

**A Future  
Story**  
for the  
**Central Rocky  
Mountain Region**  
of the  
**Christian Church  
(Disciples of Christ)**



**Imagine ten years into the future...**

*Rocky Mountain Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is a web of relationships committed to ministries of justice and compassion as disciples of Jesus Christ. As individuals and congregations, with our Regional Ministry Team and Board, and in connection with the General and Ecumenical Church, we create, sustain and renew these relationships and ministries through a shared commitment to our four Core Values and our three Core Ministries.*

**A Web of Relationships**

Ten years ago we came together as a region to search for ways to move into the future in a spirit of hope and renewal, to celebrate our faithful ministries, both past and present, while honestly confessing our places of brokenness and neglect. We found that too often our relationships were tenuous or wounded, our trust was weak, our congregations felt isolated or stuck in survival mode, our approach to diversity was little more than tokenism, our images of God's church were weary, our structures no longer sustained us, and our concept of region was of a distant, impersonal, centralized office disconnected from individuals and congregations. We longed for healing, new life and a creative new vision for a new day. We needed to rediscover our collective calling to live as people of the living God, as members of the Body of Christ and as a community of the resurrection life and the reconciling ministries of Jesus Christ.

Today, Rocky Mountain Christian Church is a dynamic and diverse web of relationships committed to multiple and varied ministries of justice and compassion. We are home to people of all colors, cultures, ages, economic backgrounds, theologies, and sexual orientations, bound together not by a unified ideology or background but by our common journey as disciples of Jesus Christ, knowing that God exists not simply in places of peace founded on uniformity, nor ultimately in the rule of a single dominant voice, but in those places where we seek to love within the uncertainties and differences of our humanity. We are ever learning to be open to one another, seeking to break down barriers that threaten to divide us, to sit in the spaces between us seeking solidarity in spite of difference, to listen to one another's needs and aspirations, to care for and encourage one another, to hold each other accountable in love and respect, to support one another's spiritual growth, and to make tough and innovative choices together in a time of rapid and unprecedented change. Out of our diversity and our solidarity, we listen together for those places of oppression, discrimination, exclusion and suffering where our voices, our gifts, and our actions can share the good news, cultivate equality, address systemic injustice, model mutuality, and offer hope and compassion.

To support us on this journey of discovery and service, we work through a living, malleable, adaptive regional structure, and with a Regional Ministry Team that brings specific gifts for specific ministries.

### **Our Regional Structure**

Our old structure was built around a centralized hub of Regional Office, Regional Minister, and Regional Board and tasked primarily with the maintenance of the established organization. As long as everyone depended on this regional hub to work miracles through old models, there was no way for effective, innovative, shared ministry to take place. Furthermore, rooted in the knowledge that we worship a living creator God and minister in a time of rapid and persistent change, we recognized the need for an adaptive regional structure engaged in an ongoing, creative process of change, growth and renewal. Based on decentralization and adaptation, our new structure is organic, flexible and communal, a partnership between individuals, congregations and the Regional Ministry Team and Board, all turning to one another for help and support.

In order to facilitate this new approach, we adopted a streamlined structure with four Core Values and three Core Ministries. The Core Values are **Diversity, Communication, Innovation, and Empowerment**. The Core Ministries are **Congregational Life, Ministerial Life, and Regional Life**. Through these Core Values and Core Ministries we are committed to creating and sustaining healthy, educated and connected congregations and clergy, and regional relationships rooted in deep spirituality, theological exploration, reconciliation, and mission and justice work.

Those ministries under the old structure that remained fundamental, such as search and call, received attention and revitalization, and many new ministries were given shape and form and the energy to flourish. Some of the things we have implemented or experimented with are:

### Congregational Life

- a region-wide evaluation of our buildings and our demographics and the creation of a comprehensive plan addressing the interrelated issues of new church development, stewardship of resources, growth, and transformation
- the planting of eight congregations varying in size, location, and ethnicity, each with strong regional support and support from at least one local congregation
- using the website as a place where Elders can speak to other Elders in the region, Board chairs to other Board chairs, deacons to deacons, youth leaders to youth leaders, etc.
- pairing sister-churches for ongoing mutual support and relationship building
- linking congregations with particular strengths or spiritual gifts with congregations who might benefit from that expertise or insight
- creating support networks for churches facing similar crises or opportunities
- a web-based resource library (like Craigslist) for sharing educational materials and music
- the creation of a network of technologically minded individuals helping congregations set up their own email databases, web sites, and power point systems
- an Education and Training team to work with congregations on specific topics for twenty-first century ministry in areas such as worship, theology, justice, conflict, stewardship, evangelism, mission and ethics

### Ministerial Life

- the establishment of a curriculum for intentional mutual care and shared wisdom among all clergy, those serving in local congregations, those in specialized ministries and those in retirement
- regular retreats for clergy, led by local and national Disciples pastors and scholars and by ecumenical leaders, a place to encounter cutting edge resources and current theological discussions
- new approaches to licensing and the development of a program to take theological, spiritual and practical education to the laity of our congregations
- review of standing procedures for clergy and implementation of electronic filing system
- a mentoring system for all seminary students, newly ordained ministers, ministers new to the region and licensed ministers, and for the calling forth of new pastoral leaders, as well as a support system for ministers transitioning into retirement
- a review of our search and call process with the goal of attracting the highest quality of pastors to hear God's call to locate in this region

### Regional Life

- the creation of multiple forms of communication in order to reach as many people as possible in as many ways as possible:
  - traditional mailings
  - an improved, comprehensive, user-friendly, interactive website with links to all congregational websites and to partner web sites including the General Church
  - email notifications using regularly updated databases containing all clergy – ordained, licensed, active, retired, specialized, congregational, senior and associate, Board and Elder chairs or equivalent, youth leaders, and church administrators

- direct forms of communication such as Twitter and Facebook
- enhanced contact through Skype, teleconferencing, conference calls and webinars
- the addition of bilingual communiqués and links
- the creation of a group of Regional Elders gifted for ministries of listening and for communicating information, care, and attention
- using an Outdoor Ministries model for building regional relationships among all age groups: re-visioning Men's and Women's ministries to meet diverse needs across generations and cultures; the creation or enhancement of alternative camp and retreat ministries to families, singles, seniors, musicians, and other groups with various affinities; the creation of interest groups in areas such as literature, meditation, the arts, outdoor activities, liturgy, theology, justice, etc.; the creation of a camp and conference alumni group for continuing relationships and dialogue beyond the camping years
- the enhancement and creation of region-wide mission trips and service projects, and educational tools to raise awareness about local, national and global justice issues and how individuals and congregations can get involved
- a network of individuals and groups committed to praying for the relationships and ministries of the region, with a prayer page on the website
- the establishment of a Spring Feast, replacing Regional Assembly, to include a service day at a church in need, a worship service, a celebration of our ministries, an articulation of, and recommitment to, the theological vision of the region, space for real, intentional, intergenerational conversation, and a meal that might range from a potluck to a barbeque to a black-tie affair
- providing qualified childcare, and, where appropriate, the involvement of our children and our youth, at all region-wide events and involving youth in planning for these events
- shared office space with several congregations around the region contributing to decentralization and planning for a regional retreat center that can belong to everyone in the region and double as additional regional office space
- using technology to involve as many people as possible around our large region, including youth, in dialogue and planning, while reducing expensive, time consuming travel
- working in cooperation with bordering regions and ecumenical partners to create connections between neighboring congregations in remote locations and to establish collaborative inter-regional, inter-denominational local and global ministries

### **Our Regional Ministry Team**

Today, instead of one Regional Minister, we have an intentionally diverse team of ministers, with the combined expertise and theological and pastoral acumen to lead the region in dynamic and innovative ways. Our three ministry positions are:

- **Minister of Congregational Life** – responsible for the care, connectedness and transformation of congregations and for innovative new church development
- **Minister of Vision, Oversight and Pastoral Care** – responsible for fostering a creative theological vision, overseeing the Order of Ministry and personnel, caring for the region in times of crisis or conflict, and creating vital connections to General Church ministries, and to local, global, and ecumenical ministries. of justice, mission, evangelism and service

- **Minister of Regional Life** – responsible for outdoor ministries, camps, conferences, retreats, and all region-wide education and events, and for resource development necessary to maintain these programs

To support the structure and ministry team we have three administrative positions:

- **Communication and Technology Officer** – responsible for establishing and maintaining web site, email data bases, and related equipment, and for all region-wide communication
- **Financial Officer**
- **Administrative Secretary** – responsible to the three Ministers

This model divides the disparate regional duties in such a way that each minister's gifts can be maximized and each aspect of regional work can flourish. The model also values a team approach which suits the decentralized and adaptive structural model we adopted for the region.

### **Conclusion**

These changes have been a process requiring our time, our energy and our stewardship, and above all our trust in the grace and direction of God. In October of 2009 we began a search and call process for a creative and appropriate ministry and staff to make the organizational transitions we envisioned. In 2010 we held our inaugural Spring Feast, a day of repentance, healing, hope, prayer, and theological and strategic reflection culminating in a sense of unity of purpose and vision. From there we entered a period of transition, engaging our strategic plan and the necessary development and stewardship work to make our vision possible.

As we celebrate these past ten years we continue to live in hope that confessing our brokenness and living towards a brighter vision is an ongoing, creative, cyclical process that is at once messy and transformational. We celebrate that we have a shared story stretching back to our grandparents and great-grandparents who built our churches brick by brick and person by person, stretching back through trailblazers, advocates, prophets, and keepers of tradition, and stretching far into the future of our children and their children who will build things and think things and dream of things beyond our imaginations.

Thanks be to the living God, the God of creation, the God of time, the God of us all, who opens us to new worlds and new possibilities. Thanks be to Jesus the Christ who guides us on our journey and to the Holy Spirit who empowers us for our ministry.