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Name of ministry: Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada

Ministry

Executive/Regional

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Ministry

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**In what ways is your
region/ministry thriving?**

The Canadian Region rejoices in the resiliency and creativity of all participants, congregations, and ministries, despite the challenges of covid related restrictions on gatherings. Congregations continue to meet online (predominantly) and are connecting with lapsed and moved members here in Canada but also around the world. We continue to engage and minister to many demographics across the country, with a special emphasis on ensuring that folks who are not computer literate (or have access to technology) are also included. New ministries continue to rise up which seek to serve those who struggle or who have been challenged in the past with exclusion of various kinds including: mental health, LGBTQ++, seniors and those who are homebound, and those seeking faith communities which are theologically "safe" and welcoming to their growing/transforming faith & understanding.

Many of our congregations and ministries have a renewed sense of mission and service and are dedicating more time and resources to feeding programs, community gardens, justice initiatives, mission support, global ministries, and disaster relief.

We enthusiastically added a new congregation (Freedom

Church Windsor) this year in Windsor, Ontario, who came to us because of our commitment to deep spirituality, true community and a passion for justice. We continue to actively look for partners across Canada who want to work together in these areas.

The Canadian Region, while small demographically, is growing in some significant ways, most importantly in leader development. We are excited to have three ministerial candidates under care of our Committee on Ministry and will be ordaining one new minister in 2022. While these numbers may seem small in comparison to larger Regions, they are significant for us because they point to the faithfulness of God who has blessed us through answers to prayer. We are grateful for each of these individuals who bring with them a wealth of experience, enthusiasm, deep faith and spirituality, and a passion for Christ's church. All of them come from previous denominational experiences but have chosen the Disciples of Christ as their new church home because of our commitment to living out the love of God in Christ-centred, theologically grounded, and justice oriented ways. We strive to live out the gospel call to be light and salt in spiritually generous ways, making space for each leader and community to use their specific and special gifts to minister to and with the people they are called to serve.

What are the biggest challenges facing your region/ministry this year?

While our established congregations are managing to hold their own financially, our new congregations are struggling. With almost a third of our congregations having been established within the last 10 years, this creates some serious challenges with cash flow into the Region. We are currently looking at ways to diversify our income streams.

We are also finding that the current governance model which has served our Region well over the past number of decades is no longer sustainable. We seek to include

representatives on our Board from each of the three Areas in the Region (Western Christian Fellowship: British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan; Central Area: Ontario, Quebec; and Maritime Area: New Brunswick, PEI, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland). With congregations spread so widely apart geographically and the numbers within each one reaching all time lows, it is difficult to find representation from each Area to serve. In addition, finding individuals who understand what the Region is and what ministry it performs is becoming increasingly difficult. With travel restrictions still in place across Canada, our most useful tool - the Regional Minister's presence in every congregation at least twice a year - was still no longer possible. It has been a struggle to keep connections and grow relationships without the ability to meet in person.

Unfortunately this year we said goodbye to our two last Haitian congregations who have decided to disaffiliate. Because of isolation, language barriers, and a deficit in cultural competency (on behalf of the Region), it was very difficult to nurture and build the relationship between us. We pray every blessing on them both as they continue to minister in the Montreal, Quebec area.

What is something you hope to accomplish in the next year?

Over the coming year we will examine our governance and ministry structure with a heart to realigning ourselves with our purpose and priorities. In addition, renewed efforts to increase understanding of the Region's work will take place, taking advantage of current technology and congregations' increased use of online and video technology in their gatherings.

We will also continue to build our Lay Leadership Education Program which was launched in 2021. We look forward to engaging with folx from across Canada, in new and established congregations, to learn with and from one another to strengthen the whole body of Christ.

What is something you would like the General Board to know about your region/ministry?

The Canadian church remains a bit of an anomaly in the life of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). We exist in a different country and a variety of different cultures than what is generally experienced by our United Statesian counterparts. While we are small, we do have a substantially different understanding of many ecclesial, theological, and justice oriented issues and experiences. We do appreciate the steps that have been taken to include this different perspective on boards, committees, etc. We would like to raise the challenge to the GB and its representatives to include the Canadian experience/perspective/history in such vital areas as racial justice and Disciples history. What we have to offer in these areas is unique and generally unknown to many United Statesian Disciples, yet adds a level of diversity/beauty/perspective that enriches the whole.

How can we pray for your region/ministry?

Please pray for our leadership - Regional and congregational - who are facing serious burnout and exhaustion. Please pray for our indigenous peoples as well who continue to fight for recognition, reconciliation, and justice on a daily basis - not only for the over 8,000 children who died in residential schools, but for treaty violations, continued discrimination, and a host of other injustices perpetrated against them. Please pray for our Regional board that they may have wisdom, creativity, and energy to reimagine this church for a new age.