

NO. 0911

## HIGHER EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP MINISTRIES

Dennis Landon, President  
Report to the General Board  
April, 2009

### HELM'S MISSION AND PURPOSE

With the whole church, Higher Education and Leadership Ministries works to help proclaim and embody the reign of God and to be part of the human transformation that is the mission of both higher education and the Church of Jesus Christ.

*"In order to develop and nurture transformative leaders for the church and the wider human community, Higher Education and Leadership Ministries develops partnerships between the church and higher education that are creative and reconciling meeting places of faith and understanding."  
(Provisional Mission Statement, May 2003)*

### HELM AND THE PRIORITIES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

HELM responds to the mission priorities of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ—new congregation establishment, congregational transformation, becoming a reconciling and anti-racist church, and leader development—by making those priorities inform all its activities. Thus, in our work with higher education institutions we look for ways those partnerships can add value for church leadership to both the undergraduate and ministerial educational experiences. We understand our involvement in student ministries as serving the church's leadership needs as a locale for exploring and refining vocation. In our direct leader development activity we explicitly seek to nurture leaders in such a way that they will contribute to the fulfillment of the Church's priorities.

### HELM AND THE CURRENT FINANCIAL CRISIS

HELM funds its ministries through a variety of sources (2009 Budget Figures):

From Designated and Non-Designated Investments	62%
From Disciples Mission Fund and related sources	22%
From Individual Gifts (Annual Fund)	11%
From Fees and Program Income	5%

Because we are heavily dependent on invested funds, the current financial crisis has reduced the resources available for ministry. In 2009 we will delay some events and meetings, curtail staff travel, postpone enlarging any programs, and look for every opportunity to reduce expenses.

### REVIEWING HELM'S MINISTRIES

## UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

**GOAL: HELM will create programs to identify, support and nurture undergraduate students with strong potential for church leadership—both lay and ordained—in partnership with congregations and other Disciples and ecumenical agencies.**

### HELM Leadership Fellows Program

We added six Leadership Fellows in the Class of 2012 and held the eighth HELM Leadership Fellows Conference November 7-9 in St. Louis, focusing the program on ministries in non-congregational settings. Resource people included Kaki Friskics-Warren, who talked about her experiences starting several social service agencies from scratch; Rebecca Woods, who described the development of her call as a journalist and filmmaker; and José Morales, Jr., who talked about his simultaneous vocations as pastor, teacher, and community activist.

During 2008 HELM staff reviewed our scholarship endowments, focusing on recent gifts, and made plans to increase the total number of leadership fellows to at least 28 within the next several years. However, the current economic situation will prevent us from implementing this plan in the immediate future.

**GOAL: HELM will create recruitment initiatives, coordinated with the undergraduate institutions, to increase the proportion of Disciples students within the student bodies of Disciples-related colleges and universities.**

### Undergraduate Recruitment

Having come close in 2008 to scheduling the long-delayed consultation with chaplains, church relations directors, and admissions staff from the Disciples-related colleges and universities on the recruiting of Disciples students and how the church and the institutions can coordinate their efforts in this new fully digital era, We believe it is prudent, however, in the current financial climate, to postpone this event.

### ICYF 2008

HELM participated in the International Christian Youth Fellowship assembly, July 24-27, 2008 at Chapman University, along with eight Disciples-related colleges and universities and four Disciples seminaries who took advantage of this opportunity to connect with Disciples high school students.

### HELM Web Sites

We continue to look for new ways to use the HELM and STEP web sites to strengthen and promote our ministry. As we launch a digital HELM newsletter in 2009, we will point to our web site and particularly to the reflective writings there from Leadership Fellows and STEP Leadership Team members, as a resource for congregational newsletters.

**GOAL: HELM will assist partners throughout the church in efforts to develop and nurture leadership.**

### Young Adult Commission

HELM has been still an active partner with Disciples Home Missions in the work of the Young Adult Commission through the participation of Brad Lyons, as staff liaison.

### **First Christian Church, Winterset, Iowa**

HELM manages the Taylor Scholarship Fund for First Christian Church, Winterset, Iowa, and also administers the annual scholarship completion. Over the past 15 years this congregation has awarded over \$1 million in scholarships to students from Madison County, Iowa.

### **Hyde Park Christian Church, Austin, Texas**

HELM also works with the Hyde Park Christian Church of Austin, Texas, in administering the Alvin and Elsie East Scholarship program. This program provided \$56,250 in scholarships in 2008 for students from five Austin, Texas congregations.

***GOAL: HELM will work to heighten consideration of the mission and ethos of church-related higher education among faculty, administration and other institutional leaders through inter-campus and intra-campus conversations.***

### **Council of Colleges and Universities**

The Council of Colleges and Universities did not meet in 2008, but will meet November 3-4, 2009 at Lynchburg College.

At the initiative of the Council of Colleges and Universities and the recommendation of the HELM board, the General Minister and President in 2008 appointed a Task Force on Undergraduate Education to review the written covenants and other matters related to how the undergraduate institutions connect and work with the church. The task force began its work by arranging interviews with each college or university CEO. The task force includes congregational ministers and lay leaders, college faculty and staff, and regional church staff. There is no published timeline for its work.

### **Leadership Changes**

Dr. William Fox has announced his resignation, effective June 30, 2009, at Culver-Stockton College to assume the presidency of St. Lawrence University in Canton, NY. Dr. Sebetha Jenkins has retired from the presidency of Jarvis Christian College and been succeeded by Dr. Cornell Thomas.

### **THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

***GOAL: HELM will pursue long-term projects to identify, nurture and support potential leaders of Disciples institutions.***

### **The Bethany Fellowships**

HELM is completing the fourth year as grantee for the continuation of the Bethany Fellowships, a project in the Lilly Endowment's "Transition to Ministry" program. We made our third report to

the Lilly Endowment in May 2008. HELM will continue to provide financial and programmatic supervision to the Bethany Fellowships while the program seeks to become self-sustaining in 2010, though we do not supervise the actual program. The Bethany Fellowships board continues its efforts to raise a \$2 million endowment to support the program.

### **HELM Ministerial Student Grants**

Late in 2008 HELM announced the HELM Ministerial Student Grant program, an opportunity for support of special projects and opportunities designed to add value to the education of Master of Divinity students and strengthen their potential for congregational leadership. HELM will announce the first five grants in spring 2009.

***GOAL: HELM will facilitate cooperation between the church and its institutions of theological education in their joint responsibility for the recruitment, education and nurture of the church's leaders.***

### **Disciples Seminarians Conference**

Sixty-seven students participated in the 2009 Disciples Seminarians Conference, which was held March 5-8, 2009, in Nashville, Tennessee. Twenty-five general church leaders and special guests joined them for worship, fellowship, workshops, recreation, and orientation to general church resources and people, all organized around the church's Four Priorities.

### **Disciples Scholars Breakfast at AAR and SBL**

HELM and Chalice Press sponsored breakfast gatherings of Disciples scholars and students at the annual meetings of both the American Academy of Religion (Chicago) and the Society for Biblical Literature (Boston). Chalice Press hosted the SBL breakfast and HELM the Chicago breakfast, with HELM director Clark Gilpin serving as convener.

### **Theological Institution Admissions Meeting**

Admissions staff from the Disciples theological institutions met in St Louis December 2-3 to discuss current and developing trends in the recruitment and enrollment of ministerial students.

***GOAL: HELM will help lead efforts to respond to the needs of non-ordained pastoral leaders, and to the church's need for them.***

### **Policies and Criteria for the Order of the Ministry**

The General Commission on Ministry has released a new draft of Policies and Criteria for the Order of the Ministry, which incorporates many of the recommendations regarding non-ordained ministerial leadership that were brought to the church through the Nazareth Consensus document.

### **Council on Theological Education**

The council met February 25-27, 2009, at the Disciples Seminary Foundation in Claremont, California, and discussed matters related to education for immigrant pastors, new delivery methods for ministerial education, the work of the Mission Alignment Coordinating Council, and the new Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry document. Mark Miller-McLemore, of the Disciples Divinity House at Vanderbilt Divinity School, was reelected chair of the council, with Kris Culp, of DDH-Chicago, agreeing to continue serving as the CTE representative on the General Board.

### **Leadership Changes**

Dr. James P. Johnson became president of Lexington Theological Seminary following the retirement of Dr. Robert Cueni. Dr. William Tabbernee has announced he will step down from the presidency of Phillips Theological Seminary later this year to return to the faculty. Dr. Mary Anne Parrott will retire later this year as president of the Disciples Seminary Foundation.

### **STUDENT MINISTRIES**

***GOAL: HELM will develop national linkages among students and student groups with the aim of nurturing students for church leadership.***

#### **Council on Ministries in Higher Education**

The council met February 13-15, 2009, in St. Louis, gathering for one day longer than usual in order to help HELM consider new priorities for working with student ministries and campus ministers in 2009 and beyond. Rev. Heather Godsey, ecumenical campus minister at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, was elected council chair for the next two years.

#### **Student Ecumenical Partnership Team (STEP)**

The Student Ecumenical Partnership includes Disciples and UCC undergraduate students and continues to work to develop a national network of students and those committed to ministry with students in order to support individual journeys of faith; foster the churches' commitment to ministry with and for students and advocate for their needs and concerns; and encourage student participation in state, regional, national and international ecumenical student events

The STEP Leadership Team met October 17-19 at Elmhurst College in Elmhurst, Illinois. STEP is focusing its energies on a national student ministry leadership conference in 2010 and will be seeking external support for this event.

#### **Council for Ecumenical Student Christian Ministries (CESCM)**

CESCM, currently the U.S. affiliate of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), is still struggling to define its role in relation to WSCF and to the Ecumenical Campus Ministry Team (ECMT, formerly Higher Education Ministries Arena). Having pulled away from HEMA in 2007, and following its recent meeting in Louisville, CESCM is now negotiating with ECMT for a new partnership role that would probably involve ceasing to be the WSCF affiliate. Meanwhile, the WSCF is committing resources to establishing a separate Student Christian Movement-USA.

#### **Ecumenical Campus Ministry Team (ECMT)**

ECMT, the organization of staff professionals in student ministries representing six Protestant denominations, met November 1-2, 2008 in Louisville, Kentucky. ECMT, now a sub-group of the National Council of Churches' Education and Leadership Ministries Commission provides a comprehensive directory of campus ministries and ministers, publishes study and devotional guides for students, operates a job listings service for campus ministers, and will continue to work with CESC. Dennis Landon continues to work with as ECMT's link and advisor to CESC. HELM manages ECMT's web site and has overseen a redesign of the online campus ministry directory.

## RECONCILIATION AND ANTI-RACISM

### Emerging Leaders and Pro-reconciliation Efforts

#### Disciples Leadership Institute

A "Where do we go from here" meeting of current and former DLI Steering Committee members was held December 4-5 in Chicago to determine next steps for this project that brings together younger leaders of both new and established congregations across the divides of race, language and culture through in-depth conversations around theology, personal experience, and church practice.

A fourth DLI summer conference, planned for July 2009, has been postponed in response to the worldwide economic crisis. Some DLI participants are exploring ad hoc regional events in 2009, and we hope to see another national conference in 2010.

## COMMUNICATIONS

### Digital Newsletter

HELM has begun a digital version of "Tomorrow's Leaders Today" our quarterly newsletter. Currently the newsletter goes only to those on our donor list and anyone who accesses it through our web site. Now we will use several kinds of online contact to invite Disciples to join an e-mail list that will deliver access to the newsletter to a much larger number of people. We will also add e-mail addresses we already hold to this list, with an easy opt-out option for those who do not want to receive it. In addition to our newsletter, we will distribute student stories and campus news round-ups through the list. Readers will be able to subscribe at <http://www.helmdisciples.org/listserv/>.

## ADMINISTRATION

In 2008, as the gasoline price crunch worsened we began an experiment in working hours at HELM, moving most of the staff to four days of ten hours each per week. We will evaluate the experiment in early 2009, but it appears that this is beneficial both for staff (who get an added day off) and to the ministry (which has people in the office over longer hours Monday through Friday).

In addition to the president, who joined the staff in 1997, HELM is Linda Plengemeier, Brad Lyons, and Janice Martin. Linda serves as vice president and treasurer, and has been with the ministry since 1987. Brad is Director of Communications and Program Officer, and has been with HELM since 2000. Janice is Administrative Assistant, and is just beginning her second year. Also, Sara Crump works with us part-time as a financial assistant.

**Recommended Action:**

The General Board receives the report from Higher Education and Leadership Ministries.