

**HIGHER EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP MINISTRIES
Dennis Landon, President
Report to the General Board
April, 2010**

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 the Church of Jesus Christ and higher education by developing and nurturing leaders who will renew and transform the church in the coming generations.

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 our activities. Thus:

- We work to add value for church leadership to both the undergraduate and ministerial educational experiences.
- We support student ministries as they provide a locale for exploring and refining vocation.
- We seek in our entire ministry to nurture and embody the values, knowledge, and practice that will nurture leaders to strengthen our church's identity as a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world so that we can welcome all people to Christ's Table as God has welcomed us.

RESOURCES FUNDING HELM'S MINISTRIES

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

From Designated and Non-Designated Investments	61%
From Disciples Mission Fund and related sources	23%
From Individual Gifts (Annual Fund)	11%
From Fees and Program Income	5%

DIRECT LEADER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

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.*

Leadership Fellows Program

We added seven undergraduates to the Leadership Fellows program in the Class of 2013:

- **Henry Brewer-Calvert** of Atlanta, is a member of First Christian Church, Decatur, Ga., and will be a student at Lynchburg College.
- **Aly Gideon** of Enid, Okla., is a member of Christian Church of the Covenant and is bound for Chapman University.
- **C.J. Findley-Grubb** of Yorba Linda, Calif., is a member of First Christian Church in Fullerton. She will be a student at Chapman University.

- **Stephen Hall** of Goldboro, N.C., is a member of First Christian Church and plans to attend North Carolina State University.
- **Sabreena Rodriguez** of Mentone, Calif., is a member of First Christian Church in Orange, and University Christian Church in San Diego. She will be a student at Chapman University.
- **Alison Simon** of Greensboro, N.C., is a member of First Christian Church and will attend Texas Christian University.
- **Virginia White** of Austin, Texas, is a member of University Christian Church and will attend Rice University.

We held the ninth HELM Leadership Fellows Conference November 6-8 at Northway Christian Church in Dallas, Texas. We enjoyed an excellent partnership with Northway, which provided housing and meals for the conference and whose hospitality exceeded any expectations we might have had. HELM staff members and the fellows were introduced to the congregation on Sunday morning, and I spoke briefly about our ministry and to promote the Thanksgiving Special Offering for the benefit of the Disciples educational institutions.

The conference itself focused on Faith, Creativity, and Vocation and featured Disciples leaders Sherri Emmons (Managing Editor of DisciplesWorld and novelist), Bill Thomas (Associate Minister at Church of the Valley in Van Nuys, California, and actor on stage and in movies and television), and Thom Schuyler (Youth Director at Woodmont Christian Church in Nashville, Tennessee, and one of country music's most successful and respected songwriters). All three talked about their life as Christians and church leaders in the light of their artistic work, and vice versa. The conference received very high marks from both the fellows and the resource people.

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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

The Bethany Fellowships

HELM has now begun its fifth year as grantee for the continuation of the Bethany Fellowships, a project in the Lilly Endowment's "Transition to Ministry" program. We made our fourth report to the Lilly Endowment in May 2009. While we do not supervise the actual program, we provide financial services to the project and are responsible for accountability to Lilly for the funds. We learned on November 13 that Bethany Fellowships has received a renewal grant from Lilly for another five years, beginning in 2010. We have agreed to continue as grantee and financial agent for Bethany Fellowships.

HELM Ministerial Student Grants

We have awarded the first round of Ministerial Student Grants; A total of \$7,760 will be distributed

- **Diane Faires** of the Disciples Divinity House at Vanderbilt will join in Week of Compassion's trip to Bosnia and Herzegovina next summer.
- **Jonathan Hall** at Eden Theological Seminary will use the grant to help underwrite a semester at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute in Geneva, Switzerland. Hall will also receive major funding from the Council on Christian Unity.
- **Linda Harding** of Denver Seminary will participate in a trip to Turkey and Greece, studying Biblical sites and learning about the cultures from which Christianity grew.
- **Erin Moore** at the Disciples Seminary Foundation will create a Disciples focused study guide to "Our Whole Lives," a sexuality education curriculum.
- **Deb Phelps** of Christian Theological Seminary aims to create "The Net Christian Church," an online congregation that will reach potential Disciples who are unable to participate in traditional brick-and-mortar congregations.

This new program is supported by the Hughey-Peery Fund, in partnership with the Pension Fund of the Christian Church.

Goal: HELM will work with emerging leaders toward becoming a pro-reconciling and inclusive church.

Disciples Leadership Institute

After a budget-related hiatus in 2009, we continue to look for financing to continue the Disciples Leadership Institute experience and continue to provide a cross-cultural leader development fellowship for younger congregational leaders—pastoral and lay.

COOPERATIVE LEADER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

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.

Youth at General Assembly

With HELM's assistance, the Disciples-related colleges and universities hosted a Youth Pizza Lunch at General Assembly (Thursday, July 30). Student representatives of the Disciples-related colleges and universities and I talked about the value-added elements of Disciples colleges and universities, and representatives of most of the schools were present to talk with prospective students. About 300 high school students attended.

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

Young Adult Commission

HELM is a partner with Disciples Home Missions in the work of the Young Adult Commission and through the participation of HELM connected students, including outgoing commission chair, Diana Batzka Hodges. The commission has launched its new website at www.docya.org.

First Christian Church, Winterset, Iowa

Having helped First Christian Church distribute \$58,200 in 2009 scholarships to 67 students through the Charles and Lois Taylor Scholarship Fund, we began the 2010-2011 scholarship process in early January. We continue to work with the congregation to make the application process easier for applicants and more effective for the church. We manage the endowment and administer the Taylor Scholarship program, and have helped the congregation award more than \$1 million in scholarships during the past 15 years.

Hyde Park Christian Church, Austin, Texas

The Hyde Park Christian Church of Austin, Texas, in cooperation with HELM, distributed \$52,900 in 2009 scholarships to 21 Disciples students in Austin through the Alvin and Elsie East Scholarship program.

T. A. Abbott Award

On November 12, I presented the 2009 T.A. Abbott Award for Faculty Excellence to Dr. John Hull, Professor of Psychology at Bethany College.

Council of Colleges and Universities

The Council of Colleges and Universities met at Lynchburg College, November 3-4, 2009, with the presidents of 7 of the 17 institutions present, (and the president of Transylvania University participating by phone), along with GMP Sharon Watkins, and the president of HELM. Dr. David Arnold, president of Eureka College, was elected chair, succeeding Dr. Butch Drake of Midway College.

Those present acted to approve the revised Covenant describing the relationship between the church and its related colleges and universities as presented by the Task Force on Undergraduate Education and that document has been forwarded to the HELM board. Following approval by the General Board, this covenant would need to be affirmed by the governing boards of all institutions wishing to receive Disciples Mission Fund allocations. The revised covenant is the sole output of the Task Force, which came into being through the joint request of the HELM board and a group of college and university presidents; no other report is expected.

Several major actions were taken regarding the undergraduate schools' relationship to HELM and the church.

Asserting that the mission and resources of HELM do not allow us to represent the institutional interests of the undergraduate institutions in a way acceptable to those institutions, the council members participating in Lynchburg:

1. Appointed a committee to write bylaws for a new organization that would allow it to speak directly to the church in relation to institutional representation and finances, especially regarding enrollment management and financial development.
2. Proposed to shift the 5% holdback from the undergraduate portion of the Disciples Mission Fund and Thanksgiving Offering allocations currently administered by HELM as the College-University Grant Fund and the Undergraduate Interpretation Fund—or perhaps a larger proportion of those allocations—to employ a staff person under the direct supervision of this new organization.
3. Proposed that the institutional relationship between the church and the undergraduate schools be supervised through the Office of the General Minister and President.
4. Acted to define membership in the new organization as only those schools currently in covenant with the church (that is, not including Northwest Christian University, Tougaloo College, and Drake University, who have been members of the HELM council by virtue of their “historical” relation to the church).

GMP Watkins participated in the discussions and indicated her support for the actions taken by the council. GMP Watkins also promised to meet with the presidents in the future and promised her support in working through the required organizational transitions and funding changes.

Given the support of the GMP for these changes, the HELM president and board of directors will not oppose these moves. We do, however, believe there will be a number of issues—related to both governance and funding--that the General Board will need to consider as it processes these changes. HELM will continue to respond to the church's mission and priorities related to leader development in relation to undergraduate students.

College/University Grants

The HELM board Executive Committee met on May 12, 2009 and approved five College/University Grants:

- Barton College is partnering with Week of Compassion to create "Campus Compassion," a program increasing awareness among students of global challenges such as poverty, food security, sustainable development, disaster recovery, and immigration. An alternative spring break trip to a mission site will be the culmination for students; a subsequent gathering of chaplains of Disciples-related colleges and universities will share best practices with the goal of expanding the program to other campuses.
- Culver-Stockton College will gather high school students, young adults, college students, and youth pastors for "Christian Leadership Experience," an examination of stewardship, empowering students for leadership, emerging and non-traditional movements in churches, and faith during college. This gathering is set for the summer of 2010.
- Eureka College's "Disciples Schools and Growing-Edge Churches" will collect information on the denomination's fastest growing churches, racial-ethnic minority and immigrant congregations, with the goal of enhancing the way Disciples institutions of higher education serve this unique demographic.

- Jarvis Christian College's "Diversity Studies and World Religions" project will help create two classes providing opportunities to compare religious traditions. It will also help Jarvis establish a Study Abroad program.
- Texas Christian University, in partnership with HELM and the United Church of Christ, will host the National Campus Ministry Convocation in June 2010. This event will gather approximately 75 students and campus ministers with the goal of identifying student ministry leaders, creating church-wide networks, and sharing best practices. The convocation will be planned by the Student Ecumenical Partnership (STEP), the national student ministries of Disciples and the UCC.

Given that the colleges and universities have responsibility under the Disciples Mission Fund system for recommending to the General Board the allocation of funds within their portion of the 10% designated for Higher Education, and assuming they follow through on their plan to recommend another use for the College/University Grant Fund, we would expect the College/University Grant Program (and the undergraduate Interpretation Fund) to end.

Leadership Changes

David Wilson has announced he will leave the presidency of Northwest Christian University at the end of the 2009-2010 academic year. **Cornell Thomas** has become president of Jarvis Christian College. **Dick Valentine** will become president of Culver-Stockton College, succeeding Bill Fox. **Nancy Brink** is now Director of Church Relations at Chapman University, **Stephanie McLemore** will be the new Chaplain and Director of Church Relations at Lynchburg College and **Scott Thayer** has been named Chaplain of Bethany College and Pastor of Bethany Memorial Church.

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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

The Disciples Seminarians Conference drew 67 M.Div. students from across the country, representing 19 theological institutions, plus two dozen general ministry staff. Open to Disciples students who have completed their first year of Master of Divinity studies, the conference is sponsored by the general ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and coordinated by HELM.

The next Disciples Seminarians Conference will be held March 31-April 3, 2011, at the Scarritt-Bennett Center in Nashville. Planning for the conference will begin in summer 2010.

Theological Institution Admissions Meeting

Admissions staff from the Disciples theological institutions met in St Louis December 2-3, 2008, to compare admissions data and discuss current and developing trends in the recruitment and enrollment of ministerial students.

Disciples Scholars Breakfast at AAR and/or SBL

HELM and Chalice Press sponsored breakfast gatherings of Disciples scholars and students at the annual meetings of both the American Academy of Religion (in Montreal) and the Society for Biblical Literature (in New Orleans). Participation at both breakfasts, as well as the society meetings themselves, was significantly lower than in previous years, with 21 at the AAR event, and only 13 expected at SBL on November 22. Chalice provides the financial support for these events, which we expect to pick up in attendance once the AAR and SBL return, in 2011, to meeting at the same time and in the same city.

Association of Disciples for Theological Discussion

ADTD met October 9-11, 2009, at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. The Association is now in its fifth year as a self-sustaining organization, with HELM providing administrative and financial services.

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Council on Theological Education

The council met February 25-27, 2009 at the Disciples Seminary Foundation in Claremont, CA. Agenda items included

- Theological Education Resources in Relation to Korean Disciples
- An update on the proposed Disciples Center for Faith and Giving
- The work of the Mission Alignment Coordinating Council
- Promotion of the Thanksgiving Special Offering
- The proposed new “Policies and Criteria for the Order of the Ministry”
- The current situation and future of Lexington Theological Seminary

The council is scheduled to meet March 17-19, 2010, at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa.

Leadership Changes

Gary Peluso-Verdend is now president of Phillips Theological Seminary, succeeding William Tabbernee. Tamara Nichols Rodenberg is now the Intentional Interim President of Disciples Seminary Foundation following Mary Anne Parrott’s retirement. James Johnson is now President of Lexington Theological Seminary.

Pastoral Leadership Summit

The Summit was called together on October 26-28, 2009, by the presidents of Church Extension, Disciples Home Missions and Higher Education and Leadership Ministries in order to explore this question:

“How can the Disciples of Christ develop an infrastructure that will strengthen pastoral leaders, leaders who will have the heart and skill to increase the number of vital and mission-driven Disciples congregations?”

More than forty leaders from congregations, regions, general units, higher education institutions, and racial/ethnic constituencies shared their experience and wisdom as we considered:

- What is the current contextual reality for pastoral leaders in the Disciples today?
- Given that context, what does pastoral leadership that can lead congregations towards renewal/transformation/revitalization look like?
- What helps cultivate and support that kind of leadership and what are the next wise steps if we are going to make progress on supporting this kind of leadership?
- What does each group present see as their role in taking those next wise steps?

Summit participants expressed quite clearly that for them, the work of renewing/transforming congregations is not about “survival” but about a passion for being and sharing the good news. The shared picture of reality for pastoral leadership is:

- We are in a period of amazing shift – inside and outside the congregation. This creates a climate of loss and many of our congregations are grieving what is passing away. In the death of what we have known is also the hope of new life emerging. We have a sense that God is doing a new thing and new opportunities for mission are arising.
- Articulating the gospel in this new day is challenging and takes new words, new structures, and new sensibilities.
- The leadership models that many of us are trained in and comfortable with must give way to new models if we are going to be effective in this context.

Some key qualities and competencies for pastors that can lead renewal and transformation emerged:

- The pastors themselves are experiencing personal transformation – active healthy spiritual lives
- Passionate about leading the congregation to shift from maintenance to mission
- Courageous and bold in leading
- Character of integrity, living with transparency
- Willingness to reach out and form partnerships
- Lifelong learners, with curious spirits
- Stay connected with support networks and mentors
- Students of their context, inside the congregation and in the community around the congregation
- Psychological health and ego strength

What will help cultivate and support that kind of leadership? What are the next wise steps for us as a church if we are going to make progress on supporting this kind of leadership?

There are some strategies/supports/systems already in place that are helping cultivate and support pastors who are leading change. Together the summit participants explored a number of those models and then named ways that we might make concrete progress in the days ahead in supporting this kind of leadership.

An understanding emerged that effective pastoral leadership involves and evolves out of an “ecology” of education and nurture that includes theological education, peer group support, mentoring, health insurance and pension benefits, coaching, ministerial education and spiritual formation.

The next step will be the creation of an intentional process of cultivating pastoral leaders for the development of missional congregations. This requires a multi-faceted approach including elements such as peer groups/mentoring/training and the cultivation of a culture in which participation in these kinds of activities is the norm and is supported by our relationships and structures. It will require:

- New partnerships
- Infrastructure
- Resources (some existing some new, some re-allocations)
- Accountability

A full report of the Leadership Summit has been published. The executives of HELM, CE, and DHM have already begun to organize all of the relevant partners to create a pastoral leadership support movement analogous to the existing New Church Movement.

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

Alternative Ministerial Education

The 2009 General Assembly approved “Policies and Criteria for the Order of the Ministry,” which created a new apprentice track toward ordination alongside the current requirement for a Master of Divinity degree. The apprentice track has specific and significant educational requirements in a large number of areas of ministerial knowledge and practice, and the General Commission on Ministry has organized a comprehensive implementation process that will be responsible for identifying and delivering the instructional components that will be needed. HELM stands ready to help in any way we can.

STUDENT MINISTRIES

GOAL: *We 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. The council discussed:

- Ways to energize the Student Ecumenical Partnership to create high quality gatherings that give students a voice in the church, help them stay connected, provide high quality worship, and opportunities for service.
- New ways, in a time when resources are reduced even more than the past, to relate to and support institutional chaplains and ecumenical campus ministers.
- New ways to think about our ecumenical connections.
- Young Adult Ministry in relation to Student Ministry

The council will meet February 26-28, 2010 in St. Louis.

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 November 13-15 at Texas Christian University, with representatives of TCU, to plan for SHARE 2010—a national gathering of representatives of Disciples and UCC student ministries nationwide. The purpose of the conference will be to share ideas and best practices for student ministries, and provide opportunities for worship, fellowship and service among students and campus ministers. HELM has received a grant from the Oreon E. Scott Foundation for this event, and TCU has received a College/University Grant. The United Church of Christ (our partner in STEP) will provide significant funding as well. An expanded planning committee—enlarged to guarantee full diversity of participation—will meet in late January or early February 2010.

Council for Higher Education Ministries (CHEM)

The long process of dissolving the Council for Higher Education Ministries, Inc., is completed and the assets of CHEM have been transferred to the National Council of Churches of Christ. This will be the last mention of CHEM in these reports.

Ecumenical Campus Ministry Team (ECMT)

ECMT, the organization of staff professionals in student ministries representing several Protestant denominations, met October 5-6, 2009, in Valley Forge, PA. Now a sub-group of the National Council of Churches' Education and Leadership Ministries Commission, ECMT 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 provides a clearinghouse for cooperative work with students. ECMT incorporates the functions previously performed by Higher Education Ministries Arena (HEMA) and the Council on Ecumenical Student Christian Ministries (CESCM).

COMMUNICATIONS

Digital Newsletter

We now deliver a digital version of "Tomorrow's Leaders Today" our quarterly newsletter, to an estimated circulation of over 1,600 recipients—individuals and congregations.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCE

The 2009 HELM annual fund received a record amount in 2009: \$110,218, with 100% of our directors participating.

We also successfully reduced our expenses in 2009 to match our reduced budget, with significant reductions effected in respect to the General Assembly and travel. While we had projected an operating fund deficit of \$37,000 in 2009, we actually ended the year with a surplus of \$13,201.

Our investments have continued to recover, but our spending policy—using the 36 month trailing average of fund values—will still reduce available fund revenue in 2010. We made only nominal staff compensation increases in the 2010 budget.

With the help of the board's Finance Committee we have developed a new office accounting manual. We have also provided our board with a new format for reporting information about the purposes of our designated funds and the programs that utilize their income.

ADMINISTRATION

Facilities and Equipment

We worked to keep capital expenditures to a minimum in 2009, and deferred replacement of any office computers until 2010, when we will upgrade one machine. We will also replace our obsolete internet firewall in 2010, and the new system will allow staff to access the office server and document files from remote locations. We are also exploring the possibility of changing phone and internet providers in a way that will increase the speed of our connection and also lower our costs.

Staff

Brad Lyons will be on paternity leave for six weeks in early 2010.

Closing Comments

As always, I am grateful to a gifted staff of colleagues and a committed and generous board of directors who continue to help us keep our eyes on our mission and that of the Church, and who act with generosity and vision as we do our ministry.

I am particularly interested in, and committed to, the work of this board's new Committee on Diversity and Partnership, which I hope will have the effect of lifting up the practice of full diversity in all aspects of our ministry as a mission equal to and alongside our mission to develop and nurture transformative leaders.

We continue to find that "New occasions teach new duties..." Especially in the face of complicated challenges, our call is to be faithful to the big things—God, Christ, Spirit, the gospel—and to the conviction that we, as a ministry nurturing partnerships for leader development for the church, have a role in God's redemption of the world.

I rejoice still in this ministry and thank God for the opportunity to lead it and to work with the HELM staff, out board of directors, and our colleagues and friends throughout the church.