

Regional Elders

Report to Regional Board

June 3, 2023

By David DeBow, Co-Chair of Regional Elders

The Regional Elders have met three times in the last nine months to discuss the transition to the Interim Regional Minister. Below is a quick summary of these three meetings:

July 27, 2022

Cathy shared that she and Doug were going to be announcing their retirement in the near future. The transition to a new Regional Minister would take 12 to 18 months. Cathy shared two main concerns during the meeting, which the Elders are uniquely positioned to help through their ministry: 1) Congregations going through the 12 to 18 month interim process can feel left out and drift away from regional contact; 2) The active and retired ministers can lack pastoral care (both personal and congregational) because of the short time frame of an Interim Regional Pastor. There were other concerns that Cathy expressed, but these were the main two topics of discussion. A broad discussion began on how the Regional Elders could help through the interim period.

These discussions continued in various forms between this meeting and the next among the Regional Elders and Regional Ministers.

February 17, 2023:

This meeting was a roll up the sleeves and make decisions about the Regional Elder Ministry. We explored a broad range of focused ministry ideas. Two main ministries of the Regional Elders emerged from this discussion: 1) To develop a ministry where the Elders are present in the region's congregations. A couple of the ideas were to visit during worship and attend special events. (Several Regional Elders experimented with visiting congregations between meetings and reported back to the group.) 2) To expand the Retired Ministry of the Regional Elders to all ministers during the Interim Period. The Regional Elders looked at this proposal and realized how much work we would add to the elder ministry. Out of this discussion came the idea of additional Elders (especially in our larger Districts). A third idea was a support ministry by several chaplains in the Region. This has not developed into a ministry. If this ministry does develop, it will be reported to the Regional Board. We acknowledged that the expanded ministry would be an 18-month to 24-month commitment through the transition.

Selected Regional Elder Co-Chairs:

Larry Crist – Snake River and Blue Mountain River Districts

David DeBow – Scenic Rivers, Santiam River, and Columbia River Gorge Districts

Contact the Interim Regional Minister Search Committee and Our Future Story Representative to share these changes in the Regional Elder Ministry. These contacts have been made.

May 25, 2023:

We transferred leadership from Cathy Wirt to Larry Crist/David DeBow. Cathy led half the meeting, and Larry/David led the other half.

- Opening devotion and prayer - **Larry**
- Expressions of appreciation to those leaving the ministry (all involved since 2017)
 - Carol Miller – Scenic Rivers
 - Michael Kennedy – Scenic Rivers
 - Cathy Myers Wirt – Regional Minister and leader of Regional Elders
- History of Regional Elders – **Cathy**
 - Pastoral Care of Retired Minister – shared ministry - Regional Ministers and Elders
 - Began in 2017 as a pilot project for three years
 - Became a ministry of the Region in 2020
 - Expanded Regional Elder Ministry through Interim Period
 - Connection of Churches in Districts
 - Pastoral Care of all Ministers in our Districts
- History of Districts – **Cathy**
 - Unique Ministries have formed in each District
- Welcome of new members into Regional Elder Ministry – **Cathy**
 - Wayne Bell – Scenic Rivers
 - Sandi Richard - Scenic Rivers
 - Laura Powell – Scenic Rivers
 - Kim Free – Santiam Rivers
- Strength of being together as Districts – **Larry and David**
 - Larry shared that their district ministers have begun meeting in person at Red Rock CC instead of online. This has been a positive and strong experience for the ministers.
 - David shared on Sunday that two congregations in the Columbia Gorge District had a joint baptism. On Monday, the active district ministers had dinner at First Church. Just as Larry shared, it was a positive and strong experience.
 - Cathy shared that all five Districts have their active ministers meeting regularly. She also shared some of the unique district activities.
- Business of the Regional Elders
 - Contact made of Search Committee and Rep. to Our Future Story – **David**
 - Joys and Concerns of Ministers – Who will do this – **Discussion led by Cathy**
 - Renee in the Regional Office will be our contact person
 - Cathy will check if Renee will send prayer information out for the elders
 - Important for each Elder to relay information to Renee
 - Building a Contact List in each District – Summer Project – **David**
 - Contact List of congregations (Admin. Assistant, Minister, Youth Pastor, etc.)
 - Double-check the current contact information we have for each minister
 - Review of Regional Policy in this area – **Cathy**
 - Develop a plan for Reg. Elders that complies with Regional Policy
 - Renee will be our contact person in the Regional Office
 - Questions by elders on contacts in their Districts
- Next Meeting – late September or Early October
- Words of appreciation for the Regional Elders from **Cathy**
- Closing Prayer – **David**

Regional Elders and Districts (May 25, 2023):

Blue Mountain Rivers:

Larry Crist

Columbia River Gorge:

Michael Crouch – Retired Minister’s Ministry

David DeBow – Church Ministry

Possible New Elder – New Church Ministry

Santiam River:

Kim Free

Possible New Elder

Scenic Rivers:

Laura Powell

Sandi Richard

Wayne Bell

Snake River:

Cheryl Hudson

Chaplains:

Myrna Phillips

Noel Phillips

Regional Elders – Co-Chairs:

Larry Crist – Blue Mountain Rivers and Snake River Districts

David DeBow – Columbia River Gorge, Santiam River, and Scenic Rivers Districts