



“Babel Table” Brings Young Adult Disciples Together to Explore Issues of Mission, Racism, Multiculturalism, and Exclusion

INDIANAPOLIS, February 21, 2011 – The first gathering of the *“Babel Table: from Tower to Table,”* in New Orleans on December 16-19, 2010, underscored the value and vision of bringing together Disciples young adults in seeking to understand what it means to become a truly multicultural and inclusive church.

This event brought together fifteen young adult Disciples, representing the rich racial and cultural diversity within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), to engage in a hands-on mission experience of rebuilding a house in the Ninth Ward in post-Katrina New Orleans. Meeting at the Westside Mission, the agenda also included anti-racism training, reflection on the context of mission, and extended time in sharing their personal experiences of exclusion. The hope was that the group would come to better understand the difficulties and challenges to becoming both truly multicultural and inclusive.

In evaluating the event, many of the participants said that they found themselves transformed by new cross-cultural friendships. They described how the event raised their awareness of the interconnection of racism and the dynamics of exclusion, and how “dialogue opened their eyes to issues they had been blind to.” They also talked of forming honest friendships and their own changed hearts.

Elizabeth Tellado, an Hispanic youth leader from Kissimmee, Florida, shared, “I returned with a positive mind and fullness in my spirit. The funny thing is I thought I came to serve, yet to my surprise the Lord served me.”

Eli Rolon, a member of the Young Adult Commission of Disciples Home Mission and seminary student at Vanderbilt, stated, “The greatest achievement of this weekend’s conference, I believe, was the creation of a new community by its participants -- a community that hopes the commitments and values of inclusion and reconciliation will spread even further.”

The “Babel Table” program has been co-sponsored by several general ministries in the life of our church, including the National Convocation, North American Pacific/Asian Disciples (NAPAD), the Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries, Disciples Home Mission, Higher Education and Leadership Ministries (HELM), Week of Compassion, Reconciliation Ministries, and the Council on Christian Unity (CCU). Funding for this project was provided by a grant from the Oreon E. Scott Foundation; staff support is being provided by the CCU.

Future “Babel Table” events are scheduled to take place in San Diego at the Romero Center, focusing on the issues of “the border” and immigration, and in White Swan, Washington at the Yakama Christian Mission, focusing on Native American concerns. Coming from the New Orleans event there is a hope that the “Babel Table model” might

also be picked up by regions as they develop programs in the area of young adult ministries.

Participants in this first Babel Table experience were Alex Candelaria, Althea Cole, Allison Enari, Phillip Garrard, Cristina Kurtek, Amanda Martinez, Andrew Packman, Ben Saunders, Elizabeth Tellado, Jesus Vega, and Chona Wright. The leaders for the New Orleans event were Daphne Gascot, Eli Rolon and April Johnson.

(For more information, contact Robert Welsh, president of the Council on Christian Unity, at rwelsh@ccu.disciples.org.)