



RISE Regional Transformation Process
Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Rebecca Hale, Transitional Interim Regional Minister

RISE is a partnership of the NW Region and the Center for Parish Development. Ray Schulte is the primary process consultant and Transitional Interim Regional Minister, Rebecca Hale, has been the staff person called to shepherd the process. The transformation process has five phases and is about a three-year process. The region began in 2006 and will conclude the formal process early in 2009 with the reminder of the year given to understanding how to live into the new ministry of the NWRCC.

Design Elements (Necessary Conditions):

- The journey itself should be transformative
- Process must be highly participatory
- Must be helpful to local churches, even as it engages in discerning direction for the region
- Must have Biblical and Theological integrity
- The process must be future-oriented, not limited by the past or seeking to recreate a particular past
- The process must raise standards for performance, challenging persons and structures to become more faithful and effective in ministry
- The process must enhance trust and accountability among congregations
- The process will honor the investments of our anti-racism/pro-reconciliation concern for diversity, and for racial/ethnic participation
- The process will expand ways of communicating within and throughout the region
- The process will need someone who can dedicate a significant time to manage this process if it is to involve most of our churches

An exceptional RISE Team is working on this process. This is a highly functioning team that has been very, very faithful and responsive and consistently has risen to the challenges of a region-wide extended process such as this. Edie Rice-Sauer chairs the team.

The other main goal was to continue to engage in episodic conversation and dialogue with as many groups as possible. In the process, creating new networks of connection and relationship.

Phase One – Getting Ready for the Journey

2005/2006/2007

Goals and Activities:

- Approval for the process and contract with Center for Parish Development
- Building the case with in the region for the “why” of regional transformation.
- Launch at 2007 Regional Assembly
- Formation of a Regional Coordinating Team
- Visits with Clergy Cluster Groups
- Many one-on-one visits with local pastors and congregations

Implementation and Results:

This phase took time and attention and some retracing ground to be sure everything necessary was covered. Some of the winter of 2006 and spring of 2007 was going back and making the case again, soliciting prayers and involvement. This was done by lots of personal meetings by Coordinating Team and Regional Minister and by meetings with each regional clergy cluster group. Part of the reason this was so difficult was that when the regional board and assembly initially agreed to enter a transformation process, it was a time of conflict and there was open pain. So even though communication happened there was a great deal of emotionality present and not all the things that folks hope to communicate got through to others. The initial team that was formed was not adequately representative so we re-formed the team in January 2007.

Also, it was clear that the process design was not going to be as effective at helping the region’s five ethnic congregations engage. So a working group was formed to work with those congregations one-on-one and in a way that was more relational than the general process. By the end of February 2007 we had re-formed the team, got a working group formed to engage the ethnic congregations, redesigned the timetable for the process, and met with all clergy groups and many congregational leaders to build the case for why regional transformation. **And we named the process, RISE!**

Phase Two – Common View of Reality January – September 2007

Goals:

- To recognize the changing North American landscape
- To begin to understand our specific NW context
- To come to a clearer understanding of the actual organizational and relational functioning of the NW region
- Articulate the challenges and opportunities before us as a region

Implementation and Results:

Again, foundational to this process is constant and ever expanding circles of conversation with an effort to involve as many individuals and congregations as possible.

- The RISE team conducted 22 2-hour interviews with key leaders in the region. A compilation of these interviews was shared broadly with key leadership groups. (See Booklet)

- A Bible Study was given to all congregations – about ¼ of the NW congregations participated during Lent of 2007. Feedback from the Bible Study was given to the RISE Team and fed into understanding our current context and this region
- Meetings with clergy were held to ask them about what they understand as our key challenges
- The Regional Board met for several hours to also identify key challenges
- In May of 2007 four regional cluster meetings were held to engage broad dialogue around our key challenges and to share results of the interviews – about ½ our congregations were represented at these meetings
- Four key challenges/opportunities were identified and shared broadly in the region
 - Regional Board
 - All clergy clusters reviewed them
 - Mailed and emailed to congregations as bulletin inserts with questions for reflection and prayer
- This phase of the process had a fairly high level of engagement with core folks across the Region. It is not clear that many of our congregations who have marginal regional involvement participated much in this phase.

Phase Three – Discerning God’s Call

Fall 2007 – May 2008

Goals:

- Form a Regional Vision Team to study and listen on behalf of the region
- Study and think with one another about God’s “dream” for the world
- October clergy meet to discuss document “Region as Community of Communities” about 30 clergy were present
- Hold a region-wide vision retreat
- Craft a Missional Strategy with three main components:
 - Vision Statement
 - Mission Statement
 - Key result areas and overarching goals
- Have this completed and embraced at May regional assembly

Implementation and Results:

- Vision Team enlisted and then began meeting and studying and listening – one member asked, “is it still a meeting if all we do is talk about theology?” This has been one of the highlights of this process
- Congregations given a bible study for Advent
- Region-Wide Vision Retreat November 2007. Representatives from more than 50% of regional congregations participated. Goal was to think about God’s dream for the world and begin to wonder what would be happening in our region if we felt called to live into that dream – what would be happening how would we be behaving?
- Vision Team took feedback from whole process and especially the Vision Retreat and has crafted a regional vision statement

- The Regional Board provided input and finalized the vision statement
- In February 2008, four regional clusters meetings engaged the statement – trying it on for size
- March – regional board worked with the Vision Team to craft specific mission and key ministry area statements
- April – key ministry areas were shared broadly in the Region in a congregational engagement process
- April – RISE team met with all clergy clusters
- May – Missional Strategy celebrated and affirmed at Regional Assembly
- May – Conference on the Future at the Regional Assembly
- From the 2008 Regional Assembly, lists of potential ministry areas were named and four design teams were formed to begin working to flesh out a concrete sense of the ministry of the NWRCC

Phase Four – Designing a Missional Region May 2008 – May 2009

Goals:

- Work with Ministry Design Teams to prepare a Ministry Design for the NWRCC with a 5-year horizon
- Hold a special regional assembly in May 2009 to present the Design Plan and proposed Structure. RISE Team will coordinate
- Recruit Writers and Structure persons to help complete this phase
- RISE Team begin to plan for Phase Five and the Hand-Off to a new regional board and new team to give life to the Ministry Plan
- Celebrate the work of the RISE Team and all that have been involved

Implementation and Results:

- Ministry Design Teams met throughout the summer with a total of 36 people on the teams. Many team members were new to the process and represented new regional leadership voices
- Work was divided into 4 key areas:
 - Common Life
 - Formation
 - Resources
 - Structure
- This work fed into a Ministry Design Plan for life in the NW region for the next 5-10 years.
- A Writing Team was formed to take the work of the Ministry Design Teams and harmonize it and form a cohesive plan for ministry, Fall and Winter 2008-09
- The Structure Team continued to meet helping design a structure that will make the Ministry Plan sing!
- January 2009 the NWRCC Executive Committee interacted with the proposed Design
- February 2009 – Design Plan given to Regional Board for input and conversation.

- March 2009 – cluster and clergy meetings are scheduled to interact with the Plan; feedback will be used and a final plan circulated to congregations in mid-April 2009

Phase Five – Living into a Faithful Future May 2009 and Ongoing

- Planning for hand-off to new regional minister
- Celebrate the work of the RISE Team
- Leadership training for this new ministry design will be developed
- Executive committee for the region will develop a plan and strategy for moving into this new ministry plan