

Title: Report of the Mission Council Task Force

Origin: Administrative Committee

Background:

The Administrative Committee is pleased to bring GB 15-0934 Report of the Mission Council Task Force.

Recommended Action

The General Board approves the Report of the Mission Council Task Force, the Mission First! concept and authorization for the pilot.

MISSION FIRST! A Call to Mission and a Pilot Model

Background:

In February 2014, the General Board approved GB-14-0885, directing Moderator, Glen Miles and General Minister and President, Sharon Watkins, to appoint a task force to facilitate a consultative process “about how we as one church, discern God’s mission for Disciples today and organize to accomplish that mission. Disciples have long believed that we can do more together than we can apart. Tony Rodriguez, Second Vice Moderator, served as chair. The names of the Task Force members are attached.¹

The task force proposes Mission First! as a church wide process (1) to call Disciples to focus upon God’s mission in the world today; and, (2) to test a two-year pilot model for shared mission.

I. God’s Call to Mission

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only son...” (John 3:16)

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matt. 28:19-20)

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

“Mission is a movement from God to the world... To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people.”²

Addressing the 2014 General Board, Sharon Watkins challenged the Board and our whole church: *“The time has come to lighten our load and tighten our focus – on mission! I am inviting our Church, in all its expressions, to join in a Church-wide conversation on God’s mission for Disciples today – and to establish new mechanisms that would hold us accountable to that mission.”*

Mission First! addresses the need to find a shared focus on God’s mission in the world. It seeks to help Disciples identify the next set of mission priorities. It creates a space for strengthening the connections among congregations, regions, general ministries, higher education and key partners in mission locally and globally.

¹ See Appendix 1

² David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, Maryknoll Orbis Books, 1991, 389-390.

Mission First! also seeks to expand the way we engage in God's mission together.

*In Christ's name and by his grace
We accept our mission of witness and service to all people.
We rejoice in God, maker of heaven and earth,
and in God's covenant of love which binds us to God and to one another."*
Preamble to The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Mission First! seeks to help the Church:

- Claim its roots as a relational and covenantal church among its members, congregations and ministries;
- Resource, engage and empower congregations for mission;
- Create space for new, shared and emerging mission-focused partnerships;
- Develop a nimble and responsive governance board for the church;
- Establish new partnerships for mission among existing ministries for shared work and ministry.

The ultimate goals of **Mission First!** are to identify a unifying vision of mission for Disciples today by which we will be known in the coming years and to develop an effective structure that will:

1. Strengthen mutual accountability of general and racial/ethnic ministries, regions, institutions of higher and theological education and congregations by focusing our mission on the most critical tasks for the 21st century.
2. Evaluate progress toward that mission as it is expressed in a variety of ways (through a Mission Council);
3. Provide a more effective way of assuring accountability to that vision by the church (through a Governance Board); and
4. Refocus the mission when necessary (through a Mission Council).

The **Mission First!** model involves four inter-connected elements:

- (a) Holding intentional, periodic conversations, called Mission Gatherings, across the life of the Disciples of Christ to learn from each other how the Church is experiencing and living out God's mission today and could be living God's mission in the future;
- (b) Establishing a Mission Council, to listen, discern and identify key areas/directions of mission activity for a specified period of time, to focus our common life in mission together as Church. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will be known by how these key mission directions impact the world and, just as importantly, transform the Church;
- (c) Developing a plan of implementation involving congregational, regional and general ministries working in close collaboration and partnership. The implementation will include a strategy for engagement and communication with church-wide membership. Ministries will give leadership to and coordinate the implementation of a particular mission direction; and,

- (d) Establishing a new governance structure that can convene and act in a timely manner and reflects current best practices in non-profit governance providing oversight and accountability in implementing the mission directions.

The heart of the proposal is that we focus on God's call to engage in mission, and discover our place as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through that mission, both in the context of the US and Canada and within the global and ecumenical witness of the church today. This engagement will have clear implications for how we fund the church's mission in the coming years.

This proposal is an affirmation that mission is a gift from God, an invitation to participate in God's redemptive and restorative work toward wholeness. Thanks be to God, we are called!

II. A Pilot Model for Testing and Evaluation

The following paragraphs describe a model to help Disciples hear God's call to mission in our communities and world and to create strategies for collaborating in mission. The testing, evaluation and revision will take place from 2015 to 2017.³ A refined model will be presented to the 2017 General Assembly for action.

Four Components of the Model

A. Mission Gatherings

Mission Gatherings will provide an opportunity for our whole church in all our varied communities and theological diversity to share the joys and challenges of being God's people in mission. The focus of Mission Gatherings will be to listen and respond to how God is currently working in the world through the various expressions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and gather information for identifying common themes that unite the Church in mission.

The Gatherings will be opportunities to make connections, discover synergies, and encourage mission initiatives among those who have come together to share. For example, Mission Gatherings may take place at regional and racial/ethnic assemblies, women's events, the general assembly, constituency gatherings, children and youth camps and conferences, colleges and university settings, as well as specially planned, geographically dispersed mission conversations.

The vision for Mission Gatherings is that input and experience will be offered from congregations, regions, racial/ethnic and general ministries, higher education and other ministry partners, through small group discussion in formats appropriate to the specific context and culture. Mission Gatherings will engage the church through a consistent set of questions and uniform evaluation tools that help the Mission Council discover common themes and emerging areas for shared ministry.

B. Mission Council⁴

The goal of the Mission Council is to set before the church a vision for mission large enough to capture the imagination of Disciples and realistic enough to be embraced.

The Council will plan, encourage and equip leadership of the Mission Gatherings in partnership with other ministries of the church. Based on the rich learning from the Mission Gatherings, the Mission Council will identify one to four key mission directions for shared ministry.

³ See Appendix 5 for a Draft "Operational Timeline" for the Pilot Model for Testing and Evaluation 2015-2017.

⁴ See Appendix 2 for composition of the Mission Council.

The Mission Council will facilitate communication, connection, and collaboration among the ministries of the Church and will encourage the ministries of the Church to develop implementation strategies for the key mission directions.

C. Implementation Plan

Once the one to four mission directions have been identified by the Mission Council, an implementation plan will be developed for each mission direction by congregational, regional and general ministries working in close collaboration and partnership. The implementation will include a strategy for engagement and communication with church-wide membership, identifying budget resources to carry out the plank and offering leadership and coordination.

The General Assembly will continue as the widest expression of the Church, gathering biennially for mission resourcing, worship and business. The Mission First! process will influence General Assembly themes, topics and educational resources. In the future, the General Assembly may offer an opportunity to hold a Mission Gathering, providing intentional time for conversation and engagement.

D. Governance Board⁵

Mission First! will establish a new structure, the Governance Board, to assume responsibilities on behalf of the General Assembly. Working in collaboration and cooperation with the Mission Council, the Governance Board will take any required action related to the common mission directions.

As a smaller representative body of the General Assembly, the Governance Board will bring together the governance roles of the current General Board and Administrative Committee in order to carry out the responsibilities and business of the general expression of church and to support Mission First!

⁵ See Appendix 3 for the suggested and tentative composition of the Governance Board.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Mission Council Task Force Members:

1. Antonio Rodriguez (chair) – M, L, H, FLA (50-59)
2. Thaddaeus Allen – M, C, W, WV/PA College Regional Ministers (40-49)
3. Lizzy Beach – F, L, W, PSW (30-39)
4. Rachel Bell – F, L, AA, TN (30-39)
5. Delores Carpenter – F, C, AA, Cap Area (60+)
6. Jinsuk Chun – M, C, A, IN – Cabinet (50-59)
7. Susan Morris – F, L, W, NE – (50-59)
8. Bernice Rivera-Martinez – F, L, H, OR/SI (50-59)
9. Deanna Scobbie – F, L, A, IL/WI (20-29)
10. Mark Surles – M, L, W, PSW (40-49)
11. Robert Welsh – M, C, W, IN – Cabinet (60+)

Glen Miles – Ex Officio – M, C, W, GKC (50-59)

Sharon Watkins – Ex Officio – F, C, W, IN (60+)

Todd Adams (staff) – M, C, W, IN (40-49)

Appendix 2: Membership of the Mission Council for the Pilot Model

The **Mission Council** will be composed of forty-six (46) members:

- Four (4) General Assembly Moderator Team;
- Eighteen (18) congregational representatives nominated by the General Nominating Committee and elected by the General Assembly including two from the Governance Board, one approved by each of the Racial/Ethnic ministries, and two under the age of 25;
- Ten (10) regional representatives, representing regions of varied size and location appointed by the College of Regional Ministers;
- Two (2) representatives from Higher Education (one appointed by the Council of Theological Education and one appointed by the Council of Colleges and Universities);
- Eight (8) General Ministry representatives, chosen by the General Ministry Cabinet;
 - A majority to be selected from ministries whose mission can be characterized as “programmatic,” which includes the Division of Overseas Ministries/Global Ministries (DOM), Division of Homeland Ministries (DHM), Council on Christian Unity (CCU), Higher Education and Leadership Ministries (HELM), National Benevolent Association (NBA), and HOPE Partnership for Missional Transformation, but also including those ministries characterized as “financial,” which includes the Pension Fund, the Disciples Church Extension Fund and the Christian Church Foundation;
 - One representative will be named by Disciples Women (DW) and one from Disciples Men (DM).

- Three (3) representatives from the racial/ethnic ministries: one each from National Convocation (NC), North American Pacific/Asian Disciples (NAPAD), and the Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries (CPOHM) , chosen by their respective bodies;
- The General Minister and President.

The Church, through the Office of the General Minister and President, will provide for the expenses of the forty-six (46) members of the Mission Council.

Standard terms of office for the Mission Council members will be determined after the pilot model is completed and evaluated.

The Mission Council will meet under the Open Meetings Policy⁶ of the church. Individuals attending under the Open Meetings Policy will attend at their own expense or the expense of the ministry inviting them to participate.

Appendix 3: Possible Membership of the Post-Pilot Governance Board

The **Governance Board** will consist of a diverse group of persons, broadly representative of the church, with gifts in administration related to mission implementation.

The Governance Board may be composed of twenty-four (24) members:

- four (4) members of the Moderator Team;
- fourteen (14) members at large, serving on rotating four year terms;
- two (2) from the college of regional ministers;
- two (2) from the general ministry cabinet;
- one (1) General Minister and President (non-voting);
- one (1) Parliamentarian (non-voting), appointed by the Moderator.

The Church, through the Office of the General Minister and President, will provide for the expenses of the twenty-four (24) members of the Governance Board.

The Governance Board will meet under the Open Meetings Policy⁷ of the church.

⁶ [Open Meeting Policy \(Rev 2013\)](#)

⁷ [Ibid.](#)

Appendix 4: Budget Information

Combined 2015 General Board and Administrative Committee - \$80,300.00

Projected Mission Council Costs - 2016

Mission Council	\$26,000.00
Governance Board/Admin Committee	20,000.00
Consultant (Mission Gathering Design)	8,000.00
Pilot Implementation Team (meeting plus resource materials for pilot)	<u>22,000.00</u>
Total	\$76,000.00

Appendix 5: Mission First! Operational Timeline

Pilot Model for Testing and Evaluation 2015-2017

I. Approvals and Planning

1. April 2015 - General Board:
 - a. Approves MISSION FIRST! concept and pilot
 - b. Calls for presentation on Mission First! to be made at the 2015 General Assembly
 - c. Cancels 2016 General Board meeting
 - d. Authorizes first Mission Council to meet in 2016
 - Mission Council membership of the Eighteen (18) congregational representatives will be drawn primarily from 2017 and 2019 classes of General Board members nominated by General Nominating Committee
 - All other members will be chosen by their respective bodies
 - e. Authorizes Administrative Committee to handle certain governance functions on behalf of General Board until the General Board reconvenes in 2017.
2. Early Mission First! planning
 - a. Implementation Team selected to:
 - i. Create 2016 Mission Gathering process
 - ii. Map and schedule Mission Gatherings
 - iii. Plan Mission Council
 - iv. Design feedback loop to communicate with the mission gathering participants along the way
 - b. The OGMP will engage a Consultant to help with Mission Gathering and feedback design

- c. Communication Ministry creates communication plan
- 3. Spring – Summer 2015 – Mission Gathering scheduling, mapping, design Implementation Team:
 - a. Schedules Racial/Ethnic and Regional Assemblies for Mission Gatherings in 2016
 - b. Map 2016 Racial Ethnic and Regional Assemblies. Schedule Administrative Committee for Fall 2015, Spring 2016 and Fall 2016 in geographical areas that are missed
 - c. Look for other places geographically where additional mission gatherings might be held.
 - d. Begin work on format, questions and evaluation tools for Mission Gatherings
- 4. General Assembly
 - a. Monday - first item of business in General Minister and President's "State of the Church" address and presentation of General Board actions regarding Mission First!
 - b. Administrative Committee to meet and elect Mission Council
- 5. Fall 2015 – Administrative Committee
 - a. Hears progress report from Implementation Team regarding the plan for Mission Gatherings

II. **Mission Gatherings**

- 1. January 2016 – Finalizing Plans for Mission Gatherings Implementation Team
 - i. Reviews common questions
 - ii. Sets in place feedback loop between Council and Mission Gatherings/Church-at-large
- 2. Spring, Summer, Fall 2016 - Mission Gatherings
 - a. Mission Gatherings take place across the life of the church
 - b. Reports are gathered about the Mission Gathering experiences and shared with the Administrative committee
- 3. Fall 2016 – Refinement of Mission First! Model
 - a. Implementation Team
 - i. finalizes plans for Mission Council
 - ii. receives preliminary evaluation by the Administrative Committee of Mission Gatherings
 - b. General Board's Governance Committee starts working on language for governance documents for new model
 - c. Administrative Committee meets

- i. Implementation Team reports
 1. How Mission Gatherings have functioned
 2. Plans for Mission Council

III. Mission Council

1. November 2016 - Mission Council convenes
 - a. Harvests the stories of mission and ministry from Mission Gatherings
 - b. Identifies broad streams of missional activity within those stories
 - c. Encourages ministries to organize around the key mission direction(s), draft plans, including mission outcomes as well as staff and financial resources allocated
 - d. Mission Council reports to the Administrative Committee. If there are rules, funding or structural changes requested by the Mission Council, the Administrative Committee processes those

IV. Evaluation and Next steps

1. Following the 2016 Mission Council meeting, the Administrative Committee will evaluate the pilot model, and for prepare a report to the 2017 General Board that might include the following elements:

- a. General Board's Governance Committee Report on suggested rule changes
- b. A business item for the 2017 General Assembly regarding changes to *The Design*

2. February 2017 – Report to General Board

- a. Mission Council reports key mission direction(s)
- b. First report of a mission implementation plan

3. July 2017 – General Assembly Adopts Mission First!

- a. Affirms and celebrates mission direction(s)
 - i. Educational opportunities sponsored by the Mission Council at the Assembly
- b. Adopts new governance model, proposed changes to the Design, etc.
- c. Elects new GMP

V. Beyond the Pilot –

Year One:

Mission Gatherings coordinated by the Mission Council

Year Two:

Mission Council meets to discern broad themes or mission directions
Implementation strategy is developed

Ministries commit to making this a missional and financial priority (people and money)

Informational report shared with the Governance Board

Year Three:

Church wide communication on the implementation progress, etc.

Year Four:

Mission Council meets to evaluate 1-4

Mission Council plans next round of mission gatherings