



GREAT RIVER REGION-2024



A FUTURE STORY

DISCIPLES MAKING IT HAPPEN

THE GREAT RIVER REGION IN 2023

ALICE'S NOTEBOOK

It is 2023, and Alice is a 22-year-old anthropology major at Texas Christian University. Alice grew up in First Christian Church and was a product of the Region's youth and camping programs over the years. She is playing also with the idea of going into ministry.

In her senior year, Alice was invited by her professor to do a case study on an organization that has gone through significant change and improvement. The assignment was to name a group of people who have defied the current trends and how they got there.

Alice immediately thought about the Great River Region and their journey. She began to organize her interview schedule, and then began a trek across the region to discover how they did it. The following are entries from her journal.

APRIL 8, 2023—FCC, GULFPORT, MS

Today I attended two worship services and a Sunday school class. During the visit, I had three interviews with members of the congregation to see what they knew about the Region and how it related to their congregation.

Evelyn: Aged about 50, church member for 23 years.

Reports that FCC is a satellite church. Their church simulcasts sermons to some of the region's smaller congregations who cannot afford a full time pastor. These churches are led by pastors who receive training at the Institute. They lead worship every week and preach twice a month. FCC streams in their sermons twice a month. This provides worshippers a variety of preaching and gives the part time pastor more time to provide pastoral care rather than preparing a sermon. Evelyn is obviously proud of her church's ability to provide this kind of outreach to other Disciples in the region.

Nick: Aged mid 40's, church member for 5 years.

Reports that his kids, who are now teens, are engaged in Regional summer camps. He says that their kids used to have to travel outside of the region for camp, but after a couple of years of hard work the GRR has been able to provide camp within 200 miles of the church at another conference center. The GRR provides staff for the program. While the camps are small, and include a wide range of ages of campers, Nick reports that they have had a huge impact on his daughters. That

they can't wait to go, and that they learn so much more about what it means to be a Christian by participating. He also recalls his youth as a representative how hard it was to keep a camping program going without a Regional Associate.

Nick also reports that he was a little jealous of what his daughters were learning. He could see their faith deepening. He felt the church was providing great learning opportunities...but he relished the chance to expand his horizons and be challenged in his faith. That is when he discovered that the Region provided numerous community connection experiences. He began that journey by attending a leadership training at the Institute. This training helped him see how he could identify missional needs in the community around his church, and how he could ignite the passion of others around him to join him in making a difference in the community.

"The work we do is local, and done by the congregation. The GRR provides us with help in discovering HOW we can do it. They basically help us meld our passion with God's mission. I'm a very different Christian as a result of this."

Jon: Late 60's, church member for 5 years.

Reports that he began exploring Christianity after retiring. He had nominal church experience before that. Once retired, he wanted to make a difference with what was left of his life. He extolled his enthusiasm about his local congregation, its pastor, and programs. He added that when he read about a regional mission trip to Haiti he was all in. During that week in Haiti he met other newly retired people from around the region who shared his passion for helping others. They worked hard together that week in Haiti, helping with a well project in a rural area. After returning, the group has worked on local projects around the GRR, helping more of the rural congregations with building projects. He reports that he has never felt better about retirement.

At the conclusion of my day with First Christian, I noted that this was a healthy church, that was made stronger by its relationship to regional programming. While the church was leading in many areas, it found that its program life was enhanced by experiences they could not offer as an individual church. Thanks to a healthy Region, they were serving in more ways than ever, connecting people to God's mission.

APRIL 15, 2023—FCC, PINEVILLE, LA

This Sunday I attended the worship service in Pineville with about 35 other people. This is a smaller congregation that has struggled for survival periodically. Today, the church is still small, due to community dynamics, but there is a lot of spiritual growth happening in the congregation. I met with several members during the coffee hour.

- **Ted:** in his 70's, has been a church member for 50 years.

Ted reports having the longest tenure of any of the members of this church. Having worshipped here for so long, he felt he had achieved spiritual maturity. That was before he was invited to attend the Institute for lay leaders. This session was offered in partnership with Hope Partnership. He reports that he was thinking that this would be a typical event designed to teach people how to lead meetings. Boy was he wrong. Instead the group was exposed to new

prayer practices, and challenged to lead their congregations in spiritual grounding practices that were transformative.

Perhaps the thing that changed most for Ted was that he began listening to God, instead of telling God what was on his mind. Once he began opening his heart in that way, he also began to look at the community around him through God's eyes, and began to ask himself what God's mission was in that place. Ted reports that his leadership in the church has shifted significantly as a result.

- **Alice** a 30 something member of 10 years overheard this conversation and took me to a corner to add to Ted's report. She confided that Ted was something of an old curmudgeon. "He was that old guy that always stood in the back and said 'that will never work' yet never offered any help. I can attest that this has been life changing for Ted and I have to say for me as well. When Ted came back, I saw a Christian who was refocused on his faith. Well, if that old dog could change his tricks then I thought I could too. I've always loved my church, but the Institute has done things for us we couldn't have done for ourselves. You need that outside voice to challenge you once in a while."
- **Ben** is a 60-year-old who has been a member for 20 years. He is the technology coordinator for the church. During the past 5 years, the church has added monitors to the sanctuary, and the church live streams preaching from Gulfport FCC. "We only have a part time pastor, and he does a great job preaching—but he is only part-time and needs a weekend off once in a while. So...we lead worship, sing our hymns, and at the appointed moment we switch to the sermon from Gulfport."

Ben gave credit to the Region for providing help that helped him do the technical work to get the systems on-line and working. They now use the monitors for video clips, pictures, sermon enhancement and song leading. "It is like we are now in the computer era!"

- **Greta:** a very happy 60+ woman. She sings in the choir, and sings all of the time. When I met her she was humming Blessed assurance, and then broke into her own version which I quickly wrote down:

**Blessed assurance, your church won't die!
We care too much to sit idly by!
We have resources, like distance preaching
Sister churches can partner, it's our yearning.**

**This is our story, to help you along
Working together, we cannot go wrong
This is our story, to help you along
Working together, your church will be strong!"**

While the church is small, I discovered a congregation where people were hopelessly in love with God and seeking to be a part of His mission. They did not apologize for being small. They reported that the community looks at them differently now, and that visitors are increasing (several joining this year). While an older congregation in a small town, I felt like this would be a place where I would be welcome. This is a church who really believes that all are welcome – that “All means All.”

APRIL 22, 2023—FCC, NORTHWEST ARKANSAS

First Christian has been serving this community for 60 years. 10 years earlier, the church had a divisive pastor and the church split following an involuntary termination. The congregational leaders doubled down on trying to revive its old programs despite being much smaller, and spent down most of the church's reserves. They are now in Search and Call with the Region, and wondering about what is next.

- **Harold** is a 60-year-old who has been a part of the church for 15 years. He was chair of the congregation when the split occurred. He reports that he almost left the church. “I never saw so many mean spirited Christians in one place. I just wanted to scream ‘Can’t we all just get along?’ I have to admit, I was angry at people, and angry at God for putting me in this position. I was really mad at the Pastor. We were fractured. Little money. No mission. Worse yet, we were drifting from God.”

“The first thing I did was call the Regional Minister. Nadine was out here within a week and met with our board. It was amazing watching how she transformed this anxious group of angry and hurt Christians away from our fear—towards trusting God again to move us in the right direction. She got us engaged in conflict management with resources the region had screened—and they were really helpful.”

“After we worked through the conflict, we put things in place to ensure we wouldn’t get in that fix again. One of our biggest problems was that we had gone outside of the Regional system to call our last pastor. That is what got us in the fix in the first place.”

Harold then outlined how they put their profile together and sent it out to Search and Call. There was a problem however since most clergy knew what happened to the last pastor and many were reluctant to consider serving their church.

“That is when we decided to partner with another regional partner who helped us develop our ministry plan. They helped us redevelop our leadership while organizing our future story. Once we added that plan to our profile, we had a lot of pastors interested in serving us.”

Harold stated that the church has called a new pastor and eagerly awaiting their arrival. “It is different this time” he said. “This time, we know where we are going and called a leader who has skills to get us where God is calling us, rather than just finding someone who can preach.”

I regret that I didn’t get to visit more people since Harold was so talkative. It was obvious in my visit though that this church was in high spirits. The building was being cleaned, the Pastor’s study was being readied for a new pastor. The church did not resemble any of the anger or fear Harold suggested was there early on. I couldn’t help but feel the Region had made a big difference here.

Today I visited the Regional office to meet the staff and learn about their journey from their perspective.

- **Wendy Paquette** is Regional Administrator. She has served the region longer than anyone. Wendy reports that there were significant changes in the Region once Rev. Dr. Nadine Burton was called. She saw there was a real shift from organizational work towards trying to connect congregations to each other in a way that allowed them to strengthen each other.

She reports that they were really short staffed compared to previous years—but they were not short on spirit—and that they worked together as a team, committed towards serving God, through congregations. Wendy also reported that her job had shifted. “We were so short staffed, I had to do the program work for the Regional Women. I was really glad when I finally was able to shift that to our Associate RM. “She was able to get some classes in Social Media and was now working to help keeping people connected through social media and other technology.

“I think another big shift is how we do our work together. I can remember years ago, we would have meetings or events...and we segregated ourselves. We would segregate by race, or by state, or by men or women, or youth...We don’t tend to do that as much anymore. It doesn’t matter what kind of event it is, a Clergy Care Group, Board meeting, planning team, or a work trip...we look like one church now.”

I thanked Wendy for all of her years of service...and noted that she teared up a little as she reflected on all the progress she had seen on something she loved so dearly.

- **Rev. Dr. Nadine Burton** is a 20 something Regional Minister. Known for her passion for God, and her heart for justice, Nadine has now served the Region for the past 7 years. I shared with Nadine the comments I had heard from my interviews, and she was humbled and grateful for the chance the Region has had in making a difference in congregational life.

I asked Nadine what she thought made the biggest difference in their Region. After she thought for a while, she offered several ideas.

- 1- For one, when we think of being church, we think about more than just the four walls of our church building. Instead, we now think of the Region, the General Church, and the Ecumenical Church as the body of Christ. The biggest shift in our congregations is moving away from thinking of our churches as a church for “us” to being a church for God’s mission. It sounds simple...but it is a huge shift. People in our churches are no longer asking each other what they want to do, but asking God how God wants to connect us to mission.
- 2- I think another big change is in our leadership. We no longer limit our thinking to just the people in the room. We have learned to reach out and develop partnerships throughout the entire church that can help us out. We don’t have to keep a huge staff...just a smart one.

- 3- Technology was a huge leap for us. We are now the most technologically wired region in the whole church. The boundaries that used to separate us by geography no longer really exist...and I think we are thinking of ourselves as one Region now finally, the Institute was a crucial development. We realized if our churches were going to be successful, we need to develop great leadership. Our biggest investment is in leader development, and the Institute allows us to do that. We offer classes for lay and clergy alike, that are high quality and transformative. We wouldn't be able to do that without our Program Coordinator. She has a gift for discovering resources that help us all grow, and then making them available for others. We have webinars, retreats, clergy groups supporting each other, and special interest groups. Every week, we have some sort of offering to help people ALL across the Region."

Nadine said the acronym she uses to help the Region remember its mission is: **GLow**

G – We Are Grounded Spiritually

L – We Love each other 500 miles and Beyond

O – We Organize ourselves for ACTION..." we don't just talk about things...we do them!"

W – We Work in Communities Together

- **The Associate Regional Minister** is a 40 Something person who works full time for the Region. (Yet to be named) She has been working on the staff now for 3 years.

She reports that she has a wide range of program development that she is engaged in at this time. It includes coordinating the robust camping programs at three sites within the Region. She works at training staff, coordinating with retreat centers, and promoting camp for children and teens throughout the Region. "I love this work; we can really make a difference in the lives of kids who are at the most formative time of their lives." She also coordinates volunteers who work with youth in between camping seasons. They usually have a mid-winter retreat gathering for the entire Region that is a blast.

She also coordinates the Institute. This runs leader development programs throughout the year...usually at a central location, sometimes in different venues. Some of these programs include: Boundary Training, Reconciliation Training, Courses on Theology, Spirituality (contemplative prayer and practice). She partners with the General Church, utilizing services from the Christian Church Foundation, Disciples Home Missions, Disciples Women, Church Extension, Hope Partnership, and the Pension Fund.

By putting together a rigorous calendar, using technology and church buildings around the Region, it is easy to see how the Great River Region is now the most resourced Region in the denomination.

I left the meetings with Regional staff after lunch. They talked about the financial struggles they face, but churches were committing themselves to this common ministry. When Southern CC closed several years ago, the assets totaled \$350,000 and were given to the Region which leveraged that gift into providing annual budget support which pays a portion the Associate RM salary. Churches increased their giving to the DMF because they could see the benefit to their congregations...and because they could see it would bless others.

Of all the organizations that have transformed...truly this is one of the best stories ever!

CAPACITY IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STORY

Goal #1: To develop transformational Clergy Leaders who foster good collegial relationships and teach each other.

A Transformational leader is a person who can inspire a group of volunteers to do more than they ever imagined. This is different from calling leadership that “manages” good congregations, but persons who can help congregations adapt to this new period of ministry.

Regions can have profound influence on the type of leaders it calls through the search and call process. It can empower transformational leaders through training, resourcing and strong peer group relations. The region can also be helpful to congregations in the Search and Call process look at their candidates through different lenses. In order to do so, consideration of the following capacities would be recommended for the region to discuss:

Implications:

- Development of the INSTITUTE with an Associate Regional Minister as Director
- Development of formal/informal Peer Groups and providing training and resourcing for group leaders (Possibly connecting with Hope)
- Creating an atmosphere for continuing education so that Clergy are always growing. This atmosphere can also foster the concept that we are in ministry together with clergy around the region, eventually eliminating the notion that a Pastor stands alone.
- Search and Call clarity to incoming candidates that this is a connectional region.
- Regional Minister, primary staff for S/C and clergy development.

Adaptive Skills to develop:

1. The continued development of clergy will make the largest difference in the quality of the Disciples witness in the GRR. Clergy are often eager learners, who are hampered by their ability to pay more tuition, or high fees for events. Congregations need to discover that by supporting the Region, they are supporting the development of their pastor.
2. Clergy are required to take courses in Boundary Training, and Anti-Racism, Pro-Reconciliation training. These are proven development courses that Region’s offer that address some very serious issues facing the church today. When these courses are done poorly, or half-hearted by a busy staff, they become a phenomenal waste of everyone’s time. Providing an Associate RM who can take the time to get these events up and running is essential.

3. Another proven developmental process is for clergy to meet with Peers on a regular basis. Studies show that clergy that participate in these groups out-perform their peers in every sector. Currently the Regional Minister is engaged in helping establish these groups—this is not sustainable however, and groups will need to take more responsibility for setting their organization and inclusion of new clergy.
4. Finally, the GRR has some very gifted pastors who can teach each other. A shift needs to take place in thinking that the Region has to provide all expertise. Region's that capture the giftedness of their clergy, and provide platforms for clergy to teach each other create chances for growth.

Technical Skill Development:

1. There is some skill in offering on-line resources that could be further developed in offering on-line events for both lay and clergy.
2. Development of a curriculum takes some intentional work. I would suggest review of the 15 areas of development suggested by the Commission on Ministry for commissioned minister development as a starting point.

Leadership Development:

1. The need for staffing and coordinating through an Associate RM
2. The ARM will need to receive some initial training in resource development and management.

Resources:

1. The Region will be encouraged to form a "NEW INIATIVE FUND". This fund of \$100,000 would be raised to help finance the development of all the ideas that emerged from this Future Story.
2. \$10,000 of this fund should be designated for the development of PEER Groups. Some of this can be used in training facilitators.
3. About \$20,000 of this fund could be used annually to support the salary of the ARM.
4. The Region would benefit from a Permanent Fund which would receive Funds from assets of congregations that close. This fund is described later in this report.

Goal #2: To facilitate and resource congregational program life through the development of the Institute

The Region has numerous talented pastors and leaders who excel in areas of ministry. By providing a network, the region can provide a conduit for inspiration and the development of leaders. Rather than the Region being the sole source for resourcing, this would require the discovery of skills and providing platforms for resourcing the program life of a congregation.

This could include standard church programming like Youth groups, children's ministries, or women's ministry groups. It could also include innovative program offerings that some churches in the region are already offering. This is clearly an arena where the close proximity of congregations could really benefit each other.

The program development network could also include bringing in occasional resource people from other units of the church like Global Ministries, Hope Partnership, the Disciples Church Extension Fund, the CC Foundation, or even the Pension Fund. These units offer workshops and services that could benefit a congregation's program life—and usually just need a platform.

The platform developed would include web-links for live streaming and archiving of the courses so that they can be accessed throughout the year.

Implications:

- Discovering congregations that excel in program areas and recruiting them to resource other congregations.
- Eliminating structures for ministry groups—but facilitating digital networking
- Providing at least 12 events annually for lay leader and clergy development in areas i.e.:
 - Youth Spiritual and relational development.
 - Young Adult Spiritual Development
 - Children Spiritual Development
 - Cong. Financial Development
 - Women’s ministries
 - Men’s ministries
 - Music Ministry
 - Senior ministries
- Camping program development including retreat
- New Staff position would also manage social media and resource platform

Capacities:

Adaptive:

1. Shift in thinking that the region has to be the sole provider of program resourcing for congregations.
2. Shift in thinking for congregational leaders to think about resourcing each other, rather than just serving their own congregation. This also involves the sharing of clergy time with the wider church to share their gifts and talents outside of the local congregation.
3. Platforms for delivery should rotate around the Region, which may require congregations to open their doors for other churches to participate.
4. Since events will be live-streamed and archived, success cannot be measured by participation at events.

Technical Skill Development:

1. A lot of the success of this process will be determined by the Network Coordinator. This staff person would need to develop the skills to gather information from congregations about programs and resources that would be of value to the entire region.
2. The network coordinator may have to develop the technical skills for linking congregations with digital resources to make workshops and program offerings archived, and live streamed for broader participation of leaders.

Leadership:

1. The Network Coordinator position is a new position. This staff position would likely be full-time and could be connected to the Social Media/Web Master position that would expand the duties of this person significantly.
2. The other reason for making this a full-time position is that the person in that seat needs to have the time to learn what congregations are doing, and evaluating the needs for program development in congregations.

3. This person would also have responsibility for the development of Peer Groups and leadership training.

Resources:

1. From the new initiative Fund, this initiative would receive \$10,000. This would be primarily for developing the web platform and live-stream capacities.

Goal #3: To redevelop congregations through strategic partnerships, and start new congregations.

Congregational development is very seductive work. At any one time a regional staff can be swamped with dozens of congregations that suddenly have great need for redevelopment or are in financial crisis. The results are often an over-taxed staff that can help with band aids instead of the concentrated work required to be effective, or trying to put a lot of congregations through programs that may or may not fit their needs.

There are significant changes that congregations need to make if they are to redevelop. Most congregations just want to believe if they get a good pastor or \$10,000 their church would revive again. What we learn over and over again is that these solutions only lead to short term gains. Unless we reorient the leadership of these congregations, they cannot achieve sustainability. New church work in the region has been fairly reactive. As congregations have come to the region seeking affiliation, the NCD committee has been responsive. However, due to lack of funds, the committee has been reluctant to pick targets and start intentional new starts.

The purpose of this goal is to give focus to the teams, and help provide concerted efforts. This will also benefit congregations who must commit up-front to receiving extra help from the region. We have learned that if services are offered for no charge, the congregation invests little into the process.

Implications:

- Consideration for integration with Hope services and resources (i.e. Leadership Academy/New Beginnings etc.) to share in service development Hope could invest in training local resource people.
- Redevelopment Congregations would be selected in a competitive manner and selected based on their passion for mission.
- New Church development. The region has few identifiable resources for new church development. The Foundation however could provide some impact in this arena. The Region would need to become proactive in naming sites and recruiting planters.

Adaptive Development:

1. Understanding that if your congregation is in need of intensive help, there may be fees involved because of the intensive use of regional resources.
2. Development of an application process for congregations seeking redevelopment, and a selection process for working with those congregations.
3. Existing congregations may need to consider other uses of their space to generate income.
4. Existing congregations need encouragement to open their doors for new and emerging Disciple congregations in their communities.
5. New church needs to become proactive by setting internal goals. A list of at least 6 "hot" targets should be developed as priorities for New Church development and a plan for allocating resources for a plant every 3 years.

6. Hope Partnership will provide help for the Regional Committee at no charge for new church development goals.

Technical Skill Development:

1. The Region has skilled people in this area around the Region, however the GRR has not engaged strategically in congregational development. The Region currently does not offer specific approaches that can be replicated with congregations around the region that have developmental needs.
2. Consideration of the development of a partnership with Hope would move the region quickly into a position for working directly with congregations in an integrated fashion (not a vendor fashion).

Leadership:

1. Either the ARM or Regional Minister would become primary contact for congregational developmental issues.
2. Hope would make an investment in training of that named person to ensure seamless delivery to GRR congregations.

Resources:

1. The New Initiative Fund would provide \$10,000 per year towards scholarships for congregations to engage in developmental services.
2. The Pentecost Offering would provide funding for New Church Development.

Goal #4: To seek Racial Reconciliation and justice and full participation of all churches in regional life.

Woody Allen once stated that 90% of success is just showing up. It is one thing to talk about our ideal of Christian Unity, it is another thing to live it out. The GRR has a deep sense and desire to live out the Disciple Value of Unity.

In a time when our nation has been marked by deep divides, the church can provide a counter-cultural view of what it means to be one by showing the world it can work across the many human constructs that divide us so deeply.

Reconciliation is not just about race, but how we divide ourselves geographically, by family composition, or sexual orientation. Disciples are a movement for wholeness in a fragmented age.

Implications:

- Digital network would need to be developed
- Since no organization can speak to ALL of the social justice issues of our time, a decision making process that would allow the Region to determine areas of focus.
- Freeing the Regional Minister to represent Disciples on the broader ecumenical and interfaith stage.

Adaptive Needs:

1. It is not clear to me if there is a process for naming issues the Region plans to address (there are so many needs). A process for naming issues for Regional response would foster healthy debate and learning. The Regional Assembly could be the platform for this kind of conversation.

2. There would be a need for setting ground rules for civil discourse.
3. It should be noted that there may be issues we disagree on; this would not preclude people from acting on their own conscious. The purpose of this kind of debate is to find our common ground.
4. Freeing Regional minister time and encouraging the Regional Minister to engage in interfaith and ecumenical partnerships around the region.

Technical Skill Development:

1. Discovery of places of potential partnership on social, interfaith and ecumenical circles.
2. Discovery of ground rules for civil discourse.
3. Review of the Regional Assembly process for resolutions, and encouragement of congregations to participate in naming issues of common concern.

Leadership:

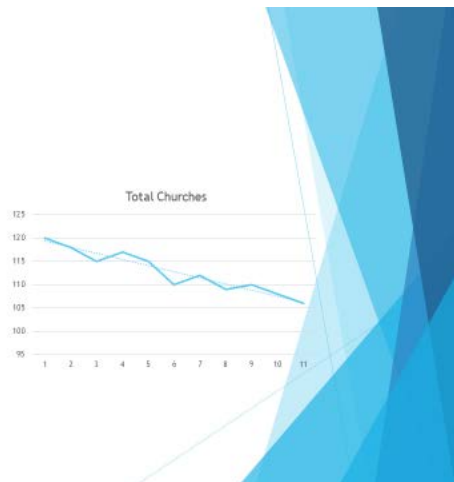
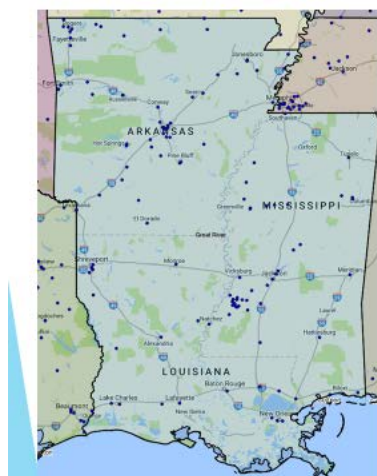
1. Often time's issues come up with little warning. The Executive team should be empowered to give permission for the region to utilize resources and encourage others to be active in social justice as needed.
2. Empowerment of the Regional Minister to "represent".

Resources:

1. There is a need to link the social justice initiatives to the website, and to keep those concerns at the front of regional partner's minds.
2. Development of links to other partners on the website to provide better cross fertilization of ideals associated with these issues.

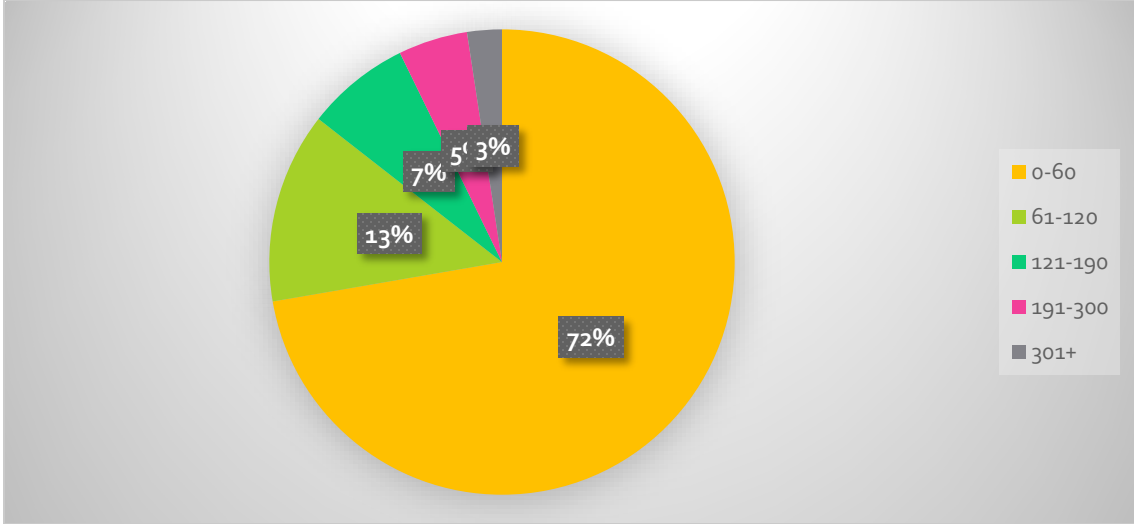
WHY WE THINK THESE GOALS ARE IMPORTANT

#1 - The region is declining in size, and not able to meet the congregational development issues with its current staffing. During the past 11 years we have dropped from 120 congregations to 108.

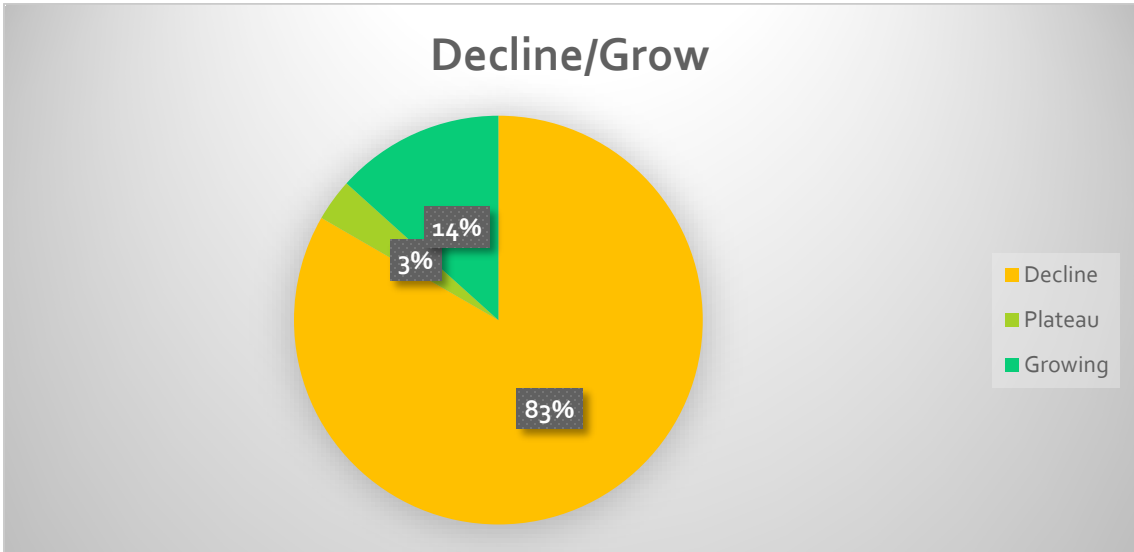


#2 Our congregations are small. 85% are struggling with sustainability—and need additional support in developing programs that meet the needs of their context.

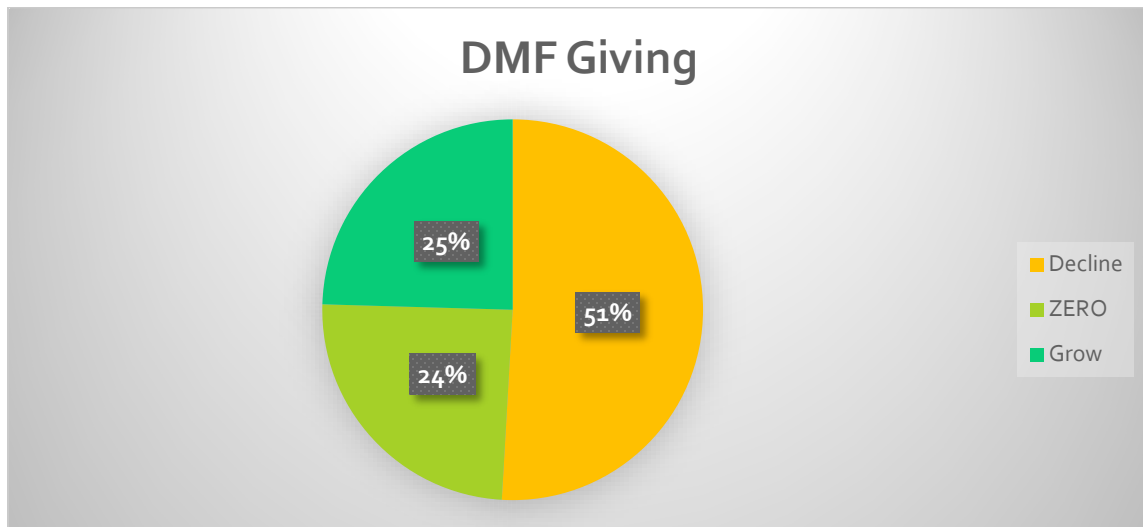
Congregations by Size



#3 83% of our congregations are in decline which indicates a need for deeper clergy development and support.



#4: Because of financial stress, congregations are not supporting DMF—even though robust fund support would provide resources that would help their congregation develop.



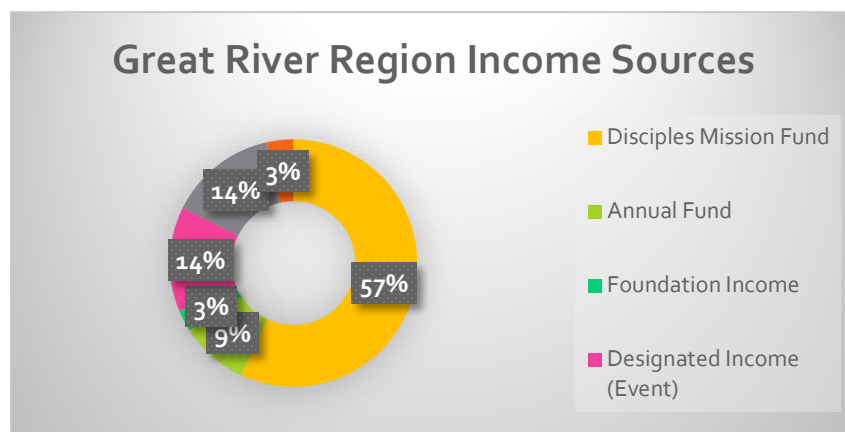
This contrasts the Great River Region:

- The Region's population has grown by 3.43% (now 10 million people)
- 357,000 new people have moved into the region over the past 7 years.
- 75% of the population is below 37 years of age.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS:

Regional Income: During the past decade, or perhaps longer, the Great River Region has been fighting a battle of attrition. This has forced the board to make difficult decisions along the way in order to balance the budget. Like a local congregation, it has cut all the fat out of the budget, to where it can no longer do more than the bare minimum. Its small staff is overworked, and the demands of serving congregations has grown exponentially. The Region has reached a tipping point unless congregations in the Region step up to the plate.

The Region is limited in its sources of income. As the chart below demonstrates:



Disciples Mission Fund: The Region receives a generous percentage of income from congregational gifts to the Disciples Mission Fund. This represents the largest source of income for the Region.

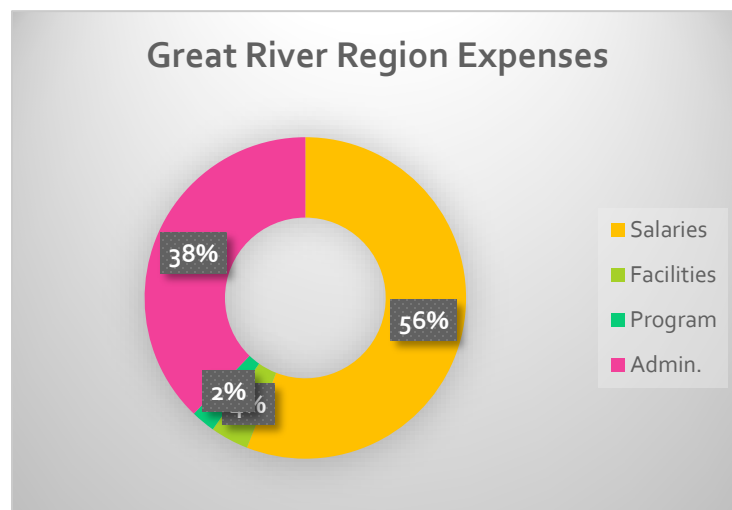
Annual Fund: Each year, individuals from around the Region contribute direct gifts to the Region which help support its annual budget.

Foundation Income: Some saints within the church have contributed permanent gifts to the church at large. These funds are invested, and the returns from those funds are distributed around the entire church. The GRR receives income from these large gifts people have made to the church, even though most of the donors did not live in the GRR.

Designated Income: is income derived from designated giving or event income given to the Region.

Special Offerings: When congregations contribute to the Christmas and Pentecost offerings, the region gets additional support.

Regional Expenses: The Region spends its funding in these categories:



Salaries: Includes benefits for 2 FT staff people

Admin: This is for travel, phones, computers, legal fees, and other essentials for operating a Regional Office and search and call resources.

Program: This is deliverables for Regional programs. Usually, any program generates enough income to cover the expense, this is all that was used for providing program to congregations. (Normally, a region would provide at least 13% of its budget in this area.)

Facilities: The Region has a sweet deal on its rent, and has been able to lower its facilities costs considerably.

This analysis proves that the Region is at a tipping point and has nothing to spend on deliverables, despite a staff and board that can see the potential of this region.

Staffing:

CURRENT	Title	PT/FT	For Consideration
Nadine Burton	Regional Minister	FT	No Change
Wendy Paquette	Reg'l Administrator/Disciples Women Coord.	FT	No Change
NEW	Associate Regional Minister	FT	Currently not funded

STRATEGIES FOR GETTING THERE FINANCIALLY

A. Develop a New Initiative Fund: Goal \$100,000

A direct appeal to individuals within the region to contribute above and beyond giving for a period of 3 years for the New Initiative Fund which would support the development of the Institute, camping programs and additional staff. This should be run like a capital campaign, with a campaign period in each congregation.

B. Develop a Permanent Fund and Policy for Closing Church Assets: Goal \$300,000

The Regional Board should give consideration for developing a policy for churches that close and how to handle their assets. The Foundation may be of help in developing this policy. We would hope that it would include distribution to the Regional church development initiatives, capital for new church development, but not support Regional operational budget since this is capital. This fund once up to \$300,000 would produce about \$10-\$12,000 annually.

C. Challenge each other to support DMF

The Region's best opportunity for financial growth is to challenge congregations to grow in their DMF giving. According to Yearbook reports, there is capacity for congregations to participate in this offering. Participation would benefit congregations in their program development.

Closing Note:

It has been an honor for Hope Partnership to work with the GRR on this plan. It has been my pleasure to work with a small group who got up early, and met on-line over the past two months. These dedicated people did this work while driving to work, caring for kids, caring for parents all while working in demanding church situations. Great folks...thank you David Britt, Megan Craven, Laura Cosgrove, and Nadine Burton.

It has also been insightful working with the GRR Board. Over the past 20 or so years, it has been my pleasure to work with this board off and on with a number of issues. I cannot put my finger on it, but there is something really different about this board, and their spirit. I cannot tell you what it means to be able to work with people dedicated to your working life together.

Hope has done this work for very little cost to the Region because of our affinity with your Regional Minister. It is our hope that our working together will give us opportunities to partner with the Region and congregations for Ministry services in the future, and that you will see us as a resource for ministry and building planning.

*Yours in Christ,
Rev. Dr. Rick Morse
VP of Hope Partnership*