



**CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
(DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)  
ILLINOIS AND WISCONSIN**

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**Presents**

**A MANUAL FOR UNDERSTANDING,  
USING AND ORDERING  
PERCEPT DEMOGRAPHIC STUDIES**

**Facilitators:**

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**and**

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**Percept™**  
*Close The Gap*

Use of this manual is restricted to members of congregations  
related to the Christian Church in Illinois and Wisconsin.

**"Called to be disciples of Christ. . . ."**

All organizations, denominations, and churches need to be about the task of discerning what God is calling them to be and what mission they are called to do. All manifestations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) - general, regional and congregational - continually need to be about this task of discernment. . . waking to God's dream and using the gifts we have received for reaching out to the needs of the world. And, certainly, to be giving it our best efforts.

For that purpose, our General Minister and President Richard L. Hamm has just written a book titled *2020 Vision for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* [Chalice Press, 2001] to help focus and clarify our life together in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Long Range Planning and Visioning Committee for the Christian Church in Illinois and Wisconsin has recently completed such work and in those documents named "*Growing Disciples Congregations for Healthy, Vital Ministry*" as our regional mission. And, now it is just as important to ask "What identifies and focuses the gifts and ministries of your local congregation?"

In almost all the literature about congregational health, a primary and consistent characteristic is one that focuses on "Clarity of Purpose, Vision, Mission, Core Values, and Goals." This is not a new principle. In the Old Testament book of Proverbs (28:18) it is written: "*Without a vision, the people perish.*" Jesus speaks very clearly about mission in the Great Commission, when he instructs the Disciples (Matthew 28:18-20): "*Go therefore and make disciples . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. . .*" Two highly-regarded church leaders, more on the contemporary scene, have quotable insights about the value and importance of vision clarity: "*Without a vision, the people go to another parish.*" [Walt Kallestad] and John Maxwell believes there is a direct correlation of vision, funding, and vitality.

As part of the CCIW Region's ministries of support and equipping our participating congregations, we have sought out and contracted with Percept, an outstanding national research company, to provide quality demographic information for your use in defining your "current reality" and "the ministry area potentials." This planning material is critical for both congregational mission renewal and regional new congregation establishment. This information is foundational for any "faithful planning" process. CCIW is very fortunate to have on our administrative support staff, Dana Worrell, who has been trained and proficient in these very complex materials. She has written this manual for use with local church teams. She and other Regional staff members are available to consult with your leadership in your vision and planning processes.

We look forward to working with you in defining your congregational vision and mission and in growing your congregation's health and vitality in service of Christ and honoring God.

Herb Knudsen  
Regional Minister and President

May 2001

## INTRODUCTION

*Religious faith in America is dying! Based upon the responses of over eighteen thousand Americans, what has been a foundational component of American culture is failing rapidly. Indeed, if the current decline in faith involvement continues, as indicated on Percept's last Ethos survey, around the year 2013 less than half of all Americans will still hold to some level of active faith.*

*As we have shared these findings with people, immediately we are hit with a torrent of "What abouts." What about all the churches that are growing? What about the megachurches? What about the Holy Spirit? What about the Scriptures that teach that even the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church? (taken from: Regele: Death of the Church; p 143)*

As disturbing, or unrealistic, as this seems, what is apparent is the world around us is changing. Whether we want to think about it, realize it or accept it, society today is changing. For better or worse, the matrix of society is so diverse that the Church as we know it is changing in such a way we hardly recognize it.

How does the Church of today change to meet the needs of the society of tomorrow? That is the primary question we need to be asking, and the vision and planning which needs to occur in order for the Church to remain vital and healthy for tomorrow's children. Whether or not we like it, changes are taking place, everyday and in many ways. The Church needs to change, as well.

It's easy to make that last statement. It's easy to tell you to make the necessary changes. It's easy to make suggestions about what to do and how to do it. But what we would suggest, might or might not be what's right for you. What we would suggest, might not work in one place but could in another. What we would suggest could be totally inappropriate for your communities or situations. So, what do we do and how do we do it?

The Regional Office of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Illinois and Wisconsin has considered this very issue of change, vitality and growth for the Disciples of Christ churches in the Region. We are very concerned about the decline in membership, activity, and financial support our churches are experiencing. In exploring ways to become a viable resource for you, the churches of the Illinois-Wisconsin Region, we have entered into a contractual agreement with Percept Group, Inc., the top leading demographics company in the United States.

Why a demographics company? We believe, in order to make the necessary changes in our churches and aggressively promote growth, health and vitality, we need to take a look at several issues:

1. What does our past history tell us about the church/congregation of which we are a part?
2. How did we get where we are today? What activities/events took place that helped mold our congregation to its present form?
3. What is happening to us as a congregation today? Why are we growing or declining?
4. If we are healthy and growing, what can we do to continue that growth?
5. If we are declining, what can we do to turn the situation around?

The first step to answering these questions is to enter into a process of visioning and planning. These questions, and more, will be part of that process. As you begin to reflect, think and plan, you will begin to uncover your "story"...the story of what God has done for you. You will begin to discover ways to continue that story. You will begin to discover a sense of direction - where you might be going and possibly how to get there.

As a resource to help you arrive at this junction, the Regional Office, through its Percept relationship, will provide you with the realities of your mission field - the facts and figures relevant to your community and your church. When you know the facts as they presently are, you can make more informed and valid decisions for the future.

The manual you have before you is one of those resources. It is a step-by-step guide to Percept and how the demographics can help you. It is one of the most valuable resources you will ever use or need. And because of the Region's relationship with Percept, the cost to you is minimal, subsidized in part by the Region.

In order for the Church of today to be healthy and vital tomorrow, we need to know what society is thinking and feeling. That information will help us meet needs that are not being met and enhance ones that may be uncertain at best.

The Regional Office invites you and your congregation to explore ways you can remain healthy, vital and growing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Dana Worrell  
Christian Church in Illinois and Wisconsin  
Percept Group, Inc. Resource Person

[This manual is an abbreviated issue. To obtain the complete manual, call Dana at the CCIW Regional Office (309-828-6293) or e-mail her at [dana@cciwdisciples.org](mailto:dana@cciwdisciples.org)]

## **ABOUT PERCEPT.....**

Percept Group, Inc. began in 1988 to provide churches and hundreds of regional and national denominational agencies with demographics and other resources for planning within their particular mission context. Percept is recognized as one of the best strategic information companies in the country.



Basically, demographic and ethos studies help regional denominational bodies develop an integrated strategic plan for congregational development in the areas of vital congregations, new church development, re-development, racial/ethnic ministries and any other areas.

Demographics is the study of the number of people in relation to their environment. Ethos is the study of the characteristics of a culture.

Percept uses the U.S. Census as the basis of their studies. In addition, over 30 other data collection sources divided into over 133 topics and 50 lifestyle segments are used, depending on how extensive a report is needed.

### **WHAT PERCEPT OFFERS.....**

Percept utilizes a 3-step plan.

Phase 1 - Visioning-Perceiving the Present, Imagining the Future - looks at the present situation and asks the questions: What needs to be done? And What gives meaning to our lives? This phase uses a 4-part Biblical Reflection study and Systematic Listening conferences to determine what is reality and what ought the future to be.

Other "Tools for Change" used by this phase are the People Area/Focal Area/Neighborhood Area analysis of maps, compasses and graphics to tell where development should be focused. Strategic goals are established to provide clear vision and direction.

Phase 2 - Focusing - Defining Ministry Opportunities - focuses on where ministry opportunities should occur and prioritizes the processes. This helps congregations take a closer look at themselves, their area and lifestyles. "Tools of Change" used by this phase include the First View reports. This phase also looks more closely at the strategic plan, setting goals, appointing committees and people to focus on the process.

Phase 3 - Localizing - Doing the Plan of Action - defines specific mission opportunities that surfaced in the strategic plan. "Tools for Change" used by this phase could include the Ministry Area Profile (advanced cross-reference for the First View) or the results of a congregational survey.



## ABOUT Link2Lead.com

This is a new web-site created by Percept for use by pastors and congregational leaders at the local level. It is a resource tool provided to our CCIW congregations as a result of the Region's contractual relationship with Percept Group, Inc. There is no other means of access.

To log on the web-site, enter Link2Lead.com. You will be asked to register your church. Simply follow and answer the questions. You will be assigned an ID number that must be used each time you log-in to Link2Lead. This is your number only. No one else can use it, unless you let them.

Once at the web-site, you will find the following introductory information:

**ichange** - a free, interactive survey which assesses your response to change and can be used with other leaders of your congregation

**iLeadType** - a free, interactive survey which helps identify the different gifts and skills of church leaders



- free, instant demographic information for any zip code you



- a free, intensive exercise about significant changes for the church in North America.



First View Report of your zip code area. Cost to you is FREE if downloaded from the <Link2Lead> website. Call the Regional Office for a more extensive First View.

This web-site is then divided into several sections.

**Getting Started** – tells you what is required to run the program and how to begin.

**My Self** - asks you to respond to a 39-question survey that serves to tell you how well you respond to change. The 5 change response styles are listed for you as well as the results of your survey. A discussion guide is available.

**My Community** - asks you questions about your area, then gives you an actual report of a zip code you have entered. First Views are free, but you can only order one and only for your zip code area. Included at this subdirectory is the zip code questions and survey, street map capabilities, "Learn 10 Facts" about your community, the First View Report, the First View Workshop questionnaire and ability to order the Ministry Area Profile (regularly \$345, but a limited time offer of \$175 plus \$15 shipping). Cost is considerably less when purchased through the Regional Office.

**My Congregation** - asks you what you think you know about your congregation. At this subdirectory, you can order the Context Report - the 6-page survey you send to Percept for scoring. In turn they will send you a 60-page detailed report about your congregation. Cost to you is \$395 (regularly \$795) plus \$0.95 per survey. Costs are considerably less when ordered through the Regional Office. You can copy the survey free and send it to the Regional office for scoring at a considerable discount.

**My World** - asks you what the 5 keys to discovering the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church might be. You are asked to answer the true-false questions and use the discussion guide to discover how changes have effected the church. This subdirectory will provide for you four "Tools for Change" suggested by Percept for study and discussion.

*Starting Strong* has a discussion guide you can download free or purchase in Lots of 10.

*Death of the Church* has a discussion guide you can download free or purchase the book at \$21.00/10 or more = \$14.70 each.

*Crossing the Bridge* has no discussion guide. This book helps congregations facing difficulties with changes. \$20.99 each or \$14.70 for 10 or more.

*What's Next?* Gives descriptions of the books, information and products, training and Feedback about Percept and Link2Lead - all to help you make better informed decisions about your church's future.

This web site also has information on the background of Percept, the current list of clients, a glossary of all the terms and explanations of the data, an e-mail directory for Percept personnel, and a bookstore site where you can order books and materials related to church decline and growth and ethos materials for your area.

## WHAT THE REGIONAL OFFICE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN ILLINOIS AND WISCONSIN OFFERS.....

Through its contract with Percept Group, Inc., CCIW serves as your demographic resource center, offering you the following:

- A short course on Visioning and Planning
- Congregational survey, results and consultation
- Demographic study tailored to individual needs; not a generic study
- First View reports and additional maps
- Ministry Area Profiles - advanced, comprehensive reports of your area that includes color maps and graphs and consultation. This is a cross-referenced tool used in conjunction with the First View report.
- Written reports on the data
- Resource Staff Person to assist with information and interpretation
- Use of the Link2Lead web-site for churches with Internet access
- Greatly reduced fees specific to your situation
- Opportunities to attend training sessions, conferences and seminars hosted by Percept at reduced rates.

### **COSTS.....**

Listed below are most of the fees incurred when using Percept demographic materials. As a client of Percept, we receive the materials at a reduced rate. Additionally, CCIW subsidizes the cost to you, making your costs even less. This new rate will depend on several factors and each request is computed at a different rate. Some of those determining factors include: membership, participating membership, BMF giving, growth or decline rate since 1998, budget. Also considered in your cost will be the types of materials ordered for your study. You will receive an itemized invoice with your written report and the fees are due 30 days following receipt of the invoice. Checks should be made payable to Christian Church Illinois Wisconsin and designated for Percept materials.

<u>COSTS</u>	<u>REGULAR</u>	<u>CCIW</u>
Access to Link2Lead	By contract only	
Ministry Area Profile complete with maps and compass	\$345	\$190
Re-Visioning process; includes Biblical reflections and exercises	\$795	\$595
Congregational Survey with scored results and report	\$770	\$570
Additional cost is \$0.95 per survey		
VISTA 3-phase congregational development	\$1500	
First Views	\$ 85	\$ 85
Written Reports	N/A	\$ 15
Additional color maps; cost is for each map		\$ 20
Sourcebook, when ordered separately		\$ 25

This comes free with a Ministry Area Profile study

This is also free when downloaded from the <Link2Lead.com> website.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION.....**

The Percept Demographics program is extensive in its reporting and information gathering. At least 30 different sources are used to collect the most up-to-date information for you when you order reports. There are several types available to you.

In addition to the free website, the Regional Office can provide you with all the information you need in order to make an informed decision when answering the questions "What is God Calling Us to do" and "What mission are we to begin?"

Please call Dana Worrell, Christian Church in Illinois & Wisconsin Regional Staff Resource person, at 1-309-828-6293 for more information, answers to questions you have about Percept or to order a study.

There are several opportunities for you to attend training sessions at the Regional Office. They usually last a couple of hours, you receive the full manual in addition to working through the Link2Lead website, and receive suggested ways to help your congregation vision and plan for growth and vitality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.