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Name of ministry: Christian Church in Arizona

**Ministry
Executive/Regional
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The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Arizona (CCinAZ), as a Regional Office, is thriving and in sound financial shape. We have 2 full-time employees (Regional Minister and Regional Ministry Administrator (RMA)) and a very part-time DWM leader. We moved to an all virtual office in 2020, which proved fortuitous when our RMA moved out of state. He is continuing to work for us from his new location. 2020 ended "in the black" and 2021 projects to do so as well. Our staff all like each other and work well together.

**In what ways is your
region/ministry thriving?**

We are also blessed with a strong regional leadership team, especially the officers of moderator, vice-moderator, secretary and treasurer. It is a good team!

One of our focus areas is Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression work. We are working towards racial/ethnic equity in our boards and commissions, reflecting the overall makeup of our Region. We begin every board meeting with 15-30 minutes of Anti-Racism work led by our Vice-Moderator, Rev. Pedro Ramos-Goycolea, who is one of Reconciliation Ministries trainers. We have contracted with Rev. Ramos-Goycolea to be our "Enlace Regional," helping with communication and cultural understanding.

We have also recently sold a property and are exploring ways to use some of the money for American Indian/Native American reparations. In addition we tithed the first 10% of the proceeds back to the local community and put 20% in a Legacy Fund with the CCF to commemorate and continue the congregation's ministry.

Currently 21 of our 22 congregations have stable pastoral leadership (3 are interims), and the one that does not is happily using pulpit supply on a weekly basis and plans to continue doing so throughout 2022.

What are the biggest challenges facing your region/ministry this year?

The CCinAZ is a small region -- currently 22 congregations. We had two congregations close in 2020 and two more in 2021, with the pandemic having had a large effect on them. Several of the 22 congregations are very small and struggling financially, so we wonder what the future holds for them. Of the two that close, one went very smoothly and the other was difficult with a lot of hurt feelings.

Arizona is an interesting state. Many people live here in the winter but somewhere else in the summer. Sometimes called "the snowbird effect," our congregations often are much larger in the winter and smaller in the summer. What the pandemic has done, it seems, it cause many of the people NOT to come here in the winter (not traveling much), so attendance across the board is down.

Of our 22 congregations, only 8 pay their pastor what can be considered a full-time salary, and several of those are low. I have been fortunate to be able to draw on some retired ministers to serve part-time pastorates, but the pool is limited, and it is hard to attract high-quality pastors for a low salary. That said, I am amazingly blessed by the high quality of pastors we

currently have.

Cultural differences between our Anglo and Hispanic congregations continues to be a challenge. Language is part of it, but cultural expectations and practices are probably a bigger challenge.

And finally, like many of you, we have conflicts about whether to wear masks or not, whether to gather in person or not, whether to get vaccinated or not. Pastors, in particular, have suffered a lot of stress over conversations about these topics when their church members are not all of the same mind. On a Regional level, it is frustrating knowing when to plan in-person events. We have NOT done so many this year -- it's hard to know how to plan.

What is something you hope to accomplish in the next year?

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Arizona (CCinAZ) consists of 22 congregations. Seven are primarily Hispanic and worship in Spanish or Spanish/English. The other fifteen are primarily Anglo and worship in English. This gives us the potential to build unity across racial/ethnic lines -- or the potential to FAIL to do so. One of our goals for the next year is to seek to build unity. We are starting, hopefully, with an in-person Regional Gathering on January 15 and will go from there.

We also hope to offer support to all of our congregations to build/enhance their websites and presence on social media, to get the word out about congregations where all are welcome and where God's love is preached for all.

We also hope to continue to deepen our Anti-Racism efforts and continue to build our strategy, seeing it not just an anti-oppression work but also as true spiritual growth in relation to the God who loves all of us and

wants to be whole and in right relationship with each other and creation.

What is something you would like the General Board to know about your region/ministry?

The Christian Church in Arizona would like to suggest that the General Board meetings in February be in Arizona where it is 70 degrees and sunny rather than in Indianapolis. ;-)

How can we pray for your region/ministry?

Pray for small congregations discerning whether to continue their institutional ministry or close their doors. Pray for congregations and members to be more focused on God's mission than on institutional survival. Pray for true prophetic unity as we seek to get to know each other rather than a superficial unity which ignores historic inequity. Pray for all our immigrant members and their families that face continual stress.