

Central Rocky Mountain Region

Report to the General Board, Submitted March 14, 2016

Regional Staff

- **Dean Phelps**, Interim Executive Regional Minister, Ordained minister, member of Mountair Christian Church, Lakewood, Colo.
- **Shelly Garrison**, Associate Regional Minister for Youth, Commissioned minister, member of Village Christian Church, Colorado Springs, Colo.
- **Lara Maerz**, Executive Assistant, Laity, member of Highland Christian Church, Denver, Colo.

The Central Rocky Mountain Region utilizes the service of 1.3 FTE ministerial staff and 1.0 FTE office staff.

Overview

The Central Rocky Mountain Region consists of 47 congregations, located in Colorado (33), Wyoming (4), Utah (5), southeastern Idaho (4), and northwestern New Mexico (1). The Region spans over 311,000 square miles. The Region gives oversight and care to 173 ministers, 151 of which have standing in the Region.

Executive Regional Minister Search

Dean Phelps has served as Interim Executive Regional Minister since November 1, 2014. An Executive Regional Minister Search Team consisting of 11 members has been working since June 5, 2015. The Team is led by Rev. Vinnetta Golphin-Wilkerson (senior pastor, Granger Community Christian Church, West Valley City, Utah) and reflects the diversity of the Region in ethnicity, gender, age, and geography. The Search Team also consists of five laity and six clergy. The search is being conducted using the Executive Search Model.

Office

Until March 31, 2016, the office of the Central Rocky Mountain Region will be located in Suite 300 of the Tennyson Center for Children at Colorado Christian Home. The Tennyson Center is located at 2950 Tennyson St, Denver, CO 80212. After March 31, all regional staff will begin working from offices in their homes. The Central Rocky Mountain Region will continue to maintain 2950 Tennyson St. as a physical address and

will continue to receive mail at that location. The Region's files will be housed in that location as well.

The Region has occupied this space in the Tennyson Center since the current structure was built in the late 1990s. Having the CRMR office located in the Tennyson Center has helped to maintain the historic connection between the Colorado Missionary Association, now incorporated into the Central Rocky Mountain Region, and the Colorado Christian Home, now the Tennyson Center for Children. The space was designed to be the CRMR office, but in a day when the Region had more staff and covered a smaller geographic area. Now that the Region has only two Denver-based staff, and given the travel required of the Executive Regional Minister, the amount of space in Suite 300 is no longer needed.

Diminishing financial resources presented only one reason for shifting to home-based offices. The 2016 CRMR budget estimates a \$10,000 annual savings. However, the Central Rocky Mountain Region is not the same as it was in the mid-1990s. When the Region was formed with Restructure, it consisted of congregations located in Colorado and Wyoming, along the front range of the Rocky Mountains in what is now the Interstate 25 corridor. Since then, the Region has continued to grow geographically.

Today the Central Rocky Mountain Region spans more than 311,000 square miles. It has a congregation two miles from the Tennyson Center, and it has another congregation 700 miles from the Tennyson Center. Shifting to home-based offices increases the mobility of the Executive Regional Minister. It has a congregation an hour-and-a-half from the Grand Canyon, and it has a congregation an hour-and-a-half from Yellowstone National Park. The move to home-based offices creates the possibility for a stronger regional presence across the entire expanse of the Region, not just in the metropolitan Denver area.

Even though the staff of the Central Rocky Mountain Region will not be present in the Tennyson Center on a daily basis, both organizations desire to retain the ties that have connected them. The CRMR Moderator and the Executive Regional Minister continue as voting board members of the Center, and the Region will maintain its active role in Tennyson Center activities.

Accounting

In an effort to utilize regional resources more effectively and to facilitate the shift to home-based offices, the Central Rocky Mountain Region transferred its accounting functions to Treasury Services in the Office of General Minister and President beginning January 1, 2016. The 2016 CRMR budget estimates a \$15,000 annual savings will result from this change.

Mission and Ministry

The Central Rocky Mountain Region continues to live into some aspects of the Future Story, developed in 2009, as guidance for its core purpose: **to strengthen and equip local congregations for mission and ministry in their unique context.**

The youth of the Region benefit from camp and conference during the summer. Youth programming also includes Midwinter Retreat, a gathering of middle and high school youth for connection and faith development, and a Fall Retreat mission weekend. The Region's camps and the Midwinter Retreat are held at La Foret {something something}. Fall Retreat in 2015 was hosted by Central Christian Church in Pueblo, Colo. 201 children, youth, and adults participated in the camping program in 2015.

The four Idaho churches that became part of the Central Rocky Mountain Region in 2013 own and operate Camp Kum Ba Yah, located near Twin Falls, Idaho, a rustic campground that was part of the former South Idaho Region. Last year, the four churches expressed a desire to revive a Disciples camping program at the site, and so plans are underway to hold a weekend event for CYF and a week-long Junior camp in the summer of 2016.

Geography, the sheer size of the Central Rocky Mountain Region, amplifies the call to be intentional about cultivating connection so that the Region can live into its core values of diversity, innovation, communication, and empowerment. Camp Kum Ba Yah affords the opportunity for churches of the Region that lie west of the Continental Divide to participate in a regional camp program for youth that is closer to home. However, this also carries the risk of unintentionally creating two regions in one.

The Region's programming for youth may provide the starting point for those intentional connections, but the Region needs to provide funds that would allow attendance at each other's events and could create opportunity for shared mission and learning through mission work or educational events.

A group of ten ethnically and socially diverse youth who are part of Granger Community Christian Church in West Valley City, Utah, attended the General Assembly held in Columbus, Ohio. They raised the money for the trip, and the Region made a gift to help with their travel as well.

Many of the youth who attended were part of a congregation of Tongan Christians that have shared space with Granger Community Christian Church (West Valley City, Utah). Over the past few years, however, the relationship has grown from sharing space to working as sister congregation. The experience at the General Assembly helped influence this congregation to seek affiliation as the First Tongan Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Ministry with women and men in the Region finds its primary expression through annual retreat gathering. The men of the Region gather in retreat on the third weekend

of May each year at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colo. This past year, Interim Regional Minister Dean Phelps was the keynote speaker for the 22 men in attendance. The Women's Renewal event was held in October at Glen Eiyre, a retreat center near Colorado Springs, and was attended by 43 women of the Region.

As of this report, five congregations in the Central Rocky Mountain Region are in some stage of the search process. Since the last report to the General Board, the Region has welcomed: Laurie Lewis, South Broadway, Denver, Colo., senior minister; Dan Weaver Central, Pueblo, Colo., senior minister; Dan Mayes, First, Cheyenne, Wyo., senior minister; Gary Luallin, First, Fort Morgan, Colo., senior minister; and Thandiwe Dale-Ferguson, Cairn, Lafayette, Colo., associate minister.

The Central Rocky Mountain Region currently has 16 candidates under care in preparation for ministry: two (2) on the apprentice track, and 14 on the seminary track.

DMF Allocation

Like many regions, Central Rocky Mountain does more with less. The addition of four congregations in 2013, all of which are 580 miles or more from Denver, increased not only the size of the Region but also its diversity. By 2018, the DMF allocation from these congregations will be the same as other Central Rocky Mountain congregations. The addition of these congregations, requiring significant travel, with no corresponding adjustment to Disciples Mission Fund, had the net effect of a decrease in Disciples Mission Fund resources to the Region.

In light of this, the Regional Board has considered requesting an alternative allocation. They are considering this action even with the realization that the entire system of mission funding in the denomination is worn out and in need of overhaul. If the denomination is unwilling or unable to engage serious conversation about mission funding, the Central Rocky Mountain Region may request an alternative allocation beginning in 2017.

Financial Position

The Region uses accrual basis accounting. Getting timely audits and approval has been a challenge. The Regional Board has not yet approved the auditor's report for the year ended December 31, 2014. However, this is due to a knowledgeable member of the board who has caught and corrected numerous errors. The switch to Treasury Services will bring welcome relief from perpetual struggles with the auditor that the Region has used.

Recommended Action

On behalf of the General Board, the Administrative Committee receives the report from the Central Rocky Mountain Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).