



# Tomorrow's Leaders Today

The good news from HELM and higher education institutions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

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## Many journeys, one body

**Emerging leaders from both new and established congregations share stories, worship, hope**

Being one in Christ means knowing each other's stories of faith.

The Disciples Leadership Institute, a new organization sponsored by Higher Education and Leadership Ministries, gathered 28 ordained and licensed ministers, and lay leaders to share stories of ministry and faith, critique and challenge each other, and look for ways to strengthen each others' ministry.

Intentionally designed to bring together younger leaders from both new and established congregations, the institute

arose from a HELM goal to help the church learn from the hundreds of new congregations under formation within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and help those congregations establish full fellowship with established congregations. Of the 28 participants, half were from new congregations, and half were also non-Anglo.

Funding for the first two years of the institute is being provided by the Oreon E. Scott Foundation and by the Shumaker Family Foundation of Olathe, Kansas. After HELM secured funding, the important work of planning the event and recruiting participants was done by a volunteer steering committee.

"DLI is one piece in the larger ministry of the church to emerging leaders and for ministers seeking to connect with each other and envision a new life for the church," said Joe Blosser, a member of the steering committee and a doctoral student at the Disciples Divinity House of the University of Chicago. "That said, we are also a unique manifestation of this kind of ministry."

The week's worship, study, and discussion focused on the "Road to Emmaus" story found in Luke 24:13-33. That manifested itself in several different ways.

Worship reflected the diversity of the group and of Disciples in general, including many worship styles and sermons from participants covering the breadth of theological understandings.

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The 2006 Disciples Leadership Institute

## Time for a family reunion

**A HELM Leadership Fellow alumnus reflects on the diversity among Disciples**

By Steve Mason

In the third chapter of Mark there is a brief story of Jesus correcting a messenger who had told him that his mother and brothers had arrived and were looking for him. He gently chided the messenger by replying, "Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother (3:35)." Often, it's easy to think of church family as people in our congregation

who serve as an extended relatives. But do we actively think of all believers, much less all Disciples, as our brother, sister, aunt or uncle?

As someone from a "traditional" Disciples congregation I saw my church family as people who looked like me and had similar backgrounds. But my picture of what the Disciples family looks like was extended at

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## Gifts that continue to give

Dr. James I. Spainhower may have retired as president of the Division of Higher Education (now HELM) 13 years ago, but he and his wife, Joanne, are still making a difference for campus ministries.

When he retired, the DHE Board of Directors created a fund honoring Spainhower to support Disciples campus ministries. The Spainhowers, who now reside in Raymore, Mo., recently added to the fund, which currently undergirds the activities of the Student Ecumenical Partnership.

"Campus ministries have always been Jim's passion," said HELM Vice President Linda Plengemeier, who worked with Spainhower. "He believes higher education unites the mind and the soul, and campus ministries were so important to him during his student days."

HELM continues to celebrate the leadership and generosity of the Spainhowers.

## REUNION

this summer's Hispanic/Bilingual Conference in Killeen, Texas, and the NAPAD Conference in Berkeley, California. Both of these ministries showcased the diverse family that is the Disciples of Christ. Both presented the new Disciples churches that are rapidly changing the overall shape of the Disciples.

The conferences centered on the respective business of each group but also focused on how they could interact with the larger church in coming years. Although each group had a very independent identity, they shared a few qualities that most of the already-established Disciples churches sometimes lack. There was an optimistic energy about the possibilities of the Holy Spirit working through them, both groups were actively led by youth and young adults (the NAPAD Executive Committee had only one person above the age of 35!), and they both felt like their unique experiences were specific



MASON

HELM Leadership Fellow Esther Lee played a key role in youth programming at the NAPAD Convention by coordinating activities for 30 high-school students from across the country. Their experiences included an inside look at an Oakland, Calif. non-profit that helps at-risk students work toward a career, tours of Chinatown in Oakland and San Francisco, and conversations about leadership and the importance of education. HELM's Brad Lyons served as a resource for the group.



LEE

Next up for Esther: the Local Arrangements Committee for the 2007 General Assembly in Fort Worth. Luckily she won't have to travel too far; the assembly will be held about four miles from Texas Christian University, where she is currently a sophomore.

spiritual gifts that are calls to ministry.

Although both NAPAD and the Hispanic/Bilingual congregations are a minority in the larger Disciples church, their excitement has an infectious quality that could easily spread to the "traditional" churches if only congregations from various backgrounds would pool their resources more often. One of the focus points for HELM Leadership Fellows is the need for communication and being open to a flexible approach to ministries. As a Fellow, I learned that if I listen to those who may

have different ways of worshiping God, I can find a new appreciation for what they bring to the table and what spiritual gifts I have to offer. The results of "traditional" and "non-traditional" congregations working together could lead to a renewal for the entire church – and for all Disciples to understand what it means to be a part of the family of God.

*A 2004 graduate of Drake University, Leadership Fellow alumnus Steve Mason served as a Disciples Peace Intern this summer. The Nebraska native now lives in New York City.*

## Scholarship Sunday at FCC Winterset, Iowa, draws a huge crowd

Want to see how you can make a difference? Go to Winterset, Iowa.

Sixty-six students shared a total of \$57,450 in scholarships for the upcoming school year, all from the Charles and Lois Taylor Scholarship Fund provided by First Christian Church of Winterset. Taylor scholarship recipients must graduate from a high school in Madison County, about 30 miles southwest of Des Moines and famous for its covered bridges. Fields of study range from medicine degrees to cosmetology.

HELM manages the fund's investments, processes and reviews applications. Recommendations are passed on to the congregation, which makes the final decision on recipients and amounts.

Since 1989, the Taylor scholarship fund has provided individual scholarships totaling more than \$1.14 million to 918 recipients.

Call 314-991-3000 to learn more about how HELM can help manage your congregation's scholarship fund.



Photo courtesy of the Winterset Madisionian

## DLI

- Five small groups created more intimate settings for discussion, revelation, and bonding.
- After a short testimony or presentation, selected pastors were "cross-examined" by another participant in an effort to understand the different spiritual relationships or to compare and contrast different theological views.
- Throughout the week, participants could examine theology through arts and crafts, in-depth Bible study, walking stations of the cross or a labyrinth, or other exercises that may not normally be available for pastors.
- Mementos of each worship service – a vial of ocean water, olive oil for anointing, an engraved pebble, a hand-made work of art – provided tangible reminders of the experience.

Few of the conference's participants knew what to expect when they arrived at the retreat center in Menlo Park, Calif., on August 14. Five days later, they shared powerful words about the week's experience.

"God is about to do something powerful," said Ana Rivera-Acevedo, pastor of Alabama's Discipulos de Anniston congregation. "God is starting to work and secure the foundations of a new revival. This healing, confronting, and brain-stirring event helped me see Jesus, God and the Gospel from a totally different perspective"

"When we arrived, we were a diverse group of people who didn't really know each other," said Lonora Graves, a layperson from Table of Grace in Sacramento, Calif. "During the week we were able to share this diversity, to grow,



**Pedro Goycolea and Kirsten Linford listen as Will Sparrow (right) explains his take on the Road to Emmaus passage from Luke. The same small groups met throughout the conference to examine the passage and ministry in different ways.**

and to have authentic conversations and interactions. By the time the week ended, we were friends, prayer partners, and a unified force to be reckoned with!"

The grants from the Scott and Shumaker foundations will support a second conference next year. Beyond that, the project's future is in the hands of its participants.

"Our long-term goal is to create a self-sustaining, self-governing and intentional organization of emerging Disciples leaders dedicated to both learning about congregational leadership and leading congregations toward organizational health," said HELM President Dennis Landon. "We believe leaders who can transform organizations from survival mode to mission mode can be significantly nurtured by providing opportunities to learn from each

other, establishing supportive relationships and support networks, gathering for community times, and through the collective faith of the group.

"We know this is not the only program focusing on emerging leaders," Landon adds, "and we celebrate the growing number of efforts to strengthen younger leaders across the church, including the new DSF program (see page 4). With this group we want specifically to help establish a setting for creative interaction among leaders of both new and established congregations."

That unique opportunity wasn't lost on participants.

"It's great to see our church intentionally bringing together the people of such different backgrounds, new church and existing church pastors, clergy and laity, Latino, African-American, Asian, White, Haitian," said Matt Rosine, who pastors First Colony Christian Church in Sugar Land, Texas. "This is what our church will be in 15 years. This is what our church is now."

That interactive chance to refocus on the Gospel was another goal of the conference.

"This is the best and most meaningful conference I have been to in a long time," said Kirsten Linford, a Disciples minister pastoring a United Church of Christ congregation in Los Angeles. "I prayed as I have not prayed before. We worshipped deeply and in many ways. We talked and shared about our faith – telling different truths with respect and honor for each other. I really think this group has the power to bring something new to our church and to be a surprising witness to Jesus' radical love."

## 2006 Disciples Leadership Institute

- Nathan Brown, West Side Christian Church, Portsmouth, VA
- Joe Blosser, Disciples Divinity House of the University of Chicago, Chicago, IL
- Molly Carlson, Table of Grace Christian Church, Sacramento, CA
- Broderick Connesero, New Direction Christian Church, Memphis, TN
- Wilson Dickinson, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY
- Yvonne Gilmore-Essig, Shepherd Park Christian Church, Washington, DC
- Earle Fisher, Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church, Memphis, TN
- Amy Gopp, Week of Compassion, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), New York City, NY
- Matt Melchor-Gordon, Waterstone Community Church, Bozeman, MT
- Pedro Goycolea, Centro Vida, Sahaurita, AZ
- Lonora Graves, Table of Grace Christian Church, Sacramento, CA
- April Lewton, M.Div student, Disciples Divinity House of the University of Chicago, Chicago, IL
- Kirsten Linford, Westwood Hills Congregational Church, Los Angeles, CA
- Luc and Joanie Louis, Eglise Evangelique MITSPA, Miami, FL
- Brad Lyons, HELM, St Louis, MO
- Jose Miralles, Nuevo Comienzo, Hartford, CT
- Geoff Mitchell, Community Christian Church, Aledo, TX
- Jose Morales, Jr, Iglesia del Pueblo, Hammond, IN
- Christian Piatt, Milagro Christian Church, Pueblo, CO
- Sarah Richardson, Compton Heights Christian Church, St Louis, MO
- Ana Rivera-Acevedo, Discipulos de Anniston, Anniston, AL
- Hilda Robles, National Hispanic Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Indianapolis, IN
- Eli Rolon, Iglesia del Pueblo, Hammond, IN
- Matt Rosine, First Colony Christian Church, Sugar Land, TX
- William Sparrow, Jr., Empowerment Ministry, Burlington, NJ
- Sara Steen, Christian Church of Northern California - Nevada, El Cerrito, CA
- Craig Walls, South Pointe Christian Church, Lincoln, NE
- Dave Yonker, First Christian Church, Sterling, IL

## A note from Dennis

Dear partners in ministry,

It's been a summer of new experiences for me, and a time of grace as well.

In June I learned through a routine test that I have an early stage rectal cancer that should respond very well to treatment. By mid-August I had completed a course of concurrent radiation and chemotherapy, and I am now scheduled for surgeries in early October, and then again probably in early December. All this has kept me from traveling this summer, and will keep me grounded for a good part of the fall, but I expect to back in circulation — and cancer free — by the New Year.



LANDON

I am grateful for many things: First, for the grace of my colleagues at HELM, who have kept and will be keeping commitments on my behalf and continuing to develop our ministries; second for the prayers of my colleagues and friends throughout the church, which have been a source of encouragement and real healing; and third for the resources of modern medicine and the wonders of diagnostic testing. (If you're over 50 and have not had a colonoscopy, get it scheduled. I can confirm that it's a life-saving experience!)

We continue to take pride in HELM's ministry of leader development in partnership with Disciples higher education institutions and our other ministerial partners. Thank you for your support for our work and your prayers for a faithful future for our church.

In Christ,

Dennis Landon, President

## On campus

### DSF announces pastoral formation program

The Disciples Seminary Foundation is launching the Pastoral Formation Network, a response to the growing needs for first call pastors of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). It will provide intentional avenues for first call pastors to network with one another and with seasoned mentors for the purpose of practical leadership and spiritual formation.

Over the next five years, the network will seek to offer (a) An annual first call pastor's retreat, including licensed/commissioned ministers; (b) Mentor training events; (c) Opportunities for leadership development and spiritual growth.

The intention behind the Network is to bring pastors from diverse backgrounds together encouraging relationship building, mutual support and friendship, as well as ongoing learning and personal development.

The PFN seeks to be as open and inclusive as possible and does not stipulate conditions for membership with the exception of trained "Mentor Pastors" who participate in the program. All first call pastors, seminary students, or certificate of ministry students are encouraged to be involved in the PFN. Likewise, pastors beyond their first five years of ministry are called to consider becoming a PFN Mentor Pastor.

For more information, visit DSF's web site, [www.dsf.edu](http://www.dsf.edu).



### Mix in '06 event packs auditorium at CTS

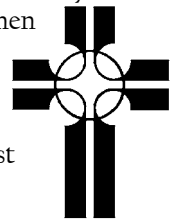
More than 425 women packed Shelton Auditorium on the campus of Christian Theological Seminary on June 22 for a lecture and panel discussion on women and ministry.

The inaugural Helen Spaulding lecture on women in ministry, was a part of the Mix in '06 Women's event, a one time historic gathering of the Disciples of Christ Women's Quadrennial Assembly and The United Church of Christ National Women's Meeting.

Sharon Watkins, the general minister and president of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), gave a keynote address in which she celebrated the accomplishments of women throughout the ages and particularly in their roles as the bedrock of their churches. She encouraged them to remain active and not be afraid to continue to lead.

After the lecture and discussion, the women attending the lecture spread over the CTS campus with tour guides and on their own to enjoy the unique art and architecture found there.

Two days prior to the lecture, CTS hosted a group of more than 60 women who were attending the Mix in '06 from other countries. After an orientation session, the women worshipped together in CTS's Sweeney Chapel and then took tours of the campus.



### New: Bookmark for theological institutions

A new bookmark listing the 10 theological institutions affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is now available. It replaces the two-sided "Adventures in Ministry" poster created in 2001.

Paid for by the institutions and produced by HELM, the bookmark is a companion to a similar black bookmark promoting Disciples colleges and universities created last year. Measuring 8½ inches tall and 4¼ inches wide, the bookmarks are the perfect size for a bulletin insert.

If you have potential college students or seminarians, or if you just want to know where Disciples are going to learn and be in community, order either bookmark online at [www.helmdisciples.org/orders](http://www.helmdisciples.org/orders), or call 314-991-3000. We'll ship them free of charge.

