

The Christian Church of Mid-America: A Region Re-Envisioned

CCMA Transformation Team Proposal for Council of Areas Consideration and Approval

The primary mission of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America is to help congregations be faithful, effective, and sustainable in the mission to which they are called. There are over 250 existing congregations, organized into nineteen congregational/clergy Clusters, and four existing geographical Areas in covenantal relationship with one another, being Church together. CCMA is re-envisioned to increasingly become a network of relationships that includes broader and deeper participation of congregations, ministers and laity in congregational Clusters and learning communities, transcending current Area boundaries and structures.

The four Area Ministers will become a Regional Ministry Team, with one of the Area Ministers becoming convener/coordinator for the Team. The Team will eventually assume the necessary duties of the Regional Minister while each team member will continue to be geographically deployed and responsible for:

- The effective **shepherding** of congregations, clergy, and Clusters in their respective Areas, ensuring pastoral care for clergy and their families; celebration of special events such as installations and ordinations; ministries for clergy and congregational effectiveness and sustainability; assistance with mediating congregational conflict; facilitation of search and call processes; and other needs as identified;
- Helping **connect** individuals and congregations to the whole Church through affinity groups, geographical gatherings, mission opportunities, and other networking groups and events; and
- Helping in particular ways with regional **administration**, coordination of effective communication, Commission on Ministry needs and programs, representation in denominational and ecumenical arenas, and identifying other needs.

In order for the four-member Regional Ministry Team to effectively facilitate these functions, the work will increasingly be done through trained and accountable networked teams, task forces, and working groups as appropriate (thus building up the capacity of our congregational leaders) while each Regional Ministry Team member also continues to fulfill important sacramental roles.

As the transition occurs from the current Region of four Areas to the re-envisioned Region of Clustered and networked congregations and leaders, the following will unfold:

- An Implementation Team will be developed including each Area Minister, one additional representative from each Area, and two to four representatives from the Region at large to assure adequate representation of race, ethnicity, and gender.
- Initially, Area Boards, budgets, and funding systems will remain in place, and Areas will continue to elect representatives to the Council of Areas which will provide governance and oversight for the transition to the new system.
- Area budgets will initially be compensated from Regional funds for work individual Area Ministers assume (with Area Board permission) from the former "Regional

Minister's portfolio"; and the Area Board will determine how to allocate the funds so received. Eventually there will be a unified Regional budget and a gradual structural shift from Areas to Clusters (on a schedule each individual Area deems appropriate) in order to create a closer link between the congregations and the work of the Region and to eliminate the duplication inherent in a Region-Area system.

- Initially, each Regional Ministry Team member (the Area Ministers) will be accountable to both their Area Board and to the Council of Areas (with regular reviews by both), with the Regional Ministry Team making assignments from the former "Regional Minister's portfolio," with the approval of the Council of Areas, taking into account the gifts, skills, and interests of the individual Area Ministers and the availability of time and energy (as determined by each Area Board).
- Current Regional staff positions (except that of bookkeeper) will be dissolved as soon as practical; Regional commissions, constituencies and committees (except the Commission on Ministry and the Budget Committee) would be put on hold as appropriate and their work gradually shifted to trained and accountable networked teams, task forces, and working groups as appropriate. The Mid-America Foundation Team will remain in place. The Implementation Team will establish (with Council of Areas approval) teams as needed to consider grant requests of Regional funds (such as new church, vital church, PR/AR, etc.) and consider any needed staffing for constituency groups (women, youth, racial ethnic groups, etc.).

Rationale:

- One goal of a re-envisioned Region is to streamline and enhance communication by eliminating multiple layers of organization. Congregations will have many more opportunities to develop their ministries and mission through enhanced communication.
- Further encouragement and support for Christian mission/ministry in the congregational setting comes from a renewed focus on supporting and developing each Cluster. As missions/ministries are developed through networks and possibilities are communicated and made available each Cluster will have access to support through a Regional Ministry Team member or networked task group. This opens opportunities for varieties of missions addressing local needs as well as global outreach efforts.

Assumptions:

- The church membership of the nineteen Clusters currently organized in the Region may remain as is, or may be reorganized wherever a change represents improvement in affinity or communication. Reorganized Clusters may cross former Area boundaries.
- In every such reorganization of Clusters, effected congregations will be at the table and participate fully in the conversations and decisions.
- Churches within Clusters will be encouraged to cooperate in exploring mission and developing discipleship and to support one another in fellowship. A Cluster might sometimes be working in tandem with another Cluster or with one or two congregations in another Cluster so that even the participating congregations in a Cluster might vary from mission to mission. (This kind of relationship among congregations is already in existence, i.e. several congregations in the Ozark Lakes Area are in different Clusters but are supporting one another in revitalization efforts.)

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