



Roxburgh Missional Network
catalyst for missional transformation

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana

Report to the Board

August 09

Section 1: Background

The Christian Church in Indiana (CCI) recognizes the need for significant adaptive change to occur in its life and mission. It seeks to respond to a spirit of restlessness among its people and leaders by discerning fresh ways to engage the radically changed context of mission and ministry in Indiana. Such adaptive change will require risk and bold initiative shaped by the courage and imagination that characterized Disciples in their beginnings. Furthermore, there is also a recognition across the Region that such transformative innovation cannot be created by a few who determine fresh vision and new strategies; it will require the engagement of the whole Region, in its people, clergy, Boards and staff coming together in dialogue and experimentation to call forth the adaptive change many seek.

The Board and staff of CCI recognize that any movement of transformation will require both a partnership across the Region as well the skills of outside eyes. To this end, the Board acquired the services of Alan Roxburgh to assist them identify the challenges that will need to be address and the processes required to innovate adaptive transformation across the Region. Dr Roxburgh worked with Regional Staff (Carolyn Reed and Dean Phelps) and a cluster of congregations in a pilot project of missional innovation. An outcome of this pilot has been the recognition that for any transformation initiative to effect the Region in a lasting way requires an engagement of the Region as a whole system. Without this intentional focus on the Region as a

whole the numerous initiatives of Regional staff and local churches will not result in a sustained transformation that innovates adaptive mission and ministry among the churches into the future. Episodic initiatives and projects, no matter how good they may be in themselves, will not create the transformation sought by the Region and its churches.

The Proposed Process

It is in this context the Board and staff decided to work with Alan Roxburgh in designing a Regional transformation process. The process outlined in this Report is comprised of the following elements:

1. Work done by the Consultant in order to prepare this Report for the Regional Board Retreat (Camp Camby, September 1 - 2, 2009)
2. Recommendations to the Board for initiating a transformation process across the Region.
3. Ongoing work with Regional staff.

A. Preparations for the Regional Board Meetings - September 09.

In June and July selected members of the CCI were interviewed by the consultant. CCI Regional staff provided the names of approximately eighteen people chosen to be representative of the Region including both clergy and laity. Each was contacted by Rick Spleth and a letter of invitation was sent by Alan Roxburgh along with the questions that would be asked. A majority of those contacted responded and thirteen interviews were conducted, each approximately one hour in duration. Each person interviewed was assured confidentiality and that the Report to the Board would not contain any specific references to individuals or their comments. This is a report of the Consultant and represents his listening to these interviews and assessment of the challenges facing the Region. The

interviews along with the information from a series of documents¹ as well as the consultants previous work with staff and Regional churches form the basis of this Report.

B. Recommendations to the Board

See Section Three below.

C. Work with Regional staff.

The Region recognizes and celebrates the high calibre of their staff and the critical role the staff needs to play in an adaptive process of Region-wide transformation. Adaptive change presumes the need to develop skills and capacities not always part of the basic tool kit clergy and denominational executives are given in their training or bring into their leadership experience. Further, mid-level judicatories, such as this Region, usually recruit staff to carry out pre-established roles within programs and portfolios that have been in operation for some period of time. This usually results in denominational staff working, with ability and skill, within assigned areas of responsibility and expertise. In adaptive change these established categories of staff function are insufficient to cultivate new forms of innovation in the system. Regional transformation will require equipping staff in the frameworks and capacities of adaptive work, learning how to function beyond prescribed roles as part of a high functioning team.

On this basis the Consultant recommended staff engage in two distinct, but interconnected, processes to provide them with a requisite understanding of

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Christian Churches Indiana 2008 Annual Report
Constitution and Bylaws of the CCI
Staff Visioning - Fall 2008
Minutes April 2008 Board
Report of the CCI to the Board of CC US and Canada 2009
Report of the Regional Church Study Committee

skill sets and team work as preparation for decisions the Board might make at its September meetings. These processes are:

1. Executive Leader 360

This 360 assists each member of the Regional Staff to identify specific areas where he/she will develop skills and capacities in adaptive leadership. The process involves the following steps:

April –	Webinar introduction to the Exec 360
May-June	360 sent out to all those completing it on the execs Personal 360 Report for each staff member Feedback Seminar for the staff and description of next steps
July–Nov	Phone coaching with each Exec

2. Executive Team 360

This 360 assists the staff to understand and address its own roles and identities in the innovation of an action-learning organization which will necessarily involve issues of prioritizing, setting common goals, working on a common set of activities and basic time management. The 360 will also provide the basis for staff learning how to become a highly effective team working cooperatively in actioning the directions set with Regional Board. The process involves the following steps:

August	Executive Team 360
Sept	Staff Team retreat working with Team 360
Sept-Oct	Team development in tandem with Board recommendations

Section 2: Listening Interview Report June - July 09

A. Background

The purpose of the Region-wide interviews was twofold. First, listening to a representative group of the constituency through a set of open ended questions intended to invite reflection from respondents. The interview process recognize Regional transformation comes from among the people rather than the analysis of experts. Theologically, the interviews are based on the conviction that God is already at work in the Region and part of our work is attending to what God might be doing among the people and the churches. Second, the interviews address the basic nature of a transformation process by communicating to the system that the Region is taking seriously what the people have to say. Listening is a critical element of adaptive change because adaptation is not the work of experts or plans from within a small group of leaders. Adaptation is the work of the people; it emerges from among the people and requires a new level of listening and communication within an organization.

B. Interview Process & Questions

The process was quite straightforward. Each person interviewed received the same set of questions (see below) followed by an hour long phone interview. The consultant took detailed notes of responses. Many questions led to further and deeper reflection on the life of the Region by those interviewed. The questions asked were as follows:

Interview Questions

1. Describe your role(s) and relationship(s) in the Region.
2. Describe those times when you've seen the Region working at its best.
3. From your perspective what are the primary challenges facing:
 - Local churches in the Region
 - Pastors and church leaders in the Region
 - The Region and its staff
4. How would you assess the initiatives of the Region over the past five years in terms of addressing the needs for transformation?

5. How would you imagine the role of this Region into the future?
6. What other observations would you like to make that might assist me in understanding this Region and the challenges it might need to address?

C. Detailed Report

1. When is the Region at its Best?

In the interviews ministry staff score high marks for professionalism and the high quality with which they run the established programs of the Region. The characterization of the Regional and its staff that emerged was of a *Program Resourcing Agency*. The programs and resources mentioned more than once included: Youth, Children, Camping and Women's programs. Each was as an illustration of the Region working at its best. Alongside these categories was that of Search and Call, the LEAD program, Regional Assemblies and the more recent resourcing of churches in the area of finances. There was also a recognition that the Region does well when it mobilizes people in response to disasters and crisis.

Surprising to the Consultant were the number of people interviewed who responded with the phrase 'I don't know' to this question. They indicated a background awareness of what the Region was doing but seemed directly unaware or uninvolved in Regional activities and communication.

Region Seen as a Performative Organization

In summary, the Region is seen to be at its best when organizing and running established, expected programs, responding to others in need and brokering connections with local churches in terms of the above programs. In terms of denominational systems, the Region is understood as a well functioning *performative* system. This means the basic focus, direction and culture of the organization are directed toward maintaining and performing well within well established criteria of success and leadership function. In this Performative Zone the Region operates out of the organizational

structures, skills, and capacities that have been recognized to work well in those stable, predictable environments that shaped church life in the recent past. When a movement begins, as with the Disciples in the 19th century, its organizational life and culture is directed outward from itself by some form of mission into its context. This was the story of the pioneers of the Disciple's movement. Over time, movements learn to thrive and be successful in a certain context (America at the mid-point of the 20th century, for example) and embeds the structures, practices and habits of that time into its organizational structures and ways of life. The system then focuses on replicating and continually training people in the skills and capacities that made it successful. In this case, for example, the list of 'Region at its Best' is replicated in one Region after another across the country. This is indicative of a performative organization that has embedded a certain set of programs, skills and expectations across the whole country irrespective of regional differences. A primary characteristic of a performative organization is that its focus of energy has shifted. It no longer focuses on cultivating adaptive skills, rather, through its training institutions, Boards and leadership models, it works at transferring learned, performative skills to new generations of leaders. Hence the designation performative organization.

This is not a criticism but a recognition that those interviewed described CCI as a performative organization. Its organizational culture focuses on performing well what has been learned and proven to work. In this performative culture, the primary values are not innovation but protection of what exists through the skilled performance of regular patterns of habits and actions. Performative organizations thrive when the environment, or contexts, in which their churches are located change little and share common values with these churches. But when the culture and context begin to change, performative systems will flounder and lose the support of its constituency and may misdirect the organization. Performative organizations function best in stable, predictable environments; they are not organized to deal with discontinuous change. They require predictable, stable environments to thrive. They deploy tactics, programs, and techniques that improve what is already happening (better worship, preaching, small group

life, mission trips, etc.) but don't address the need for adaptive change. They resist change that requires them to shift significantly away from the habits, skills, and capacities that have brought success to this point.

Until the last quarter of the 20th century, the context of church life and leadership was one of relative continuity, predictability, and stability. Because the issues of change in the contexts of our churches are recent, most of the habits, experiences, and default positions of churches and their leadership are performative - designed to run denominational systems pretty much the way they have for the past forty or fifty years. Since the last decades of the 20th century the wider culture has been radically de-stabilized by forces of rapid, discontinuous change. The results are denominations, congregations and leaders struggling to find ways of engaging the new environment. They usually do so by working harder at all the programs and skills that brought success in the past while aware this approach is no longer producing the desired results. Some characteristics of a performative organization are:

1. Organizational culture has well-developed structures with clear lines of function, roles and expectations, rather than loose network of teams.
2. Leaders are professionals who tend to work only in an assigned area of expertise, as such they function in organizational silos rather than cross-discipline teams. Such leaders are certified by the denomination to do the performative work.
3. Planning from the center rather than "just-in-time" learning among the people. Planning, organization, and development flow outward from the center. Leaders view their job as first maintaining the system and that the best results come from a top-down planning that invites others in.
4. Specialization of roles and programs through professionalized, credentialed leadership is the norm.
5. Leaders are chosen on the basis of abilities to perform established roles.
6. In Performative systems all but those in executive positions lose a sense of overall vision of the organization. There ceases to be a shared vision but rather a set of documents that state vision and these have to be continually sold to the constituency because they are not in the DNA of the people.
7. Focus and energy is on managing current programs.
8. Formal groups, committees and meetings rather than high levels of informal social interaction. Communication is formalized, taking place

mostly through newsletters and information pieces from the center-out. It is not about just-in-time communication across the system but one-way information from committees and staff wanting people to be involved in programs and events.

9. Leaders believe that the sharing of information is communication.
10. Planning is based on the predictability of past results with an assumption the future will develop in much the same ways as things have in the past. Planning is about continuing the present culture into the future. It moves from center to periphery in a process where people agree or disagree by means of vote or financial support.

2. Challenges Facing the Churches, Leaders and Region

The next set of questions asked interviewees to identify current challenges they believe face a) local churches of the Region, b) the pastoral leadership, and c) the Region in terms of its organization and staff. Their assessments of the Region were sobering and challenging. Their collective responses present a picture that shows people recognize that the performative nature of the Region as excellent and well served through a highly qualified staff, cannot be the basis of a hopeful future. On balance those interviewed believe ***the Region faces a crisis of identity, credibility and direction that cannot be addressed by business as usual.*** There is a conviction that the Region and its staff must be willing to take significant risks to address the level of adaptive change required for the Region to work with its churches and leaders in a dramatically changed context of ministry.

Challenges Facing Churches:

i. Congregations and their Contexts

Congregations are perceived as having a difficult time adapting their ministries and internal cultures to the changing contexts of their communities and the peoples now living in their areas. It is felt that many aging congregations are reacting to the culture around them out of fear, anxiety and confusion. People in the congregations don't know what to do

in terms of engaging their contexts even when there is a desire to process ways of engagement.

Congregations no longer understand their communities and neighborhoods. Coupled with this is the sense that the internal structures of congregations, developed in a time when church was a far more natural part of the life of communities, have become impediments to mission and ministry. Structures are no longer working. People had a difficult time concretizing this observation but it was a strongly felt and expressed conviction that the ways Disciple life have been structured are not helping churches at this juncture.

ii. Congregations and Disciple Identity

The language of *identity* pervaded the interviews. People commented that as Disciples, we don't tell our story, we seemed to have lost connection with the memory of who we are as Disciples; there is a sense of a watering down of core narrative convictions, a loss of faithfulness to traditions and history as a movement. For some there is a fear Disciples are losing their sense of what it means to be faithful to the Gospel and what Jesus called them to.

A part of this connects with the first point in this section, the confusion and disconnect between a local church and its context. The changing nature of our society is contributing to a growing confusion about what the Disciples' story and convictions about the Bible mean for our day. It is this straining of relationship and changing of the social context that is partly responsible for precipitating an identity crisis with its resultant confusion about the nature of witness and ministry in a new context. Across the Region there is an underlying but often unspoken question of identity: *Who are we as a church?* It's sensed that a significant number of people across the Region still have a strong denominational identity (they believe in and want to belong to Disciples churches) but have lost an awareness of who they are in terms of founding stories and core theological/Biblical narratives. The result is the absence of a sense of what they exist for as Disciples. A people who have lost this level of identity don't evangelize and fail to grow as a movement.

A result of this identity drift is where congregations focus their energies and time. Overall, they're directing their energies, resources and focus toward their own local expression of church or networks that share their values and commitments. Some churches are growing and thriving in the midst of culture change but these tend not to view the Region as a source of partnering or resources. Many churches are decreasing in size; their anxieties are driving them into survival and maintenance modes. The overall result is that the Region is becoming increasingly optional for many churches and the core issue is that of identity. The identity question came up many times. ***People are asking: 'Who are we?'. The question is two sided. It represents for some a genuine desire to recover the story and discover fresh vitality as a movement; for others is it a sense that energy and capacity for mission and ministry are no longer located in the Region and its structures.***

iii. Congregations, Congregationalism and Denominations

It was interesting listening to the ways interviewees framed the issues of congregationalism and the Region. Some saw that across a spectrum from strong connection to the Region to strong commitment to the congregation the swing was definitely toward the congregation at the expense of the Region. Some of this was identified as a reflection of difficult economic times that cause congregations to turn in on themselves to manage minimal resources and look after their own. Sometimes its this response to declining membership and aging roles that cause a church to instinctively turn in on itself to conserve and, hopefully, survive. Some noted, along these lines, that in their own economic challenges, those times when the congregations of the Region came together have been reduced. The perception is that churches no longer connect outside of meetings of their clergy.

Current economic and social forces are putting huge pressures on congregations. The Disciples are congregationalist in structure and ethos. What they are experiencing is what is happening across most Protestant

denominations at this moment. The performative roles of denominations are proving more and more inadequate to address the challenges of mission and ministry with the result that congregations are defaulting to their congregationalism. Given the roots of the Disciples this is happening more powerfully and deeply than in other church systems.

Some of those interviewed believe that Disciples want to function within a movement that will require accountability and this basic default to congregationalism lies at the heart of the Region's current malaise. This reading can misdirect the Board and Region in terms of understanding the current situation. While congregationalism and autonomy are strong factors within the Disciples movement, it will be important to wrestle with the sources of the current attitudes and actions of congregations. It may be more helpful to understand the present situation as churches finding themselves caught in massive social and economic transformations at a time when the denominations and judicatories are continuing to offer performative leadership when adaptive risk taking is urgently required. The number of times the identity question was raised signals that people do not experience a sense of direction coming from the Region at a time of crisis in the congregations. The default to independence and autonomy is more about fear of loss on the part of some congregations or an intention to find ways of doing meaningful ministry for others rather than an ideological commitment to autonomy over against the importance of denominational systems.

Contrary to popular perception America is not in a post-denominational period of its history. The facts are that denominationalism in America is thriving not waning. The issues around decline and loss of congregational life in denominations cannot be simply explained in terms of broad generalizations such as the end of denominationalism. The facts do not support this conclusion. In a study funded by both Baylor University and the Gallup organization, the sociologist of religion, Rodney Stark (*What Americans Really Believe*), states that while there has always been very high rates of denominational shifting in America, denominationalism itself is alive

and well. Denominations that are declining and losing their young people are losing them to other denominations not irreligion. See the Table below (Source - Stark, *What Americans Really Believe*, 22):

Some Growing and Declining American Denominations			
Members per 1,000 U.S. Population			
	1960	2000	% Change
Christian Church (Disciples)	10.0	2.7	-71
United Church of Christ	12.4	5.0	-60
Episcopal Church USA	18.1	8.2	-55
United Methodist Church	58.9	29.8	-49
Presbyterian Church (USA)	23.0	12.7	-45
Evangelical Lutheran Church	29.3	18.2	-39
Unitarian-Universalist	1.0	0.8	-49
Southern Baptist Convention	53.8	56.3	+5
Church of the Nazarene	1.7	2.2	+35
Foursquare Gospel	0.5	0.9	+80
Seventh Day Adventist	1.8	3.1	+72
Assemblies of God	2.8	9.1	+225
Roman Catholic	233	221.7	-5
Mormon	8.2	18.2	+122

People are switching as well as leaving. Some denominations are growing while others continue struggling with decline. It may be that a resurgence in congregational autonomy is also connected to these realities, that it represents both anxiety at loss and a search for relevance in mission and ministry. These will be critical issues for a Regional to assess.

iv. Congregations and Readiness for Cultural Engagement

Interviewees also identified a series of challenges that might be placed under this category of cultural engagement which refers to the capacities of a congregation to adapt their internal focus and systems. Some raised the question of congregations needing the capacity to listen and encourage people with different ideas in their midst. Others recognized that the

technological revolution was profoundly changing the nature of the larger society (for example - networking rather than preset structures and programs) but churches still struggled to engage with minimalist levels of technology in their midst.

Worship wars comprised internal fights about taste rather than significant attempts to connect worship within a context. The worship wars were cited as ways in which churches are getting bogged down in the wrong issues; the more underlying reality is the challenge for congregations to learn how to have different conversations than those currently occupying their energy.

In a time of significant change in local communities, congregations are unable to establish a focus in terms of mission and ministry then figure out how to develop strategies and use resources to empower that focus. This is exacerbated by a sense of scarcity that is paralyzing action. The reality of dwindling resources makes it imperative for churches to learn how to prioritize commitments based upon convictions about mission and ministry. Further, there is the belief that the congregations have not been equipped well to deal with the challenges they are facing. The focus of congregational life is turned inward on the needs of those already within so that churches become less and less permeable to their contexts.

What was fascinating and encouraging about many of these comments was not just the concerns being expressed over the level of challenges facing congregations but the awareness of a need for theological conversation within and across the churches. There remains a level of conviction about the Disciple ethos that helps people grasp that these challenges must be addressed with more than tactics and programs. The desire for a theological engagement is indicative of an awareness that these challenges go to the heart of the Movement's convictions about the nature of God and the call to ministry and witness in our time.

Challenges Facing Clergy/Pastoral Leadership

i. Cultivating New Skills and Capacities

As with the responses to congregational challenges, responders recognized one of the greatest set of challenges facing clergy was the limited scope of skills with which they have been equipped. These skills are mostly those of performative leadership used to carry out expected roles and programs within congregations. Clergy, to a large extent, are not equipped to assist congregations engage the changing context of ministry and are finding it difficult to address the levels of resistance and confusion present in congregations faced with decline in the midst of changing communities. Some of the skills and capacities mentioned as significant and essential at this point were: a) the ability to listen and attend to people in ways that engage their narratives and invite imagination to come from among them, b) different kinds of communications from the teaching/preaching forms in which they were trained, c) the capacity to manage conflict as an essential, positive force for innovation and transformation, d) skills in entering and attending to the neighborhoods and communities in which the congregation and its people are located, e) learning to risk in leadership when there will be resistance and the future is unclear, f) and the skills of dwelling in Scripture as well as teaching.

ii. Recognizing the Crisis of Clergy

People commented extensively on the pressures clergy are facing at this time. Clergy were characterized as isolated and lonely; some saw them as tired and overwhelmed by the demands of managing churches with fewer resources, where they struggle to make budgets work and feel they are bailing water. In other cases the tiredness and confusion of clergy relates to their sense of not having an authority, or capacity, with which to challenge their congregations. It was disturbing to hear responders talk about the lack of connection and collegiality among clergy. They are seen, at times, cut off from spiritual support and unsure of their own calling to the vocation of

ministry. It is important to note the number of times words like loneliness, cut off, isolated, accountability, frustrated, lack of collegiality were used in the interviews. These words characterize a crisis of vocation and meaning among some clergy; it suggests a situation in which some percentage of clergy are struggling with a convictional center that would energize and give shape to their calling in the midst of difficult and stressful leadership.

Younger leaders are looking to one another for support and empowerment. They are less and less convinced the Region in its focus, direction and resourcing can provide leadership for the levels of change that are required at this point. These leaders are increasingly turning to each other for support. They want to learn the skills of adaptive change and how to focus the energies of a congregation toward mission but aren't convinced these resources can be found in the Region. Some of these leaders are turning to networks and communities outside the Region for partnerships and resourcing.

Respondents described a need to cultivate communities of peers among clergy where a co-learning, supportive environment would assist each other to focus pastoral energies and address the challenges of transformation.

Challenges to Region

i. Mission, Vision and Focus

This section is divided into two parts. The first looks at the way people named the challenges faced by the Region itself while the second focuses on the nature of the challenges faced by the ministry staff in their work. These are summaries of the responses of the people interviewed rather than an assessment of a consultant.

If responders could recall the Region's mission/vision statement they viewed it as so broad practically everything would fit into it. The statement does not

focus the energy, resources, staffing and attention of the Region. On the contrary, it provides a rationale for doing many things without mechanisms to prioritize or provide clear measurables around outcomes. The perception is that everything is assumed to be a high value goal to be addressed in terms of program and resources. The Region is trying to do a lot of things and is bound to expectations from its past that are impossible to meet today given staffing ratios, cultural? and financial constraints.

ii. Mission, Vision and Structures

Responders perceive that structures are impeding the possibility of mission shaping the life of the Region and its congregations. These structures were designed for a time of church and cultural life that hardly exist any longer. At the same time and in spite of downsizing (professional staff have gone from 7 full time people to 4 over the past fifteen years), the Region is not doing anything appreciatively different. Structurally, areas were once a useful means of connecting the Region's churches and doing ministry together. They are no longer seen to work but still function as a structure shaping the system. In a time when the Region, like almost all mid-level judicatories, is facing unfamiliar challenges requiring adaptive innovation rather than the management of what exists, it remains functionally a staff-driven organization in the midst of structures created to ensure autonomy. These structures might have worked in another time when the cultural context was stable and traditions strong. In our new situation of massive change and huge cultural transformations few fully appreciate that the existing structural forms thwart the Region's capacity to create connections and networking essential for adaptive change.

In multiple ways responders saw the Region managing what exists when there is a critical need to reconstruct, - even start again - with a blank sheet, the Region in ways that will address identity questions and give a focus to its life. There is a call for a focused mission statement with intentional aligning of structures, resources, staff and programs around it.

Some responders spoke in terms of there needing to be a new creation if there is to be a different future. It is felt the Region sees the need for this but doesn't know how to do things differently.

Responders see the system locked by fear to the extent it has become resistant to engaging in the level of adaptive change that needs to happen. There is a perceived unwillingness to take the risks that might enable a sense of movement or emerging of direction. It is also understood this movement must come from among the churches and leaders themselves rather than be staff-driven. At some levels, issues of identity, direction and empowerment will have to engage elements of the Disciples' story where a tradition shaped by independence creates a fear being co-opted by a system and, therefore, tends toward autonomy over connecting and networking. These issues go back to the ways siloed structures seem to have been built to protect autonomy rather than cooperation and collegiality.

iii. Mission, Vision and Hope

The language of hope was used by numbers of responders. It recognizes the Region is struggling under financial challenges that are not easy to address and has done a good job with its resources in a bad situation. Further, there are leaders across the system willing to join together to risk and imagine a new future for the Region in its mission and ministry. A percentage of leaders across the Region sense an urgency to act and are willing to commit time, energy and resources to a process that addresses this issue. The fear, however, is that a larger percentage of leaders no longer see the Region as significant in their planning and networking around ministry and mission. There is energy and desire in the system to engage in substantive transformation but it will need to happen in ways that engender trust and communicate that this is more than one more add on to staff and programming. People are waiting to be inspired to risk and trust and be invited into a process of significant transformation. They sense that this level of transformation must reconnect with churches and leaders in ways

that create networks of experiments from among the people and pastors, rather than new initiatives from the center. This will require a rethinking of communication across the Region - people repeatedly mentioned communication as both a key element in engaging transformation and currently as a significant challenge needing to be addressed.

Challenges to Region Staff

The Regional staff are well liked and respected. They are viewed as competent, skilled professionals in their areas of work and responsibility. At the same time practically all responders see Regional Staff as overwhelmed, overworked, overextended. The responders also quickly named the reasons - the vision and focus of the Region isn't clear and there has been an unwillingness to prioritize and focus on where the energies of staff need to be placed. In spite of significant cuts of staff and resources over the past several years staff are still managing and running the same programs. In this situation the basic function of staff is maintenance of a system. Staff cuts have produced too much work for those left framing the question of how staff can keep going and what will be the breaking point? This situation is viewed not only as bad modeling to the Region's churches and leaders but also an illustration of the Region's inability to address the tough issues of choice, change and innovation. One result is that staff are working hard within their assigned roles but have little time for anything more than management and maintenance. This has created a situation where staff are siloed and do not function as a team working to address the overall directions and priorities of the Region. In this situation, initiatives are created within silos without the ability to adequately assess their significance relative to priorities and the direction of the Region as a whole. This communicates to the constituency that staff create multiple and episodic initiatives but are not giving direction to the critical issues of re-invention and transformation.

Here again there is a recognition of the need to re-invent the staffing of the Region for a radically different context of ministry and mission. Region and its staff need to be willing to risk entering into a re-invention process linked with and shaped by the challenges of recreating the Region itself. At this point the overload of work and maintaining the system is dampening the ability to create and conceive of how adaptive change can take place. This is viewed as a time when the excellent leadership abilities of the staff has to be refocused. The leadership of the Region is being asked to risk in new ways. This risking involves a willingness to move outside the management of established rules and move to the edge in some of the messy and unpredictable ways that involve inviting people into a process of re-imagining the Region and its future. The risk in this process is that the roles and responsibilities of Regional staff may be dramatically changed and they will need to develop new skills in innovation and leadership development.

The Board:

Numbers of responders mentioned the Region's Board. The characterization they gave isn't surprising given the basic description of the Region and its challenges. It is viewed as well led in terms of meeting management but basically a pro forma assembling to hear reports and approve decisions. It appears few are involved in agenda development. At this point, the structure of the Board and its size seem to render it unable to address the critical challenges facing the Region and the generative thinking that will be required to design a process of transformation.

3. Initiatives in Transformation - past five years

The responses to this question are already mirrored in the previous sections and so this section will only summarize. Overall, initiatives over the past several years are viewed as helpful in themselves but also as symptoms of a system without clear directions. Initiatives are viewed as additions to an agenda without prioritizing or resourcing and only add to the overload of staff. There is a view that because the Region is struggling with the identity issue it might be creating initiatives without first working out the question of how the system as a whole engages in transformation.

4. Next Five Years?

The work of the next five years, from the point of view of responders, is implied in the first three sections described above. There is a strong sense that over the next five years the Region must re-invent itself to create a new level of networking and innovation across the congregations and among the leaders. This will involve risk and must be directed to creating a movement of hope and adaptation from among the constituencies rather than the center. It will mean working cooperatively across the whole system in processes that learn the nature of adaptation and innovation. There was a strong emphasis on a Region focused around leadership development and connecting/resourcing its clergy to shape a new church. The model shaping the Region in its structure and staffing would be quite different from that which currently exists. People see the need for a much more organic, responsive co-learning community of churches and leaders that, together, is learning how to address a changing social context for which few of us were prepared. It is clear that people have energy and a desire to be called to work for this vision of a new Region but little hope that the current form of the Region can engender life.

Section 3: Recommendations to the Board

. I have sought to faithfully and appropriately to describe what I heard and provide a framework within which to categorize the challenges the congregations, clergy, Region, Board and Staff must wrestle with to effect transformation. The following summarizes the Consultant's assessment and recommendations to the Board around a series of next steps it might take in response to this Report. These next steps involve two, sequential initiatives. The first, over a period of approximately seven months, would involve creating the design of the transformation process by intentionally working with people and leaders of the churches across the Region. The goals of this first phase would be to a) engender energy and hope that an adaptive process is being initiated, b) practice adaptation by inviting the people and leadership to name the shape of transformation and c) develop a clear plan of action for the next phase. While the Regional staff must be integrally involved in this initiating stage it must be led by an Executive Committee of the Board in close partnership with an external consultant. The second phase would be the implementation of the planning design that would come into place by around April of May 2010.

The following is this consultant's summary and specific recommendations:

First, there is a lot of goodwill within the Region.

I detected people wanting to see the Region thrive while recognizing there have been multiple contributing factors, both internal and external to the system, that have created the current situation. There is respect and admiration for the staff of the Region. People are aware of competencies and like the staff. The good news is that people want the Region to be different; they want to see it playing a vital role with congregations and pastors in engaging dramatically changing contexts of mission and ministry. There are numbers of leaders ready to partner together with their time, skills, energy and resources to re-imagine the Region.

Second, the Region not seen as effective change agent:

The hard word is that significant numbers of clergy and congregations do not see the Region as a factor in the challenges they have to face in either declining congregations or growing congregations engaging their contexts. There is a perception that the Region is too focused on conserving and managing what is and not ready to address the levels of change it is felt will be needed. Rightly or wrongly, the perception is that Region and its ministry staff are unwilling to risk in creative and innovative ways.

Third, adjustment to current structures is not sufficient:

People understand that adjustments to the current structures and life of the Region are insufficient. While there is support for good management, there is a wide recognition that the Region needs to re-make itself. The sense that a significant adaptive transformation is required is out there and people will measure any initiatives on the basis of this conviction. It is felt that the Region has spent too much time, energy and resources on initiatives that are disconnected from clear priorities and focused attention to what has to be done. The level of expectation in terms of the Region being able to cultivate a new future is low even while the desire for this to happen and willingness to participate is present. This is why the Board must understand that the next steps it takes have to be carefully designed. The primary task at the beginning of such a transformation process involves cultivating hope, signaling this is not business-as-usual or one more initiative among a list, and communicating that the shape of this transformation is going to come out of consultation and dreaming among the people and leaders of the Region. These are the steps that start to build a new level of hope, trust and confidence in the Region and call forth the imagination and commitment of its people.

Fourth, the kind of innovation required is adaptive.

It is important to distinguish between adaptive and technical challenges because the Region has been addressing major issues of change using technical solutions. Both technical and adaptive skills are critical in the change process required by the Region. Technical and adaptive processes are not two ends of a polarity but complementary sets of skills required in any change strategy. The problem is that largely technical change and leadership skills have been used by the Region to this point. The diagram below summarizes the relationships and differences between technical and adaptive change as well as showing the types of leadership each involves. Technical challenges are not trivial (for example, managing budgets, clergy placement, addressing conflict, church closings, planning Assemblies, running camping programs or Women's Ministries), and they are important to the ongoing life of the organization. Technical challenges require performative leadership where the skills and ability to do the job or develop good solutions already lie within the repertoire of the organization and its professional staff. They are dealt with by assigning the most skilled people with the task of coming up with actionable solutions. This is what we do when we hire 'professionals' to run programs.

Relationship between Technical and Adaptive Challenges		
	<i>What is the Work?</i>	<i>Who Does the Work?</i>
Technical Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply current know-how and expertise to the challenge • Apply rules, techniques and processes that have always worked • Organization & culture remains essentially the same. • No need for basic organizational, management or identity changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned authorities • Professionals • Experts
Adaptive Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges are outside the scope of current expertise. • Unless challenges addressed the organization will fail. • Current know-how, rules and processes misdirect. Must learn to learn new skills if there is to be future • Organization & culture must change to enable new future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work of the people • Answers can't be given; must be found and developed among the people • Experiment and risk among the people and across system

Adaptive challenges are outside current repertoire of skills and organizational culture of the system. They confront the organization with the demand to adapt and change or decline and die. Finding a solution is critical. The Region faces significant adaptive challenges. There are critical challenges that must be addressed that are outside the current skills and perceptions of the Region as it is currently functioning. In adaptive challenges, solutions can't be generated from the center (staff, Board or experts). The system as a whole has to be invited into a process where it can discover its own actions and solutions among and across the

constituency through experiment and innovation. This requires leadership processes that cultivate a cross-system, lateral and bottom-up learning community around just-in-time actions. Furthermore, adaptive challenges are tough to address from within the system itself because the people in the system are too close; without outside eyes working with the system at the start, the chances of reverting to technical defaults and habits is high. Adaptive change isn't linear, like a strategic plan; it requires a variety of initiatives happening at the same time involving multiple groups across all levels of the Region.

Fifth: Action Steps

Step One: Board and Executive Staff process this Report in order to:

1. Understand the underlying issues named in this Report that must be addressed to innovate transformation across the Region.
2. Understand the capacities and actions that will be required to communicate to the constituencies that the Region, through its Board, intends to cultivate a new kind of Region that will thrive in the midst of the new church cultural realities.
3. Set aside the resources and time over the next seven to nine months to develop a planning strategy for adaptive work that brings the whole system into the process and develops out of this clear priorities and strategy for implementation after Easter 2010. This should include:
 - i. An Executive Committee of the Board empowered to meet on a regular, monthly basis to develop the processes for moving forward. This process is not a center-made set of strategic plans but a design process of listening and engaging people across the Region in the creation of a new set of priorities and actions. Out of this listening process will come the design with its implications for priorities, structure and staff functioning. A critical element here will be the Board's capacity to engage the whole system in designing the adaptive

changes that will be required. Key to any adaptation is the need to energize the constituency demonstrating it is ready to listen and invite the various elements of the system into this future. The way the Board goes about doing this is more important than even the plans and results that will emerge. The point here is engagement of the system which, at this point, has low expectation. This is the immediate challenge that has to be addressed.

- ii. The services of a consultant working directly with the Executive Committee to develop the design and engage the process over this period of seven to nine months.
- iii. Permission for the Consultant and Executive Committee to convene listening meetings with key leaders across the Region to share this Report in a summary form and invite their interactions.
- iv. Permission to include a small number of key leaders in the Executive Meetings during this process.
- v. A scheduled series of webinar meetings (video conferencing in groups of 5 -6) for Board members designed to a) communicate with the Board on the developing process and b) provide ongoing training, information and support continuing to understand the nature of adaptive change and how it will function across the Region.
- vi. A second full meeting of the Board in early 2010 (probably late February) to look at developments and initial proposals for action and the communications strategy.
- vii. Regional staff will continue to work at the development of effective team development as well as the maintenance of the ongoing work of the Region.
- viii. Regional Staff will work with the Executive Committee in the process outlined above. It will be important to carefully define and communicate the role of the staff in this process.

Step Two: Fostering Adaptation & Innovation through Region-Wide Listening

From after Easter until summer the plans for listening and engagement developed by the Executive Committee are turned into a detailed action plan for transformation. This will require such actions as:

- Training listening teams
- Redeploying Regional staff around the priorities of this process
- Developing the communications processes that invite people into the conversations.

Step Three: Resourcing the Current Transformation Process

- Provide the staffing, in terms of time and support, to focus their priorities on this core work.
- Intentionally set up Region-wide means of drawing the churches in the urban centers in to this process.

Step Four: Clergy Leadership Development for a Changing Context

Clergy leadership is essential for the innovation of mission and ministry. Clergy find themselves stretched and between a rock and a hard place. They were not trained in the skills of innovation and transformation. Even while the Executive Team is working, and in dialogue with clergy, create a series of leadership development conversations that invite the clergy to identify the learning and skill development they deem necessary at this point. This needs to be in the form of just-in-time learning experiences that match the current, real time challenges experienced by leaders in their local churches. Initially, the Region should invite clergy to a series of workshop sessions based on its announced intention of framing a significant transformation process for the whole Region.