Disciples Church Extension Fund (DCEF) and Hope Partnership for Missional Transformation, under the umbrella of Church Extension Financial & Missional Resources (Church Extension Resources), were actively involved in 2016 in efforts to help congregations answer the all-important question, “How can our congregation thrive, so that lives inside our building and out in our community are transformed through God’s ministry and mission?”

Our ministries recognize that part of the answer to this question lies in our collaborative efforts to provide services and programs that enable congregations to view ministry through a different lens, with a focus on using building and leader resources to serve God’s people out in the world, rather than to serve expensive, over-sized and less relevant spaces and programs that get in the way of mission and ministry.

How do these services help congregations thrive and transform communities?

**Disciples Church Extension Fund**

_Disciples Church Extension Fund inspires and empowers congregations to create Holy Places where people connect with God, each other and their community._

_Disciples Church Extension Fund_ has always been about Holy Places. As the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) ministry that provides congregations with building planning and capital funding services for their church facilities, we are called to help congregations create, re-create, fund and use church places
(conventional and otherwise, owned or not) as tools for connecting with the Holy so that they might also connect with their neighbors – both inside and outside their walls – in a partnership of love and service, witnessing to each other.

The process of arriving at a different concept of Place occurs for congregations as we help them find their “why” – Why do we exist? Why does God call us to be this particular church? Why are we in this location, in this facility, in this configuration? DCEF also helps congregations with two more BIG questions – Would anyone in our community notice or care if we ceased to exist in this place and time? If not, how should we use our people and building resources to be more relevant and connected to the community that God calls us to serve?

Two DCEF services in particular are effective in helping congregations think differently about how to answer these critical questions about Holy Places, mission and ministry:

• **Holy Places Planning** (currently under redesign) – Effective planning is essential to ensure that mission is driving the design, use, management, expenses, location, and even ownership status of our Holy Places. This service helps to ensure that a congregation’s overall facilities strategy is based primarily on using Place to build relationships and connect with God, each other and neighbor. The strategy necessarily includes a ministry plan, developed in cooperation with Hope Partnership’s Mission Pathways ministry planning service, which puts mission priorities at the center of any project to create, re-create or situate a Holy Place.

• **Capital Fundraising** – With DCEF’s counsel, a congregation generates funds for special projects or needs, using processes that involve identifying a purpose/vision that relates to a church’s ministry; clearly defining and articulating the project/need and case for support; discerning the most effective fundraising methodology and sources of revenue for the need; developing themes, timelines and goals based on capacity; determining leadership responsibilities; and more.

DCEF also offers a service designed to help congregations obtain a comprehensive assessment of their physical space, so they can make informed decisions about next steps for their Holy Place:

• **Building Evaluation** – This service sends an expert DCEF advisor or contractor with a background in facilities and construction management to assess the condition of a congregation’s facilities and to recommend a plan that addresses building condition, and maintenance issues and requirements.

In addition to these services and programs, DCEF continues to offer our traditional loan services to congregations, only now in the context of “ministry first.” Likewise, we continue to provide Disciples individuals, churches and
organizations with investment opportunities, humbled by those who want to benefit their Church as they’re providing for their families’ financial future.

Because the need to redefine and reinvent their relationship to their Holy Places is not unique to Disciples congregations, DCEF is now building and strengthening relationships with our ecumenical and para-church partners, as we all bring unique gifts to finding solutions to the building planning and funding challenges of creating Holy Places where connections to God, each other and community occur.

In 2016, DCEF, together with the church extension funds of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), The Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA), and the United Church of Christ (UCC), hosted the first “Now What? A Symposium on Repurposing Our Buildings, Our Outreach, Our Leadership.” Participants connected around the topic of building use for ministry, mission and transformational change. A second “Now What?” will be held this summer as a pre-Assembly event, providing the opportunity for more congregations to participate in an exploration of these fundamental topics. In addition, DCEF is exploring new opportunities to collaborate with para-church, nonprofit and governmental entities to create and use space that addresses senior housing and human services challenges in communities around the country.

Hope Partnership for Missional Transformation

Hope Partnership empowers courageous leaders.

Since its formation in 2012, Hope Partnership has been committed to empowering and preparing lay and clergy leaders to guide their congregations through transformation for the sake of God’s mission. In other words, while DCEF’s focus is on helping congregations utilize their facilities for ministry, Hope Partnership exists to empower and equip the leaders needed to help their congregations thrive so that communities can be transformed.

What does that counsel look like? In cooperation with partners such as DCEF, Regional and Area leaders, Disciples Home Missions, Higher Education and Leadership Ministries, other general ministries, and educational and ecumenical organizations, Hope Partnership delivers services, strategies and experiences that help leaders let go of old management models of leadership and disconnected ways of being church, so that God can do a new thing in and through their churches for the sake of their communities. These services include:

- **New Beginnings** – “What is God calling our congregation to do and be in this time and this place?” New Beginnings is designed to help local congregations
facing sustainability challenges assess their strengths and opportunities as they seek to answer this question. The service helps a church’s leaders get on the same page regarding the need for change, so they can help their congregation visualize and set into motion a new vision for its future.

- **Mission Pathways** – Designed primarily for stable churches with engaged and capable lay and clergy leaders, Hope Partnership’s newly redesigned Mission Pathways ministry planning service helps those leaders seek answers to the questions, “Why does our church exist?” and “How are we going to accomplish our mission?” instead of the more typical questions around money and attracting members. Mission Pathways encourages congregations to enter into thoughtful conversation and to think strategically about how they transform the lives of those within their church and in the community, using the individual gifts and resources that they have in their congregation. A self-led intentional planning process, Mission Pathways guides congregational leaders through assessment of current conditions and context, community interviewing, and a retreat experience during which they create a future story that captures the congregation’s dream for its future and results in a clear action plan that puts resources to use in the right place.

- **Epiphany** – Highly customized for larger stable churches, the Epiphany process is designed to reorient leaders to new ways of leading congregations through transformation. Through onsite assessment (possibly including a DCEF-provided building evaluation), community interviewing and two retreat experiences, the Epiphany process helps leaders write a future story articulating “why” their church exists and what their congregation will look like when it transforms lives and their community. Hope Partnership then helps the congregation create their action plan reflecting the church’s new-found mission purpose, which they can then implement with the help of trained coaches.

Because the need for leader development crosses denominational lines, Hope Partnership, like DCEF, is building relationships with and offering services to our ecumenical partners, who now represent a growing portion of Hope Partnership’s services portfolio. The UCC, PCUSA and Lutheran Church Missouri Synod are already service partners, and Hope Partnership is in conversation with ELCA and The Episcopal Church about future agreements.

**New Church Ministry**

New church ministry continues to be integral to the work of Hope Partnership, because the stewardship of leaders and partnership are at the center of the Disciples new church movement. Not only very much alive, the new church movement is, in fact, in the midst of a resurgence with the formation of several new and diverse new faith communities in 2016. Since 2001, Disciples have started 975 new and affiliating congregations, with a 60-plus percent
sustainability rate. Hope Partnership continues to engage in strategic conversations with Regions and Areas, National Convocation, Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries and North American Pacific/Asian Disciples about how we can work together to accompany new churches, often through coaching, to improve that sustainability rate.

To better serve new church planters, Hope Partnership hosted its redesigned Leadership Academy in 2016, offering an even more effective approach to training and empowering new, transforming and interim leaders to lead their faith communities in mission.

Through the Pentecost Offering and other avenues, Hope Partnership continues to encourage the wider Church to become more involved in supporting courageous new church planters, whose vision and energy are so critical to the future of God’s Church. God is doing a new thing!

**Moving forward**

Whether it’s working with congregations to explore new and creative uses of Holy Places for ministry or with courageous leaders who are equipped and inspired to lead differently in this era of God’s mission, more than ever, Disciples Church Extension Fund and Hope Partnership are committed to do this ministry in **seamless partnership** with one another and our many other partners and supporters. In 2017, as always, DCEF and Hope Partnership will continue to dedicate our expertise, experience and resources to live out God’s call to help congregations thrive and transform communities.
I am pleased to share with you the exciting work of the Insurance Board in the furtherance of the mission of the larger church body we serve, including the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ. As an ecumenical ministry partner, the Insurance Board provides an extensive property and liability insurance and risk management program to, currently, four denominations of churches including:

- United Church of Christ - (1981, incorporated in 1985)
- Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) - (1989)
- Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) - (2009)
- Alliance of Baptists – (2016)

Now starting our 32nd year, one of the most unique aspects of our program is that we are a 501(c)(3) organization. Governed by a 21 seat board, our directors include both laity and clergy, and its composition is representative of the denominations we serve. This is specifically intended to afford advocacy on behalf of each of the denominations in our program. Our board is ethnically diverse, bringing expertise from a number of disciplines such as ministry, finance, insurance, legal, loss control, consulting, and others. Our staff composition demonstrates that diversity, equity, and inclusion are fundamental considerations in our focus to mirror the values that our partner denominations consider immutable. We strive for equity through our hiring with 65% of our staff being female (where 2 of our 4 executives are women), and 26% of our staff representing minority groups (where 3 are in senior leadership positions). Current Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) board members include Rev. Dr. Bill Edwards (Regional Pastor and President, Christian Church in Ohio), Duncan Draper (CFO, Disciples Pension Fund), and Erick “Rick” Reisinger (CEO, Disciples Church Extension Fund).

Although 2016 will go down as our worst property loss year on record, the strength of our balance sheet means that the average impact to Insurance Board participants in 2017 will be minimal. As a not-for-profit organization, our focus is in trying to provide maximum insurance value to our participants, in a cost effective way. Collectively over 2015 and 2016, we passed on an average of 7.2% in rate decreases to our participating churches and ministries. In 2016, nearly 25% of our largest property claims were for Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) churches, despite the fact that the Christian Church represents only 14.4% of our overall churches. The largest of the claims was a roughly $3.5 million loss in the Midwest. Another included a $1.3 million fire in
the Southwest. Those churches impacted had the assurance of the exceptional coverage and service afforded by the Insurance Board.

Recently, as part of our work with Gradye Parsons, the former Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), we developed a 24-hour Helpline to facilitate sexual abuse prevention. The Helpline is designed to provide more efficient access to resources for individuals within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and to address suspected and actual incidences of sexual abuse. The Helpline was developed in partnership with Praesidium, one of the leading firms in safety and abuse prevention resources, and is staffed with licensed social workers/counselors, backed by legal experts, who are trained in matters including mandatory reporting requirements across all 50 states. It is our hope to be able to introduce this Helpline to our other denominations, including the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Additionally, we provide the following discounted services, including:

- Criminal Background Checks;
- Tuition assistance for Boundary Assistance Training;
- Electrical Inspection Assistance;
- Motor Vehicle Reports;
- Assistance building sexual abuse prevention action plans;
- Building valuation assistance

As an educational tool, we provide a quarterly newsletter for our participating churches and ministries known as The Steward. Each quarter, The Steward tackles issues uniquely facing churches and their affiliated ministries, and provides examples, lessons learned, thoughts on best practices, tips for improving risk, etc.

These are just some of the thousands of resources that we make available to our denominational members (whether or not they purchase insurance from us) through our website at www.insuranceboard.org.

We are privileged to be a Recognized Ministry Partner of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and invite new and innovative ways in furtherance of our commitment to serving the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) into the future.

In Christian partnership,

Timothy Harris, CPCU President & CEO Insurance Board
The General Board has reviewed GA-1705 from Church Extension Financial and Missional Resources. The report is submitted to the General Assembly for presentation and discussion. No action is required.  
(Discussion time: 12 minutes)