

## Regional Board Meeting

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Northern Lights Region

Sunday, November 23, 2025 – 6 pm PT/7 pm MT (Zoom)

In attendance: Doug Garner (Moderator), Rev. Paul Allen (Regional Minister), Mary Palmer (Treasurer), Karrin Lewis, Max Webb, Miriam Gentle, Doug Taylor, Rachel Crum, Devin Wright (Board Secretary), Sarah Almanza, Matthew Keith, Barb Abercrombie, Gloria Soja.

Doug opened in prayer at 7:00 pm PT.

Minutes of the previous Regional Board meeting were approved as presented.

Congregation-in-Formation: Missiongathering –

Doug moved, on behalf of the Executive Committee, that Missiongathering be received as a fully chartered congregation of the Northern Lights Region.

Doug asked if there were any questions; none were raised.

Doug called for a vote. The motion passed with unanimous approval.

Paul will send the appropriate minutes and documentation to the general church.

Regional Minister's Report – Rev. Paul Allen –

Paul reported on the Pastors and Plus One retreat held in October and offered thanks to Becky Taylor for her leadership. He noted that he looks forward to seeing how new ideas emerge as new people participate in planning.

He shared an update on planning for the 2026 Regional Assembly. The location has been set, and the planning team is working on housing and logistical details.

Paul also reported that he worshiped with four of the five congregations sharing space at Kennewick Christian Church and signed paperwork for the affiliation of Nueva Vida en Cristo.

Paul continues visiting congregations across the Region to build relationships and offer guidance and support. Several congregations remain unvisited, with multiple visits already scheduled.

Paul celebrated the 140th anniversary of First Christian Church, Missoula.

Six congregations are currently in the Search and Call process, with another preparing to begin. Moscow will soon be coming off the list.

Olympia, Renton, and Northwest have interim pastors; Bremerton is in conversation with a candidate for their interim position.

Paul also noted he will attend the College of Regional Ministers meeting following the holiday.

#### Financial Report – Mary Palmer –

Mary presented the Treasurer’s Report, based on the September 2025 financial statements from Church Treasury Services. (October reports had not yet arrived.)

The Region remains financially steady, with strong investment performance and a healthy cash position.

Congregational giving and designated operating contributions are slightly below budget. The Annual Fund is close to budget. The Christmas Offering came in slightly low in the past year.

Investment withdrawals total approximately \$120,000 year-to-date. Interest income continues to perform as expected.

Salaries and benefits are slightly under budget due to lower-than-expected payroll taxes.

Camping and Reconciliation lines currently show deficits, which is normal for the annual program cycle. New Church ministry is doing better.

Total assets are approximately \$5.2 million, including roughly \$272,000 in cash. DCEF investments total around \$412,000, while Christian Church Foundation investments total around \$4.5 million. Net asset growth of approximately \$500,000 is largely due to market gains in CCF portfolios.

Mary noted a letter from DCEF indicating a decrease in the interest rate spread due to market conditions. Investments continue to be the backbone of regional stability.

Mary described the Finance Team’s work preparing Christmas Offering materials and developing the 2026 budget.

Karrin asked why regional office expenses were more than \$5,000 above budget and why miscellaneous expenses were nearly triple the budgeted amount. Mary explained these were primarily due to maintenance upgrades. Karrin emphasized incorporating these realities into future budgeting.

#### 2026 Budget Review and Approval –

Mary reviewed the proposed 2026 budget, highlighting the following ministry initiatives: Regional Assembly (May 1–3, 2026), launch of the Regional Elders Program, and the Board’s bi-annual in-person retreat.

New initiatives and higher-cost events contribute to approximately \$25,000 in increased expenses, with anticipated income of about \$24,000.

Projected 2026 expenses total \$343,432. The Regional Assembly budget does not include the full AR/PR training costs.

The Elder Ministry Program budget line is \$10,000.

The budget includes a contingency personnel line related to overtime support for administrative staff.

Storage rental costs are expected to decrease significantly due to a new arrangement at First Christian Church, Sumner.

The wider church ministry line totals \$12,500.

The Region is intentionally projecting a deficit of \$18,932 for 2026 due to enhanced ministry activity. Regional reserves are strong enough to support this deficit responsibly.

Doug moved to approve the 2026 budget as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

#### Food Pantry Mini-Grant Program –

Doug invited discussion on providing grants to congregational food pantries addressing food insecurity.

Max shared that his congregation operates two food pantries that are in need of additional support. Matthew noted similar needs in his context.

Mary recommended the following structure: up to \$1,000 for congregations launching new food pantries and up to \$500 for congregations maintaining existing pantries.

Paul and Robin will work together to develop a simple application and process.

Max expressed that the need for \$1,000 grants is significant among congregations.

Doug called for a vote. The Board unanimously approved establishing the food pantry mini-grant program at \$1,000 per congregation.

#### Bylaws Task Force –

Doug reported that the Bylaws Task Force, led by Bill Jennison, is preparing revisions to be brought to the 2026 Regional Assembly.

Board members were asked to review the bylaws and submit suggested changes.

Paul noted that the Board will need to discern the Region's preferred Assembly cycle (two-year or three-year), which affects Board term lengths.

Doug stated that a three-year cycle might better align with the General Assembly cycle.

#### Commission on Ministry – Amorous Relationships Policy –

Karrin presented revisions to the Amorous Relationships Policy. The revisions clarify that pastor–parishioner romantic relationships are highly discouraged.

When such a relationship occurs, the layperson must have another pastor providing spiritual care.

The policy acknowledges diverse contexts across the Region and encourages congregations to communicate expectations clearly to candidates.

Karrin recommended that future Healthy Boundaries training also include laity and that resources be developed to support congregations.

Max asked whether candidates may ask congregations directly about their expectations regarding relationships; the answer was yes.

Paul noted the Region is seeking updated materials for Healthy Boundaries trainings.

Matthew expressed concern about tension between conditional (“may be”) and absolute (“must be”) language in specific paragraphs.

Paul explained the need for policies that allow contextual flexibility while still setting appropriate expectations.

Matthew recommended changing “It is essential...” to “It is highly recommended...” to increase clarity.

Doug initially suggested returning the revisions to the Commission, but after further discussion, the Board agreed it could move forward while allowing the Commission to refine language.

Doug moved to vote on the changes. The Board unanimously approved the revised Amorous Relationships Policy.

#### Personnel – Administrative Support –

Gloria noted Robin’s formal review was done, and they’re exploring best ways to track her hours and ensuring healthy work/life balance, self-care, and ensuring she has the resources she needs.

Max noted that using other congregations with administrative assistants may be a possible option for additional administrative support.

#### Regional Elders Program –

Doug reported that the Regional Elders Program is moving forward, with potential elders being identified. They are waiting to hear what funding will be available, and funding for this initiative is included in the approved 2026 budget.

#### Regional Assembly Planning – Sarah Almanza –

Sarah provided a brief update on planning for the 2026 Regional Assembly and expressed gratitude for the team members supporting the event. She noted the planning is going well, but no further details given.

#### Global Ministries Report –

Ron Greene's Global Ministries report was mentioned and was received with appreciation by the Board.

#### Regional Storage and Records –

Paul reported on moving regional storage to First Christian Church, Sumner. The move is in progress as materials are sorted and relocated.

Karrin asked whether the Region has a records retention policy; Paul said yes.

Karrin asked about digitizing required records so that less storage space is needed.

Paul noted that most records are already digitized and that required paper copies are stored securely. Much of the current project is clearing out materials that are no longer needed.

Max asked about the executed deed for his congregation. Paul confirmed the Region maintains such documents and that many have been digitized.

#### Next meetings:

Executive Committee – Thursday, February 12, 2026 at 6 pm PT/7 pm MT (Zoom)

Regional Board – February 2026 (date to be determined; final meeting before the 2026 Regional Assembly)

Regional Minister Paul Allen closed the meeting in prayer at 8:26 pm PT. Doug offered gratitude to the Board and adjourned the meeting at 8:27 pm PT.