

Strategic Implementation Plan
for the

Florida Disciples Regional Church



Florida Disciples in True Community:

*“A Barrier Breaking,
Bridge Building Movement of God,
Committed to
Courageous Covenant Conversation”*

We are growing into the vision!

Strategic Implementation Plan Summary

Getting from Here to There: Growing Into the Vision

We realize that some of the ways we used to do Regional Church Ministry are no longer effective or possible. This is due in part to our changing culture and our changing congregations. We realize that some of the ways we have done ministry together have fallen by the wayside and we need to resurrect those good models. Our relationships need to be stronger. Our communication needs to be more thorough and authentic.

As a Regional Church, we contracted with the Rev. Dr. Richard Hamm in 2013 to lead us through a period of understanding, discerning and visioning ... of seeking God's direction for the Florida Disciples Regional Church.

Dick gathered information from many sources to create a Contextual Analysis of the Florida Disciples (available). He helped us examine our history, understand our culture and imagine our faithful future. The two most powerful things we learned are that we need to embrace the technologies that will move us forward and we need to create active networks of relationships.

Together, we have written our Future Story ... envisioning the Florida Disciples Regional Church in the year 2020! We have deep longing to be God's faithful servants ... we have dear hope to be vibrant, relevant and strong in the years to come ... we have a loving God who is able to do exceedingly more than we could ever imagine!

The Strategic Implementation Plan is surprising in the way that it digs deep into the past to identify those features of the church that are of greatest value ... Faithful Christians in covenantal relationship with God and committed to doing mission together! Some elements of the plan will have you shaking your head, saying, "You know, we used to do that!" Other elements may be a bit daunting ... embrace technology, change our expectations!

Think of this Strategic Implementation Plan as a recipe ...

Lots of ingredients (our congregations and ministries) ...

Hungry diners at the table (us and our world in need of God's grace)

Many Chefs (Florida Disciples, adding our unique seasonings to the dish)

We are Disciples. We are people of the Table.
The table is set before us. Now let's get cooking!

Strategic Plan for the Florida Disciples Regional Church

Implementing our “Future Story”

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A TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY FOR OUR FLORIDA DISCIPLES REGIONAL CHURCH

As Regional Minister, I stand committed to leading our Florida Disciples Regional Church (FDRC) in a *process* of REGIONAL CHURCH TRANSFORMATION. This process will always move in the direction of seeking Disciples from across our FDRC to commit to "the hard work of relationship" and to a *faith walk* open to God's creative spirit.

I believe that The Church at its best is a *Barrier Breaking, Bridge Building Movement of God* that incessantly seeks to identify and remove all that separates us from God and each other AND is fiercely committed to the hard work of renewing and cultivating the relationships that make possible our collaboration for mission.

I am committed to securing partners for the purpose of creating ALL KINDS of *opportunities* for US to engage in ongoing *Courageous Covenant Conversation* for the purpose of:

- understanding and renewing our **covenant relationship as Disciples**,
- honoring our past as we continue to heal from past wounds and free ourselves from ineffective models,
- cultivating a Regional Church culture of openness and change
- creating a shared vision and mission for our Florida Disciples Regional Church
- committing to proclaiming Christ together through our various ministries and mission collaboration.

Sincerely,
Juan Rodriguez,
Regional Minister

The Vision Team

This group has been meeting since August of 2013 to look at our history, understand our current context and to discern God's leading into the future. This whole process has been bathed in prayer, steeped in conscious reflection and marked by courageous covenant conversation.

Manny Collazo	Moderator, Florida Disciples Regional Church
James Collins	Pastor, Bethany Christian Church
Jorge "Joey" Cotto	Pastor, Central Christian Dade County
Marta Harms	Moderator Elect, Regional Church
Mary Beth Harper	Director, Conference Christian Church Center
Rick Hull	Retired Disciples Minister
Michael Junkroski	Pastor, First Christian Church, Naples
Robert Kemp-Baird	Pastor, Daytona Beach Drive-In Christian Church
Margaret Marquis	Pastor, Ocoee Christian Church
Henri & Ghislaine Norey	Pastors, Christian Community Life Center
Tuck Norvell	Pastor, Central Christian Church, Orlando
Donna Oberkreser	Pastor, Central Christian Church, Clearwater
Brent Reynolds	Chaplain/Director, Florida Christian Center, Jax
Efrain Rivera	Member, Iglesia Cristiana del Norte, Orlando
Juan Rodriguez	Regional Minister
Tony Rodriguez	Member, Central Christian Dade County
Lori Lynn Wachter	Associate Regional Minister
David Walton	Pastor, Parkway Christian Church, Davie
Dan Webster	Pastor, First Christian Church, Gainesville
Gary West	Pastor, First Christian Church, Haines City
Dick Hamm	Coach/Consultant

Why Do We Need a Strategic Plan?

The Florida Region has come to a point in its history when it must do its work in a new way. This is not simply driven by finances, though diminishing finances are both symptomatic of the need for change and must be taken into account as changes are made. *This Strategic Plan is primarily driven by the need to address the cultural change we have all been experiencing in recent decades.* The Strategic Plan seeks to address this cultural change in an adaptive way¹ that is both faithful and effective.

This Plan is inspired by Romans 12:4-8:

“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”

The plan is also inspired by Ephesians 4, which describes a church that is less an institution and more of an organism. That is, it is a church in which all the believers are considered to be members of the Body of Christ and each is considered a minister. Ephesians 4:11-12 says, *“The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ....”*

These words suggest that *every* member of the body has responsibility for doing the ministry. It also suggests that leadership has responsibility for *equipping* the members for this ministry. Thus, this Plan envisions a Region in which the work is dispersed through a *network* rather than done from a *hub*; a Region in which people (both clergy and laity) are *equipped, empowered, enabled, appreciated and held accountable*. Building on relationships already in place and nurturing new relationships, the plan aims at helping the Florida Region more fully become a community that is engaged together in ministry, mission, and mutual support; a community that continually engages in “courageous covenant conversations” that make our differences a resource and a blessing; a true community that is marked by radical hospitality.

In developing this Strategic Plan, the Vision Team (which was appointed to be broadly representative of the Regional Church membership) has taken seriously the considerable comment and input received from:

- (1) The Transformation Convocation August 16-17, 2013;
- (2) The Regional Church Board, September 28, 2013;
- (3) Discovery and Discernment Group gathering at Coral Springs, Royal Palm Christian Church, January 4, 2014;

¹ “Adaptive” is used here in the same way it is used by Ron Heifetz, author of “Leadership Without easy Answers”. That is, “adaptive change” goes past “fixing problems within a system” to addressing the entire system itself.

- (4) Discovery and Discernment Group gathering at Jacksonville, Riverside Avenue Christian Church, January 18, 2014;
- (5) Discovery and Discernment Group gathering at Unity Christian Church, Ft. Myers, January 25, 2014:
- (6) Discovery and Discernment Group gathering at Orlando, Iglesia Cristiana del Norte, February 1, 2014.

All along the way, we have sought to be open to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

It is our prayer that this Strategic Plan will be received with the same openness to the guidance of the Spirit and that implementation will begin as soon as the Future Story is affirmed by the Regional Church Assembly.

The Core Issue

The current operating model of the Florida Region is, as is true of most church structures created in the mid-20th century, a **staff-dependent and staff-driven model**. This staff-dependent model has lost its effectiveness, as evidenced by reduced giving, difficulty in recruiting volunteers for some jobs, some low trust levels, and a lack of measurable or perceived common direction. So, the Vision Team has given attention to the development of a new model, which is what is envisioned in this document. This new model is a **network or community model**, which we believe is in keeping with what the Holy Spirit is seeking to do among us.

The Needed Transition

The transition to a network-driven Region will require some time, intentionality and skill on the part of the staff and other leadership (including the Regional Church Board). **Such a decentralized model will require more *networking between congregations, networking between ministers, and networking between lay leaders rather than networking between congregations and the Regional office only or primarily***. It will require investment of time and money in networking tools, including an advanced website and other Internet capacities (e.g. “webinar” capability) in the Regional Church office and the congregations. It will also mean using volunteer time for nurture and mission rather than for governance primarily. Governance is important, but a huge proportion of volunteer time is used currently in boards and committees rather than in the primary work of the Regional church. Thus the “primary work” has typically been disproportionately deferred to the regional staff (a hallmark of modern, WWII generation institutions, that does not work well in this post-modern era). The Strategic Plan looks toward revised job descriptions for staff and volunteers that will support the networking model of the Regional church.

The Regional ministry staff will shift from being the “hub” of a “hub and spoke” system (in which they are the only or primary connectors to congregations, lay leaders and ministers) to being tenders of the network of relationships, communication, and ministry between congregations, ministers and lay leaders that the Region will become. As our spiritual leaders, pastoral executives, and administrative leaders, the Regional ministerial staff will constantly be seeking: to identify leaders and potential leaders, to link individuals and congregations for joint ministry and mission, to connect ministers and lay leaders across the Region, to connect those with needs to those who have gifts to share, to equip the saints rather than *being* the saints!

Tasks/roles that must be fulfilled by the Regional church (but not entirely by the Regional staff) include:

- ✓ reconnecting Florida Disciples congregations, ministers and lay leaders with each other as the Florida regional community.
- ✓ representing to congregations and to the world the unity and wholeness of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and of the whole church of Jesus Christ;
- ✓ representing the rich heritage and identity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ);
- ✓ providing leadership and encouragement in the priority areas of the church’s mission including congregational vitality and new congregation establishment;
- ✓ tending to the health and growth of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) witness in Florida;
- ✓ facilitating search and call processes (which involves maintaining connection with the denominational processes as well as working with congregations);
- ✓ welcoming and orienting ministers new to ministry and/or new to Florida;

- ✓ leadership development;
- ✓ providing mentoring, care and counsel to ministers, lay leaders and congregations;
- ✓ conflict resolution;
- ✓ oversight of the property and program of outdoor ministries;
- ✓ programming for children, youth, and adults (men and women);
- ✓ oversight of ministerial commissioning, ordination and standing processes, and continuing education;
- ✓ overseeing ministerial ethics;
- ✓ providing representation to denominational bodies as well as ecumenical bodies; and tending the relationship of the Region with ecumenical partners.

Definitions of terms in this document

Task Force: a group created for a specific task of limited duration (typically a year or less).

Committee: an ongoing group that meets with some regularity year after year.

Learning Community: a key concept in post-modern approaches, a “learning community” is a small group (typically 6-12 persons) committed to being a group in community, to ongoing learning, and to fulfilling a specific task or tasks.

Building Blocks

Building blocks of the new community will need to be implemented into the fabric of the Regional church over time to give it a whole new character. These “building blocks” (which will help “build up the body”) will help us do the things we should already be doing as the church of Jesus Christ, but which we often fail to do because of busyness, tiredness, and the daily distractions that affect us all. These “building blocks will help us be a more intentional covenantal community of Disciples. Changes that are needed to develop a “network-driven” or “community-based” Regional church include:

(1) Communication Systems:

Development of a sophisticated-yet-user-friendly communication system that will undergird the network (a “Region-wide electronic communications network” as the Future Story calls it):

A key to an effective network is the free flow of information that does not depend upon individual staff members. Because of the volume of work and information with which staff must deal, when the Region looks primarily to them for communication, staff members become unintentional “bottlenecks.” The communication system must be broader, easily accessible, and mostly unencumbered by “experts” and “gate keepers.”

This means that, in addition to having regional hardware and software that facilitates communication between all the parts of the network (congregations, staff, lay leadership and offices) of the Region, each congregation must have adequate and compatible hardware and software and the training needed to enable every user to be competent and comfortable in using the system. This is not as daunting or expensive as it might at first appear since the Regional church has many competent communications technology people who would be willing to give time to installation, training and help. But this must be coordinated to be successful and ongoing help and seminars must be provided.

Such a system must provide for the effective use of webinars, conference calls, chat rooms, social media, etc. See more in the March, 2015 plans.

(2) Development of a Pastoral Response Team:

This is fundamental to the development of a system that is based on relationship between congregations and individuals (rather than relationships merely between staff and congregations/individuals). Pastoral Response Team members are not “staff” in the normal sense of the word, but are lay and clergy leaders, younger and older, of all races and ethnicities, chosen to serve for a limited term because of their spiritual, emotional and ecclesial maturity (not their age) and who serve as “connectors” within the body. Their authority is more informal than formal (that is, they have no “constitutional powers” but become effective as they develop trust and express care and concern for those of the body).

Implementation is envisioned as follows (see the plans for January, 2015): A “Regional Pastoral Response Team” (composed of clergy and lay representatives from each of the districts/clusters sufficient to provide geographic coverage and demographic balance) will meet with Regional Staff to develop a Region-wide program.

This “Pastoral Response Team” will seek to: be available for celebration of significant days and events in congregations; be available for advice and counsel; witness and various contributions; network congregations with each other according to their needs and strengths; and communicate to, from and between congregations about local, cluster, district, regional and wider church events. In order that they may participate faithfully in their own congregation, PRT members may visit most often during times other than Sunday morning. They will visit each congregation in their group at least three times per year.

As imagined by the Vision Team, PRT members will be people (lay and clergy) who have: been transformed by the Gospel; have demonstrated love for and participation in the life of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) beyond the congregation; modeled a lifestyle of integrity; exhibited appropriate relational skills; practiced the spiritual disciplines including stewardship; subscribed to a “Regional PRT Code of Ethics” (to be developed by the PRT members to parallel the current Disciples ministerial code of ethics); indicated willingness and ability to participate in continuing education designed for the PRT. Each will relate to a maximum of six congregations (none of which they will have served as ministerial staff).

The PRT members will be confirmed by both their district board and the Regional Church Board, will covenant with the Regional ministers and will be consecrated at Regional Assembly. PRT members will serve a two year term initially and can be re-appointed for a four year term (after six years, PRT members must take a one year sabbatical). Their foundational ministry will be one of spiritual and pastoral care and encouragement.

Regular training of the PRT will be provided through the Regional Minister, who will also be the primary point of accountability in addition to the whole group of PRT members holding each other accountable to their mutual covenant. PRT members will be unpaid but will be reimbursed for expenses.

The development of the PRT is seen as among the first steps in reconnecting congregations, ministers and lay people across the Region with each other.

(3) Development of “Regional Resource Teams”:

These are persons who by virtue of their experience, interest, trustworthiness, expertise and trainability can provide some basic regional services with excellence.

Some of the services provided by Regional Resource Teams *might* include:

- assisting in congregations’ acquisition of, and education related to the use of, technology and communications;
- guiding congregations to resources and encouragement toward evangelism and church growth;
- helping congregations identify and develop the spiritual gifts of their members of all ages;
- helping congregations develop youth ministry;
- providing resources related to stewardship education;
- providing transitional care to retiring ministers;
- educating members about local mission and justice ministry issues;
- leading cultural or generational sensitivity training;
- providing resources regarding conflict management and mediation;
- stimulating worship enrichment and spiritual life development;
- orientation of congregational search committees to the search and call process;

Not all of the needed teams can be developed in the first years, of course, but additional teams will be developed over the next several years. The identification of teams to be formed and team members will be done by regional staff, the Annual Planning Event (see #7), and the Regional Church Board. These “Regional Resource Teams” will continually undergo continuing education and training. They are accountable to themselves as learning communities (as well as to designated structures of the Regional church), and will regularly communicate with the regional ministers who are ultimately responsible for the quality of such services offered.

Though these Resource Team members are carefully recruited as volunteers, they will be reimbursed for their expenses by the congregation or group being served or by the Regional church. Being a Resource Team member is a form of continuing education that benefits both the individual team member, the congregation of whom he or she is a part, as well as the congregations assisted.

(4) Streamlining Governance

Streamlining of governance structures and committees so as to free up time and energy of volunteers for doing the actual ministry of the Region:

The current Regional structure is mostly a product of the modern era, when people related to God primarily through the institution and thus enjoyed being on a standing board or committees for its own sake. However, generally for people born after 1945, an institution has value primarily as it helps people relate directly to God and to one another, rather than “through the institution itself.” Thus, in this post-modern era, there is a desire for less time spent in governance meetings (including boards and committees) and more time spent in direct mission work with others and in the nurture of individuals and congregations in faith and effectiveness.

The work of developing a streamlining proposal or proposals will be done by a task force appointed by the Regional Church Board for this purpose and will result in a smaller Regional Church Board that is selected on the basis of function rather than mere geography (geographical representation will be accomplished by making all initiatives region-wide). This re-formed board might be called the Regional Mission Council.

(5) Clergy Peer Groups

The Lilly Endowment has been funding clergy peer groups for more than a decade and has recently completed an extensive study that confirms the effectiveness of clergy peer groups in supporting individual ministers’ personal satisfaction and happiness in ministry, extending the average length of pastorates, and contributing to the overall well being of both ministers and congregations. These learning communities covenant to be in regular attendance, to take each other’s needs and concerns seriously, and to keep personal information confidential.

The Florida Regional church needs clergy peer groups to help combat the feelings of isolation and loneliness that our pastors and other clergy often feel here. This plan proposes that every minister (whether commissioned or ordained) will be part of a group of other Disciples ministers. Our ministers will also be encouraged to participate in ecumenical groups as well, but each will be expected to participate in a Disciples group at least. Such small groups (typically 6-8 ministers) can meet mostly electronically where needed due to distance or time restraints, so long as there is a face to face meeting every six to twelve months or so.

(6) Affinity (or Special Interest) Networks

As the name suggests, these are networks of people (lay and/or clergy) who choose to participate in groups that are defined by common interests. Networks might be created by those interested in, for example:

- personal practice of the spiritual disciplines
- regular study of the lectionary for sermon and lesson preparation
- the arts and worship (including music, creation of banners and paraments, etc.)
- particular mission and/or social action interests (local or global)
- creation care ministries (environmental concerns)
- technological skills for use in the church
- mutual support of leader
- theological study and discussion
- global disaster relief
- congregational revitalization
- sharing of best practices among church treasurers or moderators or other leaders
- sharing of common concerns and interests among ministers serving in institutional settings.

These groups may form spontaneously, while some will grow out of the Annual Planning Event (see #7 below) or other regional gathering. Individual Affinity Networks may be ongoing for many years (such as a Camp and Conference Affinity Networks for those who are passionate about providing quality camp and conference experiences), or may be very short-lived, depending upon interest and need. Some networks may be self-recruiting others may have recruited leadership (by regional staff or others) and participation may be promoted throughout the Regional Church.

(7) Development of an Annual Planning Event (A.P.E.):

The purposes of an A.P.E. are to help lessen the time spent in committee work and thus free up the time and energy of staff and volunteers for actual engagement in mission and nurture, to provide for coordination and accountability, and to insure a comprehensive region-wide program of education, nurture and mission (without limiting or regulating the freedom of districts or clusters to develop their own programs).

As envisioned, all members (lay and clergy) of the Florida region will be invited to come to a one or two day event to plan together for the two years ahead (and to begin looking two years beyond that). Individuals will be invited to self-select the area of planning and the planning group of which they would like to be a part. Those doing the planning are not expected to do *all* of the implementation of the plans, though they may well wish to be involved in *some* of the implementation. As soon as practical after the event, recruitment of volunteers to implement the plans will be completed by volunteers and staff and a booklet (available on the web for downloading and also available in print) with the plans, the names of those serving, and the supporting budget amounts, will be created for review and affirmation by the Regional Church Board and then published widely for the sake of publicity, promotion and accountability.

Programs considered during the A.P.E. may cover a wide range of subjects, though the Region's capacity to support programs should always be kept in mind and program timing conflicts avoided. Affinity Groups (see #6 above) may be started, the formation of Regional Resource Teams (see #3 above) may be recommended, as well as particular programs planned (such as seminars, retreats, etc. for clergy and/or lay people).

Those participating in A.P.E. will initially plan for two years out. Each year thereafter, A.P.E. participants will review and amend-as-needed the next two years (which were planned previously) and do initial planning for the next two years beyond (so that four years will be planned: the next two in detail and the two beyond in broad strokes). In addition to addressing the needs of those who are already active in Regional church life, these events need to intentionally reach out to members and ministers who have previously not attended such extra-congregational events and must intentionally be welcoming and inclusive of **all** who attend. To work over time, these events must also have consistently high quality. Fewer educational events of quality will be better than many of lesser quality.

(8) Regional and/or district/cluster mission projects:

Most congregations in the Region are smaller and often find it difficult to generate a mission project beyond their own community (whether somewhere else in Florida, in another state, or in another country.) But by banding together with other congregations, strong mission events and projects become feasible. Thus, the Region will encourage congregations to partner in various mission opportunities. This may be developed through the Annual Planning Event (see #8 above), by an affinity group (see #7 above), by local initiative of congregations, districts, clusters, or otherwise.

A Disaster Response Ministry might be developed (such as that which has been developed in the Mid-America Region to respond to tornadoes and other natural disasters). Partnerships may be developed for building Habitat For Humanity Homes. Many of these kinds of efforts may be ecumenical in scope, reinforcing our Disciples heritage of Christian unity.

(9) Dialogues (cultural, generational, theological)

Differences in opinion in matters of conscience are an ongoing challenge, but one that must be met if we are to be a truly diverse community that respects differences of perspective. Dialogue means the outcomes are not perceived as win-lose, but win-win: in which all win by being pushed to think more deeply and carefully about various issues, while maintaining the “unity of the Spirit” (Ephesians 4:3-4) and recognizing our “oneness in Christ” (John 17:21).

This is such a challenge because the “natural” tendency (as Paul uses the word “natural”), is to want to “hang out” only with those who see things as we do and to avoid talking about the deeper matters of life and faith with anyone we suspect might challenge our thinking and perspective. Yet, if we do not engage in such dialogue, we increasingly become strangers to one another and erect “dividing walls of hostility” between us (Ephesians 2:14). We have seen this phenomenon too often in the Florida Region.

Thus the Region will encourage opportunities for dialogue. These may be planned at the Annual Planning Event (see #7 above), or grow out of affinity groups (see #7 above), or be otherwise developed. As we know and understand each other better, we will look for more ways to be and work together in ministry and mission across cultural, generational and theological lines.

(10) Congregational Transformation:

Continued development of a broad congregational transformation initiative:

Like all mainline communions, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has a disproportionate number of its congregations that are better situated for 1957 than for the 21st century, more that are in the fourth quadrant of the congregational life cycle than in the first, second or third quadrants. A transformation initiative will provide information and spiritual and emotional support for congregations that are willing to address the change needed to make them more effective in the current context. This is currently being provided through the Disciples' "HOPE Partnership" and may be supported and expanded through a Regional Resource Team (see #3 above) and otherwise.

(11) New Faith Communities:

Development of an initiative to form new faith communities.

Like all mainline denominations, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has been shrinking in numbers of congregations as well as in membership over the past 40 years. While transforming existing declining congregations is one part of the answer to shrinkage of our witness, forming new faith communities (some of which may look like traditional Disciples congregations, some of which may embody new forms appropriate to their context) is also an essential element. However, it should be remembered that the primary reason for engaging in forming new faith communities is not mere institutional survival, but the centrality of mission. Consideration must also be given to limiting the financial liability of the Region in future development of new faith communities.

It should also be remembered that forming new faith communities has historically been primarily a function of existing congregations, rather than of Regions. In fact, it was when primary responsibility for the forming of new faith communities was given over to Regions (the 1960's) that such projects markedly decreased and failure rates increased. Congregations should understand forming new faith communities as part of their mission, rather than as a threat or simply the Region's responsibility.

This initiative may be developed out of the Annual Planning Event (see #7 above), an affinity group (see #6 above), or otherwise developed.

(12) Regional Church Stewardship Initiative:

Improvement in the Region's financial position by:

- reducing financial liabilities (in regard to guaranteeing congregational loans)
- wisely guiding the stewardship of the Christian Church Conference Center
- increasing income through an annual fund (an annual opportunity for individuals to make over and above gifts to the Regional Church, as is in keeping with the Disciples Mission Fund covenant)
- encouraging planned gifts
- teaching Christian stewardship.

Partners who can assist in these initiatives include:

- Church Extension (in regard to reduction of liabilities)
- Christian Church Foundation (in regard to planned gifts)
- Bruce Barkhauer of the Disciples' Center For Faith and Giving (in regard to stewardship education)

(13) New Understanding of Regional Staff:

Reconfigure Regional ministerial and support staff to most effectively support the network. The current system requires the staff to attend too many meetings and thus fosters dependency upon staff rather than the staff being equippers and enablers. The purpose here is not to *reduce* staff, but to put staff in the position of supporting the network rather than being a hub.

(14) Recruitment of Leaders/Servants Across the Regional Church:

Identify potential workers and leaders from across the Region, and their gifts and skills, so as to engage them in our ministry and mission together. This will require the development of an ongoing committee for this specific purpose, working in tandem with the Regional ministry staff.

Strategic Plan Overview 2014-2016

A Foreword about Change

The five-year plan seeks to transition the Regional Church from a typical “hub” model (a “staff-centered” and “staff-dependent” model) to a “network” model. As this is implemented, some of the current committees of the Regional Church will be altered, replaced, or eliminated. Because there are many committed and faithful people serving on these committees, these changes in committee structure and life will need to be done with sensitivity and care. Many of these individuals will be drawn into the new model that is unfolding over the next few years. But a few people may initially feel displaced and so it is important to move forward with respect and care for everyone. This change of model should not be understood as a way of cutting anyone out of leadership and service – quite the contrary, it will ultimately engage many more persons in the ministry of the Regional Church (though not necessarily in committee work). Nonetheless, until the new model is fully up and operating, it may *feel* to some that they are being pushed out. So let us proceed with care, but let us proceed.

Only the overview of the five-year plan appears here. Month-by month plans for each year have been created but the unfolding of the details will depend a great deal upon what is accomplished in the first two years and upon regular evaluation of progress and of the plan itself. The overall Plan and our progress will be reviewed every 6-8 months by an “Implementation Team” (see 2014 Goal 2 below and plans for November, 2015) in order to make adjustments as needed and to celebrate that which has been accomplished since the last review. Changes and celebrations should be shared with the Regional Church in a public way and, as possible, in a context of worship (at Regional Assembly, for example).

The primary factor in the rate of forward movement is the Region’s *capacity* in terms of time, energy, and money. As the Regional Church transforms, new time, energy (and hopefully money) will become available and a greater rate of movement will be achievable. Thus, what might seem to be impossible initially will become quite do-able as the Regional Church steadily transforms over the next five years.

Respectfully and Joyfully Offered,

Dick Hamm

Implementation Calendar

2014

Overall Goals for 2014

1. Affirmation by the Regional Assembly of the new model for the Region (as depicted in the Future Story) and of this Strategic Plan by the Regional Church Board.
2. Appointment of an Implementation Team to guide implementation of the Strategic Plan.

August, 2014

1. The Vision Team shares an outline of the Future Story and the first draft of a Strategic Plan with the Regional Church Board for review and affirmation of direction.

October, 2014

1. The Vision Team shares the Future Story with the Regional Assembly on Friday evening (October 17) and affirmation is sought. If affirmed, the Vision Team shares the Strategic Plan on Saturday (October 18) for review and suggestions (not approval – approval is the responsibility of the Regional Church Board).

November, 2014

1. Based on Assembly feedback, any needed changes are made in the Strategic Plan by the Vision Team and presented to the Regional Church Board for overall affirmation and for approval of the first year of the plan (2015).
2. An “Implementation Team” of approximately 7 persons (broadly representative) and including 2-3 of those who served on the Vision Team are proposed and elected by the Regional Church Board.

2015-2016

Overall Goals for 2015

1. A Communication Task Force is created to develop and begin implementing plans to address Regional Network communication. (Building Block #1)
2. A Pastoral Response Team is designed and developed to begin reconnecting ministers, lay leaders, and congregations as the Florida Regional Church Community. (Building Block #2)
3. One Regional Resource Teams is recruited and developed. (Building Block #3)
4. An Annual Planning Event is developed and implemented. (Building Block #7)
5. A plan is generated for systematically developing clergy peer groups. (Building Block #5)
6. A plan is developed for reducing Regional financial liability for past new congregation projects. (Building Block #12)
7. A Regional Church Annual Fund is established. (Building Block #12)
8. Plans for the development of two affinity groups are designed during the Annual Planning Event. (Building Block #6)
9. Plans are made during the Annual Planning Event for theological, generational, cultural dialogues to begin in 2016. (Building Block #9)
10. Plans are made during the Annual Planning Event for two regional/district/cluster mission projects (these may be created new or, better, may tag onto mission projects already being planned by individual congregations. (Building Block #8)
11. A Recruitment Task Force is developed to assist in identifying potential volunteers and leaders for various Regional church activities. (Building Block #14)

2017-2018

Overall Goals for 2016

1. The Pastoral Response Team begins functioning. (Building Block #2)
2. An additional Regional Resource Team is created and implemented. (Building Block #3)
3. Congregations are equipped to participate in the regional Communications Network by June. (Building Block #1)
4. A Congregational Transformation Initiative begins. (Building Block #10)
5. A New Faith Community Development Initiative begins. (Building Block #11)
6. A Task Force reviews current regional governance structures for streamlining. (Building Block #4)
7. Plans for the development of two new affinity groups are designed during the Annual Planning Event (as in 2015). (Building Block #6)
8. Plans are made during the Annual Planning Event for two new regional/district/cluster mission projects (as in 2015, these may be created new or, better, may tag onto mission projects already being planned by individual congregations). (Building Block #8)
9. Plans are made during the Annual Planning Event (as in 2015) for theological, generational, cultural dialogues to begin in 2016. (Building Block #9)
10. A Task Force reviews the regional staff configuration to most effectively support the new network/community model. (Building Block #13)

2019-2020

Overall Goals for 2017:

1. The new congregation establishment initiative identifies the location for formation of two new faith communities in 2018.
2. Eight congregations commit to be pilot projects in the new Congregational Transformation Initiative.
3. Two additional Regional Resource Teams are created and implemented. (Building Block #3)
4. Plans for the development of two new affinity groups are designed during the Annual Planning Event (as in 2015 and 2016). (Building Block #6)
5. Plans are made during the Annual Planning Event for two new regional/district/cluster mission projects (as in 2015 and 2016, these may be created new or, better, may tag onto mission projects already being planned by individual congregations). (Building Block #8)
6. Plans are made during the Annual Planning Event (as in 2015) for theological, generational, cultural dialogues to begin in 2017. (Building Block #9)