The Christian Church Foundation ended 2016 in the strongest financial position since its inception in 1961. Assets under management broke historical records, ending the year at more than $630 million. In addition to the gains that resulted from strength in the financial markets, total assets also increased with almost $4 million in new permanent fund gifts and more than $25 million of new investments from ministry partners. The Foundation’s investment program, called the Joint Investment Trust, now manages $599 million on behalf of Disciples-related ministries and institutions.

Since its creation, the Christian Church Foundation has focused on the stewardship of accumulated resources. Our mission is to support and expand the ability of all Disciples ministries to worship, witness and serve. We do this by identifying and resourcing donors who desire to make a difference through planned gifts, and by assisting Disciples ministries to be good stewards of their gifts through sound policies and prudent investment services.

We give God thanks for this financial strength! But what does it really mean to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)?

**Income for Ministry**

Permanent funds and donor-advised funds, created by donors, provide a vital stream of income to Disciples Mission Fund and other donor-selected ministries – congregations, regions, etc. – and other charitable causes. These funds distributed $8 million in 2016 to general ministries, regions, congregations and other Disciple witnesses, as well as other charities selected by donors. Of that, $1 million went directly to Disciples Mission Fund, making endowment support one of the largest contributors to the church’s general mission funding system.

Through prudent investing, the income from these funds will continue to grow in perpetuity and provide ongoing and growing support for vital ministries.

**Free Services to Encourage More Giving**

Financial strength allows the Foundation to continue to offer no-charge services to help ministry partners grow their own endowment funds. Our deployed staff model allows us to build strong relationships with Disciples congregations and institutions, and the
donors that support them.

Our development staff helps congregations and other partner ministries incorporate legacy giving strategies into the lives of their institutions. Covenant Christian Church, in Cary, NC, is one recent example of a congregation working to enhancing their future witness.

Congregational leaders, with guidance from our staff, have put a “Legacy Builders” program in place. Legacy Builders invites members and friends to include the church in their estate plans. Leaders are leading by example, putting their own plans in place, and then inviting others to do likewise. At one gathering, two members, along with Pastor Chris Furr, shared why they have included the church in their legacy gift plans. Their witness was so meaningful and inspirational that others put giving plans in place so that their names could be added to the Legacy Builders list – not because they felt pressured, but because they wanted to. Foundation staff helped members think through the most appropriate giving methods for their individual situations. Those who put gift plans in place, and agree to be named, are honored by inclusion in Covenant Christian Church’s legacy society.

In less than a year, Covenant Christian Church has seen more than a dozen individuals put plans in place that will make a growing witness possible for this congregation. God is at work doing a new and powerful thing in this congregation!

**Cost-Efficient Investment Power**

About two-thirds of the assets held under management at the Foundation are investments that are owned by other Disciples ministries and institutions. We provide these long-term institutional investors with cost-efficient, endowment-style investment options designed to balance risk and reward. As our assets grow, we achieve cost efficiencies that improve the returns our investing partners receive. Income from assets invested through the Foundation supports the work of our many partners – making a difference in various ministries to which they have been called.

We are committed to being the best long-term investment option for Disciples-related organizations, providing those ministries access to diversified investment portfolios that benefit from investment products unavailable or cost prohibitive for any of us as single investors. We remain focused on the dual priorities of providing maximum funds for ministry while growing the invested funds to keep pace with inflation.

As a faith-based investor, the Christian Church Foundation seeks justice by engaging with companies for responsible corporate behavior. We believe that working with company management is the most effective agent for systemic change. In partnership with other faith-based investors through the Interfaith Coalition for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), the Foundation influences change by bringing a moral voice to the boardrooms of corporations. The Foundation has a seat at the Disciples Justice
Table, and uses its influence as an investor to create change in corporate behavior on a wide range of issues, from human trafficking to water resources. As a participant in the Foundation’s long-term investment program, Disciples ministries work together toward a better and more just world.

Most recently, the Foundation has been actively supporting corporate engagement actions aimed at reducing and eliminating human trafficking and supporting food sustainability and drinkable water accessibility. The Foundation’s Board of Directors in 2016 reaffirmed its commitment to be a faith-based and values-driven investor to address social and environmental issues in the world. In partnership with the Pension Fund and Disciples Church Extension Fund, a resolution was drafted for consideration at the 2017 General Assembly.

**Lasting Disciples Legacy**

Because of endowments entrusted to the Foundation, the world will continue to be impacted by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Permanent funds will continue to support charities that are doing the important ministries that are (and were) so important to our donors.

It isn’t just individuals who strive to leave a lasting legacy of service, however. Congregations and other ministries who make the decision to end their physical presence as a ministry are also called to continue making a difference! We work with congregations to put “legacy” plans in place - using assets accumulated over years of ministry to continue their faith-filled witness. As in our work with individuals, the causes that will benefit from these plans are the ones selected by the closing institutions.

Congregations don’t have to be closing to start a Legacy Fund! Recognizing the strain of maintaining an old building, First Christian Church in Cumberland, MD, opted to relocate to a more appropriate space. With the proceeds from their old building, they established a Legacy Fund at the Foundation. Annual distributions to their chosen ministries will make it possible for them to increase their response to needs in Cumberland and around the world.

Another example is First Christian Church of Owensboro, KY. Rebuilt after a terrible fire, the congregation used part of their insurance proceeds and other gifts to create a Legacy Fund that today provides an additional $50,000 a year to the congregation’s outreach ministries.

As church member Malcom Bryant puts it: “We walked the neighborhood, we reached out to them and we found needs we didn’t know were out there. This is a whole new layer of giving for everyone who needs help outside the church. The real effort is outside these walls.”
Thank you!

The mission the church gave us 56 years ago still drives us today. As the Foundation continues to achieve new milestones, we remain focused on that mission. We take care to insure that every initiative we undertake moves us toward fulfilling our calling to serve the church. Thank you for your partnership and we look forward to helping you and your ministry bear more fruit for God’s mission in the world.

Gary W. Kidwell, President
Ruth Weaver, Senior Vice President
Jim Cullumber, Vice President of Communications
Lori Lucas, Vice President and Controller
Sue Hansen, Assistant Vice President of Gift Administration
Joe Hartman, Assistant Vice President of Investment Program
Marilyn Fiddmont, Vice President – Southwest Zone
  Houston, TX 77098-1092
  Phone: 713-524-0964
  mfiddmon@ccf.disciples.org
Kirby Gould, Vice President – North Central Zone
  Mission, KS
  Phone: 816-665-8446
  kgould@ccf.disciples.org
Bobby Hawley, Vice President – South Central Zone
  Fort Worth, TX
  Phone: 817-923-0422
  bhawley@ccf.disciples.org
Randall Johnson, Vice President – Southeast Zone
  Indianapolis, IN
  Phone: 317-713-2437
  rjohnson@ccf.disciples.org
Jerry Lang, Vice President – Mountain West Zone
  Centennial, CO
  Phone: 720-232-6633
  jlang@ccf.disciples.org
Enrique Ocasio, Vice President – Great Lakes Zone
  Columbus, OH
  Phone: 317-750-9188
  eocasio@ccf.disciples.org

The General Board has reviewed GA-1704 from Christian Church Foundation. The report is submitted to the General Assembly for presentation and discussion. No action is required. (Discussion time: 12 minutes)