



# Tomorrow's Leaders Today

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

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## The art of conversation

### Leadership Fellows practice talking about their faith - and it's tougher than it seems

During a break in small groups, Allie Lundblad sat against a wall, scribbling a sentence, then rephrasing it. A prospective minister, she was concentrating on how to express her relationship with God in words others could understand. "This is hard," she said, but a big smile showed how much she was enjoying the challenge.

How Christians talk about our faith and work together despite our differences was the center of the 10th HELM Leadership Fellows conference, held the first weekend in November. Twenty-two students from across

the country who have shown leadership skills and want to help lead the church gathered in Colorado Springs to meditate on their faith and then find the right combination of words to express it.

A member of the student planning team that helped select a theme and bring it to life, Lundblad explained the conference's roots in her own struggles.

"I went into the planning meeting after a couple of really discouraging conversations in which I was disappointed in  
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## Disciples Leadership Institute returning in 2012

The Disciples Leadership Institute, HELM's program that brings leaders of all ethnicities and from new and established congregations across the country will return in 2012 thanks in part to a grant from Reconciliation Ministry, a new partner in the program.

DLI helps congregational leaders transcend traditional divisions and understand the multiplicities of worship, faith experience, and theological expression brought by participants. Testimony, small groups, spiritual practices, and unique worship frame a week packed with discussion, sharing, and prayer.

DLI's first three years were underwritten by grants from the Oreon E. Scott Foundation and the Shumaker Family Foundation. The addition of Reconciliation Ministry, the Disciples' ministry to break down racial barriers in the church and beyond, breathes new life into a program that both HELM and DLI participants believe has the potential to shape the way Disciples view diversity in the denomination.

The first two DLI conferences were held in 2006 and 2007 in suburban San Francisco, with St. Louis hosting a third conference in 2008. Almost 40 participants have partici-

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# Meet you on The Intersection

In our last newsletter, we told you about HELM's acquisition of The Intersection, a web site and social network created for members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and a larger ecumenical community. So far, the early results are good.

- Membership has increased 5 percent, to more than 900.
- Several conversations centered on congregational vitality, including information about the new Hope Initiative, the partnership between Church Extension, Disciples Home Missions, and HELM centering on getting congregations back on track with a focus on mission; links to a major study on healthy congregations by the United Methodist Church and a series from The Columbia Partnership.
- Other discussions ranging from a perceived shortage of pastors to whether Homer Simpson is Catholic.
- Several pastors blogged from the Pastors' Conference in San Diego, including Oregon pastor David Waggoner's examination of keynoter Diana Butler Bass' presentations on church in these challenging times.
- Blogs on sustainability, both environmentally and financially, from Church Extension's John Davidson; reflections on balance as a leader from Nebraska's Doug Pfeiffer; California pastor Maria Tafoya's weekly "Tuesday's Child" blog; and more.



If you haven't signed up for The Intersection, what are you waiting for? Go to [www.disciplesintersection.org](http://www.disciplesintersection.org) and click "Sign up" in the right column. It only takes a few minutes. Feel free to join in a conversation or start your own.



**Steve Mason, a 2004 graduate of the HELM Leadership Fellows Program and a 2010 graduate of the Disciples Divinity House at Vanderbilt was ordained September 18 at First Christian Church in Lincoln, Neb. He and his wife, Caitlin, live in Kansas City, Mo., where he currently serves as a pastoral resident at Country Club Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).**

## DLI

dated in the program so far.

Reconciliation Ministry has approved an initial grant to underwrite a planning process in 2011 that will undergird the restart of DLI and develops a plan to train leaders to replicate the DLI experience across the church.

We anticipate gathering a renewed planning team in next summer to prepare for a 2012 national DLI Conference and regional conferences in several locations in North America.

"The HELM Board of Directors recognized the danger when Christians with different theological and cultural roots can't understand each other," says HELM President Dennis Landon. "The first three DLI conferences demonstrated this understanding was not only possible but crucial. DLI gives us great hope for the future, and our partnership with Reconciliation Ministry gives DLI a new lease on life."

## The Hope Partnership gathers pastors to share insight on congregational vitality

In our September newsletter, HELM announced a partnership with Church Extension and Disciples Home Missions centering on congregational renewal.

That partnership now has a name: The Hope Partnership for Missional Transformation. The Hope Partnership is one of many places where congregational leaders are focusing on transformation, emergent Christianity, and becoming missional church.

In early November, seven regions, each represented by their regional ministers and a pair of pastors from congregations that had gone through significant transformation, gathered to continue to build a network focused on congregational transformation.

Over and over, becoming a missional church emerges as the crucial ingredient in renewing a dying church.

Training for pastors is key element of the program. Participants planned a pair of

intense, week-long training courses, to be taken within three months of each other.

Coaching and self-reliant peer networking will provide opportunities for ongoing dialogue; these elements be piloted in the next year. In addition, the 2011 General Assembly in Nashville will offer a six-hour learning track on a Leadership Focus for Transformational Pastors.

It's not just a pastor's job to lead the church through tough changes, says Church Extension's Rick Morse.

"We need to be working around with core team lay members to help propel congregational transformation. What we're talking about is deeply adaptive, more than a "punching up a program" approach. These congregations are going to be different than they are today."

Keep up with the Hope Partnership and other congregational transformation programs through The Intersection and HELM's web site, [www.helmdisciples.org](http://www.helmdisciples.org).



HELM is on Facebook and Twitter. Visit [www.helmdisciples.org](http://www.helmdisciples.org) for links.



**FELLOWS**

the ability of myself and other really intelligent, passionate Christians to articulate our faith well,” said Lundblad, a junior at Oberlin College from Asheville, N.C.

Lundblad isn't alone in finding the assignment challenging. In these times when opinion is misrepresented as fact and there is little room for disagreement, the ability to state our beliefs clearly without offending others is a lost art. This year's conference aimed to help students practice these conversations in a safe environment with the hope they would be able to start similar productive conversations back on their campuses and eventually in the communities where they will lead.

The conference's theme closely resembled another HELM project, the Disciples Leadership Institute. When the student planning team suggested the theme of “reclaiming faith,” three DLI veterans were asked to lead students through the process:

- Joe Blosser, an associate professor of religion and ethics at DePaul University and a member of the first Leadership Fellow class;

- Chesla Nickelson, an M.Div. student at Christian Theological Seminary; and

- Sara Steenhouse, associate pastor at Lafayette Christian Church and at InsideOUT, a new church start, both in the San Francisco Bay area.

The three resource staff led students through a trio of conversations focused on personal relationships with God, sexual ethics, and interfaith relations. While such conversations are easy

to label, engaging in those conversations is challenging – and the students were up to the task.

Students and organizers expected a challenging, exhausting weekend

“This conference demanded more of the Fellows than we had ever asked before,” said HELM Dennis Landon. “They spent a good part of the weekend in disciplined conversation about their faith and their lives. The conference also demanded even more of our resource people. Chesla, Sara, and Joe engaged the students and guided their conversations not just in the series of individual workshops but throughout the entire weekend. I'm proud of how hard everybody worked.”

Leadership Fellows shared a great appreciation for the experience.

“Articulating your faith in a thoughtful and meaningful sense is important. After spending a weekend focusing on doing this in a supportive and challenging environment, my belief in the importance of this has only grown,” said Virginia White, a sophomore at Rice University from Austin, Texas. “I have appreciated the time to practice this process, to be questioned, and to reflect. Through the weekend my hope for the future of the church as a body that can work compassionately together, even through differences, has been restored.”

While college students can often create a loose community during conferences like these, a deeper connection was noted by several students, including

Sarah Cheon, a senior at the University of California from Claremont, Calif..

“I really enjoyed getting to know my peers on a deeper level and to be able to appreciate the diversity of ideas and backgrounds found in each individual,” Cheon said. “It not only helped me to



**Alison Simon and Allie Lundblad examine cotton-like cattails during a break Saturday afternoon.**

articulate my own thoughts but also view my beliefs through a fresh perspective.”

Worship at Leadership Fellows conferences are planned and led by the student steering team, which provides opportunities for a variety of worship styles. This year's conference borrowed from children's worship styles and the monastic Taize tradition of silence and meditation.

**Recipe for good conversation**

While discussion focused on personal faith, participants were encouraged to note techniques that helped conversation. The three small groups then gathered on Sunday morning to share what they had learned. Healthy conversations included several basic but often underappreciated qualities:

- Compassion
- Empathy
- Affirmation and reassurance
- Guidance without dominance
- Flexibility in concepts & physicality
- Preparation by leaders
- Inclusiveness
- Attentiveness
- Careful expressions
- Gratitude
- Thoughtful observations
- Accountability
- Community



**Kiersten Hawes (left), Seth Rash, Sarah Cheon, and Stephen Hall listen intently as Sabreana Rodriguez explains her faith during Saturday afternoon's small-group discussion.**

“During Saturday night's worship, we were given a long moment of silence allowing us to pray in a number of different ways. I was able to actually feel God's presence,” said Paige Westhausen, a freshman at Culver-Stockton College from Girard, Ill. “It was a very powerful and emotional experience for me. I felt a connection with God that I haven't felt for a while.”

## On campus

### Chapman University adds affiliation with United Church of Christ

Chapman University has been welcomed into the United Church of Christ Council for Higher Education, making it the third Disciples school to have a dual affiliation with both Disciples and the UCC.

Chapman sought this relationship because the university already serves United Church of Christ students. The children and grandchildren of ministers of either denomination receive half tuition do youth who have served their Disciples Region or UCC Conference in youth leadership. All who participate in the Chapman student group called Disciples on Campus receive \$2,000 annually to help with their tuition.



“We are enriched as denominations because of our special partnership relationship. It makes great sense to officially recognize this partnership in the university setting,” said Nancy Brink, Director of Church Relations at Chapman. “Having this official designation will help us recruit excellent UCC youth from across the nation. We work to create a community of students who not only remain church connected, but leave Chapman ready to be transformational leaders in congregations.”

Chapman joins Drury University, which like Chapman is in covenant with the Disciples, and Tougaloo College, which is historically affiliated with the denomination, as schools with dual relations.

### Lilly Endowment provides \$1.1 million lead gift for CTS Fund for the Future

Christian Theological Seminary has received a grant of \$1,181,500 from Lilly Endowment Inc. to develop creative new approaches for educating pastors, ministers and counselors.

The grant comes at an important time in the school’s life and during a time when much is changing for denominational seminaries like CTS.

“The changing demographics of congregational life, the increasing complexity of pastoral ministry and the emergence of new technologies are changing theological education,” said David Herzog, Chairman of CTS’s Board of Trustees. “Lilly Endowment’s gift to CTS will enable us to build upon our current capabilities and explore new strategies to address these realities.”

One million dollars of the grant will serve as a lead gift for the Indianapolis seminary’s Fund for the Future providing the seminary with resources to develop and implement programs designed to send into the community a sizable and steady stream of excellent pastors who will lead, minister to and sustain thriving congregations.

“Our charge is to engage in a serious re-thinking of what it takes to prepare men and women to be excellent pastors of congregations in a rapidly changing ecclesial and cultural environment,” said Herzog. “This will require us to collaborate in new ways with congregations to attract the most promising students to produce pastors, ministers and counselors with



### DSF calls Berquist to serve as president

Disciples Seminary Foundation has called Jon L. Berquist to serve as president beginning February 1, 2011.

Dr. Berquist grew up in First Christian Church, Ventura, Calif., and is an ordained Disciples minister. He received a bachelor’s degree from Northwest Christian University, in Eugene, Ore., and a Ph.D. in Old Testament from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn. He taught Old Testament at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, Okla., where he served as associate professor and associate dean.



BERQUIST

For the last 16 years, Berquist has worked in religious publishing at Chalice Press and Westminster John Knox Press, specializing in biblical studies, theology, and preaching. Author or editor of several books, he has taught at several seminaries including Pacific School of Religion.

Dr. Berquist will be moving to Claremont with his wife, Sally G. Willis-Watkins, a minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA). They have two grown children.

Tamara Nichols Rodenberg has served as interim president since July 2009, when previous president Mary Anne Parrott retired.

the skills required to address new and yet unknown challenges.”

### TCU students combat hunger, engage in community activism

Through the office of Religious and Spiritual Life and countless other avenues on campus, TCU offers opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to live out their faith through work with social justice, civic engagement and community activism.

One example of this is the Heal Hunger Campaign and Annual Hunger Week, which for 29 years has raised awareness and funds around issues of hunger - both globally and locally. Through donations and fund-raisers, students have raised over \$600,000 over the years and donated over 12,000 pounds of canned goods



last year alone. TCU students collected more than six tons of canned goods during Hunger Week 2009.

Annual projects range from the annual Oxfam Hunger Banquet and Auction which have been a university tradition for decades to new ventures, like the new Kanstuction Competition sponsored by Albertsons Grocers.

More Campus News is online at [www.helmdisciples.org](http://www.helmdisciples.org).