This is my seventh written report to the General Board and General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) since I became President of Disciples Home Missions in October 2008. Seven occasions to reflect on our life together is minor when compared to the week-in and week-out reflection that takes place in our Regions and congregations. I estimate that during my time in pastoral ministry over the past 41 years, I delivered nearly 2,460 sermons, 745 of them from my pulpit in Southern California, from which I was called to serve in this position.
When I left that congregation to travel to Indianapolis, I asked the congregation to accept my heartfelt apology for all the distress and discomfort those sermons surely brought them. Somewhere along the way I took seriously the dictum that the role of the minister, or Regional or General Ministry leader for that matter, is to comfort the disturbed and to disturb the comfortable. Ministry at its best is always lived on the edge that leads to God’s creation of something new and fulfilling for all God’s people.

I am reminded of that story of the three busloads of Christians – Methodists, Presbyterians, and Disciples – that encountered fatal circumstances. The group of Methodists found themselves at the Pearly Gates. St. Peter asked, “On whose authority do you call to enter here?” The Methodists huddled together and with one accord said, “On the authority of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, the one who said, ‘The world is my parish.’” St. Peter responded, “No, your answer is wrong. You Methodists go directly to hell.”

The busload of Presbyterians looking on at the Methodists prepared for their response to St. Peter. They did not want to make the same mistake as the Methodists. So they thought, “Surely we have a longer history than the Methodists and our founder wrote the famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536.” St. Peter asked the question, “On whose authority do you enter here?” The Presbyterians responded, “On the authority of John Calvin.” St. Peter abruptly said, “Your answer, too, is wrong. You Presbyterians go directly to hell.”

The busload of Disciples carefully studied the situation of both the Methodists and Presbyterians. They thought, “If not Wesley or Calvin, then the correct answer must be Campbell or Stone or maybe even the ecumenist, Ainslie.” They were just about ready to give their response to St. Peter, when the Regional Executive from Virginia, the honorable Lee Parker, of ccinva_rm@msn.com had a great idea. Lee said, “I learned about the ministry of Ron Degges while on the Search Committee for the new DHM President in 2007-2008. I know that he was granted standing by the Capital Area Region, and has had a long history of pastoral leadership, leading the DHM Search Committee and Board of Directors to call him to be President of Disciples Home Missions. Lee continued, “Let us cite as our authority, Ron Degges.”

This busload of Disciples did what the Disciples never do – they reached a quick consensus – and replied to St. Peter’s query, “On whose authority do you enter here?” They said, “On the authority of DHM President, Ron Degges.” St. Peter, with open arms, said, “Come in and gather around the Table that has been prepared for you, my dear Disciples. If you have studied with Ron Degges, then you have already been through hell.”

There is no question about it. Ministry gets hot and hellish from time to time. The unexpected happens. Where there are closed doors of opportunity, God through the Spirit opens new doors and windows of greater opportunity. As the Psalmist writes: “I am about to do a new thing, now it springs forth . . .” [Psalm 43:19 NRSV].
Since my last report to you, Disciples Home Missions has been working on some new collaborative partnerships. We have become increasingly involved in the launch of a new effort to educate the American public on climate change called Blessed Tomorrow. This movement brings together some of the nation’s preeminent religious leaders from the Evangelical, Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, and Mainline Protestant faiths, including our own Sharon Watkins, to engage our clergy and congregations on climate change.

On October 15, 2014, Executives from Blessed Tomorrow came to Indianapolis to visit with a Disciples Team on climate change, to explore the possibility of making a grant to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through Disciples Home Missions and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kentucky to work through our Green Chalice Ministry to obtain 750 commitments of clergy and lay leaders over the next 12 months, to:

- To change my lifestyle to reduce my contribution to pollution
- To support recycling efforts
- To search for sustainable lifestyles
- To work for public policies which lead to a just and sustainable society
- To share these concerns with others and urge them to make this covenant

Blessed Tomorrow has received our grant proposal for an initial $25,000 and has offered to assist us in writing grant proposals to other organizations and foundations. Members of the Disciples Team include: Sharon Watkins, Carol Devine, Greg Alexander, Robert Welsh, and me. I am thankful for the collaboration between the General Minister and President, Green Chalice Minister, Kentucky Regional Executive, Council on Christian Unity President, and Disciples Home Missions President on this initiative.

Another new partnership, whose seed was planted at the Orlando General Assembly in July 2013 and was launched in August 2014, is the Real Faith Christian Church project in Clarksdale, Mississippi. Partners in this project are Disciples Home Missions and Disciples Volunteering, Disciples Women, Disciples Church Extension Fund, Reconciliation Ministry, Week of Compassion, National Convocation, Disciples Great River Region, and Hope Partnership. Our united effort is three-fold: (1) To get the fellowship hall completed, (2) To secure a temporary permit for volunteers to work on the sanctuary, and (3) To complete the sanctuary so the congregation can worship there by Easter 2015!

Joshua Baird, our Director of Disciples Volunteering, has organized long-term volunteers to set-up a Mission Center on the grounds of Real Faith Christian Church. Our Office of Disciples Volunteering is scheduling congregational mission groups to participate in the project. Members of Disciples Home Missions Staff will travel to Clarksdale March 15-21, 2015 to spend a week of hands-on mission and to “get dirty for Jesus.” I am delighted to report that Harley C. & Mary Hoover Price Foundation has awarded a contribution of $25,000 to assist in the completion of the new facility.
This is one of our denomination’s first efforts to come together across ministry lines to help a congregation in distress. I pray that it will not be our last. As we evaluate the effectiveness of this program, I think we will find other opportunities to serve in other Regions across the country where there is true collaboration between congregation, Region, and General Church.

Disciples Home Missions, Week of Compassion, the National Benevolent Association, and Church of the Brethren Disaster Services, have worked together to create a new position and initiative to help meet the needs of children affected by disaster. This project will provide a three year focus on expanding Children’s Disaster Services in the Southeastern part of the United States and the Gulf Coast Region.

The work of the Gulf Expansion Project, as it has come to be called, has progressed since its launch in the spring of 2014. The goal is to train and certify upwards of 250 volunteers in Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, and Louisiana, to provide direct, hands on care to children in shelters and service centers after a disaster. These volunteers will be organized into rapid response teams to be the first caregivers responding after a disaster in their region.

Disciples Home Missions staff participating in the creation of this new collaborative effort are Joshua Baird, Olivia Bryan Updegrove, and Olivia Stewart Robertson. A meeting was held on October 31, 2014, to bring all participants up to date with progress made on the Gulf Expansion Project.

On October 23-25, 2013, Disciples Home Missions and the National Benevolent Association, called together 45 individuals representing 30 health and social service ministries affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to discover what kinds of resources, networks, and support would further the ministries of both established and emerging projects. As a next step, DHM and NBA staff met together in St. Louis, MO, April 30-May 1, 2014, with consultants Nancy James and David Odom of Duke Divinity School, to explore areas of ministry and mission in which both DHM and NBA might find a closer affiliation.

Richie Sanchez and Sheila Spencer were appointed by me to serve on an NBA Search Committee to identify two new Program Staff for the Disciples Care Exchange/Affinity Services position and the Incubator Initiative position. I am happy to inform you that the Rev. Monica Wedlock Kilpatrick has been selected to serve as the Disciples Care Exchange/Affinity Services Director and the Rev. Ayanna Johnson as the Director of the Incubator Initiative. I offer my gratitude to both Richie Sanchez and Sheila Spencer for their participation in this joint General Ministry Search Process. Now we go to the work of integrating the Disciples Exchange/Affinity position into the joint fabric of both DHM and NBA organizational life. Monica Wedlock Kilpatrick visited our DHM Offices in Indianapolis, Indiana on January 15, 2015 and spent a day with DHM staff members. She also met with Mission Center Directors and Affiliates at All Peoples Christian Center in Los Angeles, CA, February 11-13, 2015.
Our Family and Children’s Ministry Team has made exemplary progress over this past year, leading to the development of a new web presence soon to be launched and strengthening our Ecumenical Partnership with the United Church of Christ. Unfortunately, due to economic conditions beyond their control, the Local Church Ministry arm of the United Church of Christ had to release Kate Epperly from employment. Upon word of the decision, I spoke with Olivia Bryan Updegrove, Olivia Stewart Robertson, and Ministry Associate, Jessica Kramer, about the breaking news, and offered my regrets to Kate Epperly. Kate was one of four national staff positions eliminated in this most recent round of staff reductions.

Ben Guess, Executive for Local Church Ministries of the United Church of Christ, and I will meet in the first quarter of 2015 to regroup and explore ways in which Disciples Home Missions and Local Church Ministries can work closer together into the future.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is assigned 8% of all refugees resettled through U.S. Church World Service. We have Disciple-related refugee resettlement offices in Phoenix, AZ; Los Angeles, CA; Sacramento, CA; Denver, CO; New Haven, CT; Miami, FL; Palm Beach, FL; Atlanta, GA; Chicago, IL; Indianapolis, IN; South Bend, IN; Louisville, KY; Lexington, KY; Grand Rapids, MI; Minneapolis, MN; Lincoln, NE; Omaha, NE; Greensboro, NC; Durham, NC; Concord, NH; Buffalo, NY; Rochester, NY; Syracuse, NY; Columbus, OH; Portland, OR; Lancaster, PA; Knoxville, TN; Austin, TX; Amarillo, TX; Dallas, TX; Fort Worth, TX; Houston, TX; Harrisonburg, VA; and Richmond, VA. Churches within a fifty mile radius of one of these resettlement offices are encouraged to sponsor refugees in their area. You will be glad to know that between April and October 2014 Disciples have helped resettle 719 refugees in 338 families.

News of the unaccompanied minor children flooding into the United States from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, has prompted our Refugee and Immigration Ministry to work daily with our ecumenical and interfaith partners to develop and compile information on root causes, church responses, children’s needs, and advocacy campaigns to support the children. The Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, our Director of Refugee and Immigration Ministries, and Tana Liu-Beers, our Immigration Legal Counsel, are doing exemplary work educating and advocating for the refugee and immigrant community.

I am delighted to report that Disciples Home Missions has been blessed this past year with some legacy gifts to support our continuing work as a General Ministry of the Church. We received a $25,000 gift from the Clyde Saunders Irrevocable Trust; an unrestricted gift of $346,592.91 from the Lorene Perrigo Trust; a gift of $88,949.18 from the sale of the Yakama Christian Mission property to support the struggles of indigenous people in the United States and Canada; and, the gift of a new permanent fund with the Christian Church Foundation in the amount of $97,200 from the closing of the Cherokee Christian Church in Prairie Village, Kansas, to support the work of the General Youth Council and Young Adult Commission. In all, these gifts total $557,742.09. I cannot help but lift up Clyde Saunders and family, Lorene Perrigo and family, the Yakama Christian Mission, and the Cherokee Christian Church for their
continuing commitment to the betterment of the church and world through Disciples Home Missions.

Our commitment to them must be to continue developing partnerships throughout the life of our church in all of its expressions -- general, regional, and congregational -- serving congregations, strengthening leaders, and making a difference in the world by revealing the light of Christ. I can think of no better or more focused mission than this.

We have much to celebrate at Disciples Home Missions. In this report, I can only give you highlights of the work we are doing. Our staff is dedicated to our mission and is hard working. They have braved my absence during a January through March 2014 sabbatical, the move to our new denominational headquarters in August 2014, and the continuing shifting of the sand in denominational life and mission.

From our ministries of Christian Vocation and Search and Call, Faith Formation and Christian Education, Women’s and Men’s Ministries, Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Chaplain’s Ministries, our bi-monthly Constant Contact newsletter and , The Disciples’ Advocate, we are here for the focused purpose of equipping Disciples for Christ.

Every day brings new challenges and opportunities. Disciples Mission Fund giving continues to decline, churches continue to close their visible ministries or change their denominational affiliation, and far too many of our ministers either hang up their call to ministry and seek employment elsewhere or hang around the church with little energy to serve. Our congregations and their leaders need our help and support if God is going to do a new thing in and through us.

Many, many decades ago God did a new thing. On January 18, 1916, God sent Oscar Haynes into this world. Some of you may have known Oscar. He was a dedicated Disciple of Christ, especially dedicated to his church, his Region, and his denomination. He served on the Boards of Directors of both Disciples Men’s Ministries and Disciples Home Missions, to name just a few. I have known Oscar since my first day on the job as a Disciples Minister. In recent years he would put his arm around my shoulders, lean over into my ear, and whisper, “Ron, have I ever told you that Disciples Home Missions is the heart of this church?” He believed in this ministry and spent his life supporting it. Oscar died on July 31, 2014. He was 98 years old. At his funeral, I learned that Oscar was not just my friend. Oscar was everybody’s friend. Everybody loved Oscar.

My friend and colleague in ministry, Alvin Jackson, Senior Pastor of Park Avenue Christian Church in New York City and Co-Founder and Co-President of the Disciples Center for Public Witness in Washington, D.C., wrote a blog saying, “Oscar was one of the greats among us and we can never be quite the same without him. Maya Angelou’s poem that she wrote and recited at the funeral of her friend James Baldwin seems most appropriate for my friend and the friend of many, Oscar Haynes.”

From Maya Angelou’s, When Great Trees Fall:

“When great trees fall,
rocks on distant hills shudder,
lions hunker down
in tall grasses,
and even elephants
lumber after safety.

“When great trees fall
in forests,
small things recoil into silence, their senses
eroded beyond fear.

“When great souls die,
the air around us becomes
light, rare, sterile.
We breathe, briefly.
Our eyes, briefly,
see with
a hurtful clarity.
Our memory, suddenly sharpened,
examines,
gnaws on kind words
unsaid,
promised walks
never taken.

“Great souls die and
our reality, bound to
them, takes leave of us.
Our souls,
dependent upon their
nurture,
now shrink, wizened.
Our minds, formed
and informed by their
radiance, fall away.
We are not so much maddened
as reduced to the unutterable ignorance of
dark, cold.

“And when great souls die,
after a period of peace blooms,
slowly and always
irregularly. Spaces fill
with a kind of
soothing electric vibration.
Our senses, restored, never
to be the same, whisper to us.
Indulge me just a little longer. Many, many decades ago, God did a new thing. On March 18, 1921, God sent Harold Johnson into this world. Harold served on the staff of Disciples Home Missions, assisting in the training new ministers for new congregations and a consultant to the Consultation on Church Union. He is warmly remembered as the grandfather of the North American and Pacific Asian Disciples [NAPAD]. He traveled to Asia and met people who would become his interest for the remainder of his life. One of his interests was St. Francis of Assisi. He once made a pilgrimage to that part of the world where St. Francis lived and came back home transformed by the experience.

Harold Johnson died on September 6, 2014. He was 93 years old. On October 6, 2014, I received a letter from Dr. Harold and Mrs. Evelyn Watkins, former President of Church Extension. Hal and Evelyn write:

“Harold was a far more significant voice and change agent than was ever given his due. Many areas in the life of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) benefitted from his wisdom and work – education, youth, new congregation, leader development, regional, minorities just to mention a few.”

At his funeral, I learned that his favorite passage was, The Prayer of St. Francis:

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy;
O Divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.”

What does one say after such readings as these from Maya Angelou and St. Francis?

Nothing.
March 4, 2015

In 2014, I traveled a total of 47 days to be with chaplains in settings all the country. In January, I attended the annual Conference of Endorsers of Military and VA chaplains in Alexandria, VA, and then was able to represent our church as Chaplain (Colonel) Rhett Starnes received a Purple Heart Award at Fort Bragg, NC. Rhett had suffered from PTSD as a result of an explosion in Iraq some years earlier.

In April, I made a swing through the state of Virginia to visit both civilian and military chaplains, two of whom are Federal Prison Chaplains. In all, I visited more than a dozen chaplains in various cities, over the course of four days. The highlight of this trip was a special visit to Chaplain (Colonel, Retired) Maury Hundley, a 97-year old minister living in Roanoke, VA near his wife who is suffering from Alzheimer’s disease. Maury is the oldest living chaplain who served in World War II. He hit the beach at Normandy on D-Day plus 30 and served with the Army in intense areas of fighting along the coast of Europe and into Germany. And he was there to see some of the concentration camps as well. The Army is memorializing him in their Chaplin Museum at Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

Visits to Chaplains in South Carolina in May were particularly rewarding, as I witnessed the exchange of command at the Army Chaplain School from David Colwell (Colonel, now retired) and Lamar Griffin (Colonel). Lamar is one of our newest transfers to our church from the Southern Baptist Convention. With three more chaplains in the process of making the change over to our denomination, we will have as many as seven or eight in the period of less than two years who have found the Disciples of Christ to be a welcoming and supportive church in which they can do their ministry.

June saw a trip to Kentucky and Indiana where I visited chaplains and pastoral counselors on both sides of the Ohio River. Visiting with VA and military chaplains, my highlight was getting to speak with chaplains in training at Fort Knox, KY,
where they were serving the cadets in ROTC Summer Camp. Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) Greg Thogmartin graciously hosted me and gave me a tour of the posts where 30 years ago I served as pastor at the historic Main Post Chapel. Earlier in the month, I was privileged to deliver the ordination sermon for Ralph Botte, new graduate of Wake Forest Divinity School and new chaplain in the Army Reserves.

July was a busy month at Fort Jackson again as I was joined by Reverend Ron Degges, President of DHM, as we attended the change of command for Chaplain (CAPT) Kyle Faunteroy at the US Navy Chaplain School. While there, I was able to visit with a number of military and civilian chaplains. Later that month I traveled to Springfield to conduct the funeral of Colonel (Retired) Wayne George, husband of Chaplain LTC--US Army, Retired) Linda George. Linda and Wayne had been members of my church in Columbia, SC and have been dear friends for a number of years.

Traveling back to Fort Jackson in November, I was present at the graduation of two new Navy Chaplains, Travis Armes and Jimmy Gawne, with Travis becoming an active duty chaplain with the Marines at Camp Pendleton, CA. First Christian Church hosted a luncheon for our chaplains in the area, and we had over 15 chaplains—military and civilian in attendance. Then in December I made one final trip to South Carolina to attend the graduation of Chaplain (CPT) Jonathan Fisher at the Army Chaplain School.

In all, I traveled 47 days last year of the 75 days for which I am contracted. In the coming year, we are hosting a retreat for chaplains and counselors in Columbus, OH, before the General Assembly, with Dr. Rita Brock keynoting our sessions and Rev. Ron Degges leading our worship. We will also have the chance to interact with the DHM Board members, as we share worship and meal times.
both civilian and military ministry. As military chaplains retire, the number of serving Disciples in uniform continues to decline, and I am hoping that my trip to the Seminarians’ Conference in March will enable me to tell the good news stories about what magnificent work our chaplains are doing. Our numbers hold steady around 300, as we continue to gain civilian chaplains—especially in hospitals and hospice settings. By God’s grace, we shall continue to serve our fine clergy in specialized ministries in the way they deserve.

My focus will continue to be on recruiting qualified and dedicated chaplains for
CHRISTMOUNT CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY, INC.
Michael P. Murphy, Executive Director
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(828) 669-8977 Fax (828) 669-6301
E-mail: info@christmount.org Web site: www.christmount.org

Mission Statement: To provide opportunities in the heart of the mountains for Christian hospitality, rest for the soul, and renewal for the journey.

Christmount is the retreat, conference, and camp center for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. It’s a place for education, spiritual renewal, church retreats, camps, family reunions, and many other types of events. In the spirit of the Disciples of Christ, the facilities are used by many Christian traditions, as well as families and non-profit groups. Christmount is also available for use by individuals and families.

In December, 2014, the first phase of a two-part construction project began, renovating the old dining room space in the Guest House, which had been used for a multi-purpose room. The space will be turned into a large conference meeting facility with the capability of being divided into two meeting spaces by use of moveable walls. Included in the project is an updating of all technical equipment for the conference rooms. The first phase will be completed in spring of 2015, with the second phase set to begin in late autumn and completed in early 2016.

The Strategic Plan for 2012 – 2016 continues to guide the governance of Christmount. An Administrative Board has replaced the Board, while a larger Council carries out ministry tasks such as revamping programs and working to increase awareness of Christmount throughout the Disciples world and beyond.

One of Christmount’s newest ministry ventures is a partnership with Asheville Youth Mission to develop a Mission Camp in the eastern part of Buncombe County, NC. Youth groups looking for a more intense mission experience than Christmount’s Work Camp will work in the community of Black Mountain and east Asheville in homes and with organizations that need assistance from volunteers.

Camp Lakey Gap for people on the autism spectrum is entering its sixth summer. This unique ministry offers residential camp experiences for children and adults who might not otherwise be able to go to camp. Christmount also continues to offer two weeks of Camp Sunshine, a camp for adults who are cognitively challenged, with volunteers coming from CYF groups who desire a different type of mission experience.

Christmount continues to welcome ministers on sabbatical, individuals seeking a place for personal spiritual retreats, family reunions, choir retreats, and church leadership retreats. There are also unique programs: the Festival of Biblical Storytelling, Oreon E.
Scott Clergy Conference, Elders and Deacons Workshop (co-sponsored by Lexington Theological Seminary), Marriage Enrichment Retreat, Post-College Retreat, Biblical Storytelling for Pastors, Discovery Weekend Women’s Retreat, Music Workshop, Christmount Week, Storytelling in the Classroom for Teachers, and College Retreat.

Come to Christmount, where your renewal is our priority!

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General Youth Council
Rev. Trayce Stewart

The General Youth Council continues to give voice to youth and their concerns across the life of the US and Canada. The council has intentionally reached out to Disciple ethnic minority groups to increase diversity to better reflect the changing landscape of North America and the church. The current GYC consists of 8 high school youths and 3 young adults. Through the continuing support of DHM, a contract position of liaison was also created for a young adult to facilitate work as we move toward to the 2015 General Assembly.

GYC continues to host it’s bi-annual leadership week to formally introduce members to the larger church structure and leaders within the denomination. Through monthly conference calls, a mid-winter retreat and gatherings utilizing technology, the council continues to work on programming for General Assembly, regional gatherings and increasing participation in other Disciple events and ministries.
All Peoples believes that social service programs should promote equality, unity, respect, and self-determination. Our primary goal is to establish a foundation to strengthen individuals, families and the community in South Los Angeles. Founded in 1942, by the Christian Church Disciples of Christ – United Christian Missionary Society is now a mission center of Homeland Missions of Christian Church.

The philosophy of All Peoples has been an emphasis on education as a tool for successful community building. Programs are integrated to include the entire family and the majority of individuals who attend the center utilize multiple services. The services provided are; day care, pre-school, comprehensive after school program, summer residential camp held at Loch Leven Camp and Conference Center, continuation high school, sports and recreation, parenting, parent support groups, domestic violence support group, individual/family counseling, Supplemental Food Distribution, legal clinic, employment services, health education workshops, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program.

There have been many highlights over the past two years that have had an impact on the Center and our role in the community. Partnership and collaboration are key components in meeting the needs of individuals and families. Therefore All Peoples prides itself in our ability to reach out and make connections to bring more resources to the neighborhood.

In 2013 we partnered with the Alliance for Healthier Communities. Our goal has been to change the culture within All Peoples and encourage staff, youth and families to embrace a healthier lifestyle. To accomplish our goals; we offered workshops on healthy eating, displayed posters made by staff with encouraging messages about nutrition and exercise; and changed our menu for community wide events to offer fresh fruits, “spa water”, whole wheat or grain, salads etc. Our mothers group added an evening Zumba class four nights a week.

Our community garden has continued to grow and expand. In 2013, our high school youth learned to build raised beds. They built five raised beds for residents who had previously maintained garden at All Peoples, thereby providing space for new families to come and utilize their space. A “Food Growers Network” has been established. Residents in the community will learn to share seeds, improve gardening skills and build a support system in the neighborhood. We continue to work with the
American Friends Service Committee as we learn and respond to food justice issues in our neighborhood.

Our next partnership is to provide services as American Jobs Center “access site” in a community with staggering unemployment rates as high as 40%. We will seek employment for persons living in South Los Angeles. Partnering with L.A. Trade Tech College, Coalition for Responsible Community Development, Employment Development Department, and others, our overall goal is to serve more than 2,600 individuals seeking employment.

We appreciate the support from Disciples Men and Women and the effort of Disciples Home Mission to be faithful to the covenant established over 72 years ago.

UrbanSpirit/KB Ministries Inc

UrbanSpirit continues its perspective-changing work of poverty education, with the focus on changing systems rather than treating symptoms of poverty in America.

Our primary teaching event is still our week-long poverty simulation event conducted in Louisville, which has drawn college and church groups from across the country. We also have worked with colleges and seminaries to offer course credit for “cross cultural” and “leadership training” requirements.

Our middle-school “social justice camp,” SoJust, is being held in Flint MI for the first time in August 2015, and we’re hoping to reach another region, another constituency. We’re also excited to engage the entire cohort of DHM Summer Interns in this SoJust event, as they regather in Flint for their end-of-summer debriefing. We love cross-over and collaboration!

Our primary challenge has been developing a model of sustainability that doesn’t require a full-time, year-round executive. Our founder and long-time director returned to parish ministry in 2014, with the expectation – and congregational endorsement – that she would continue her work with UrbanSpirit.

We continue to be an ecumenical center, with varying ties to Disciples, UCC, PCUSA and the Episcopal Church.
YAKIMA CHRISTIAN MISSION
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As with many other organizations Yakima Christian Mission is going through a period of significant transition. In 2014 the board of Yakima Christian Mission divested itself of the property that it owned which was a home and land. In conjunction with that sale, Disciples Home Missions sold the property it owned which included the Log Church, Parsonage and office space all of which set on five acres of land. The proceeds from these sales have been placed with the Christian Church Foundation and the earnings will be used for future ministry for indigenous peoples in the Yakima Valley. We also have moved all the bookkeeping to Disciples Home Missions which makes it possible for the Executive Director to spend more time in the community.

The Executive Director has been able to be instrumental in building a Community Skateboard Park and developing networks for ministry to indigenous children and elders. The Executive Director also was able to identify a local need at the White Swan Food Bank. Over the 2014 Christmas break there was a need for local food needy children and we were able (thanks to Disciples Home Missions) to provide $1000 grant. As we look forward to the future there is a lot of energy being devoted to Resolution 1231, a Peace Intern for the coming summer, Volunteers in Mission and FEMA in Alaska, Winter Talk (a conversation between native and non-native peoples on an annual basis) and there will be at least six groups coming for Sage Quest this summer.

Transitions are never easy, it takes time and patience. Programs without property, resourcing with very limited funds and a shifting cultural population are just a few of the significant important opportunities we will be addressing the future. We sincerely appreciate your ministry on our behalf and ask for your prayers as we continue this interesting journey.

Recommended Action:
The General Board receives the report from Disciples Home Missions and forwards the report to the 2015 General Assembly for consideration and discussion.