



**GB 2611**

**HIGHER EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP MINISTRIES  
REPORT TO THE GENERAL BOARD OF  
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)**

**Submitted by  
Dr. Tamara Nichols Rodenberg  
January 28, 2026**

**Higher Education & Leadership Ministries  
1099 North Meridian Street  
P.O. Box 1986, Suite 700  
Indianapolis, IN 46206  
(317)713-2660**

**Email: [Helm@helmdisciples.org](mailto:Helm@helmdisciples.org)**

**Web site: [www.helmdisciples.org](http://www.helmdisciples.org)**

**Facebook: [www.facebook.com/helmdisciples](https://www.facebook.com/helmdisciples)**

**STAFF:**

Tamara Nichols Rodenberg, President  
Anne Marie Moyars, Ministry Associate  
Lee Yates, Director of Scholarship & Leadership Programs  
Erin Zavala, Director of Communication, Marketing & Development  
Jim Cullumber, Director of Major Gifts & Planned Giving  
Anna Whittle, HELM Communication & Marketing Intern (January – May)

**INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW:**

***“Impacting the World Bringing Students and Resources Together”***

Mission:

*Higher Education & Leadership Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) **resources and empowers** diverse leaders through higher education partners and faith-based leadership development to navigate and influence an ever-evolving society with grace, wisdom, and compassion.*

Vision:

*Higher Education & Leadership Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is **the trusted partner for student support and resources** to help them confidently and faithfully address the challenges of our various diverse communities today and tomorrow.*

HELM's Board adopted a 2025-2028 Strategic Plan focused on enhancing HELM's role as a landing place for Disciples students. Our focus is on the "arch of learning" ensuring that we are providing resources, opportunities and scholarship for students across the arch of learning from High School to Doctoral education. This is accomplished through our flagship leadership programs: the Youth Leadership Symposium (High School), the Young Adult Leadership Symposium and Leadership Fellows Program (College), the Emerging Clergy Leadership Program and Global Theological Fellows (Seminary), and the support of our student pursuing advanced degrees (Doctoral), among others. A key component of HELM's ministry is offering financial scholarship opportunities to students at all higher education levels. These are outlined in the application materials located on our website – [www.helmdisciples.org](http://www.helmdisciples.org).

**LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS:**

- Youth Leadership Symposium (High School): YLS offers leadership development opportunities for High School youth who desire to engage in greater leadership within the church and in the realms of higher education. Students who participate in the YLS program will also qualify for scholarship remuneration at many of our Disciples-related institutions.
- Leadership Fellows Program and Young Adult Leadership Symposium (College): HELM continues to develop the LFP through its cohort-based approach. Students apply for and are accepted into a four-year program prior to their first year of college. The program is divided into approximately 10 students per cohort (1<sup>st</sup> Year, 2<sup>nd</sup> Year, 3<sup>rd</sup> Year, and 4<sup>th</sup> Year). Fellows receive an annual scholarship, attend the annual leadership retreat, and participate in a global awareness experience after their 3<sup>rd</sup> Year. In 2025, HELM partnered with Global Ministries' Rev. Michael Joseph for a global awareness experience in Brazil. Additionally, the entire LF participated in a leadership immersion retreat under the leadership of Rev. Lee Yates and Rev. Dr. Julian DeShazier. The Young Adult Leadership Symposium launched in January offering online leadership development opportunities focused on the congregational context.
- Emerging Clergy Leadership Program and Graduate Theological Fellows (Graduate): The strategic vision for this program focuses on graduate theological students and non-traditional track emerging clergy in four primary areas: Introduction to the General Church; Introduction to the Global Church; Resourcing and Internship Development; and Introducing Emerging Clergy Voices to the Greater Church. The Global Theological Fellows in January 2025 in partnership with Disciples Overseas Ministries/Global Ministries and Week of Compassion. The first cohort is up and running and with several online sessions followed by an intentional global immersion with our partners in the Philippines. HELM continues to develop partnerships and opportunities for the remaining priorities. For example, we will partner with the Pension Fund at "The

Gathering” in 2027 where HELM will offer a “seminarians conference” style gathering to foster general church relationships and learning as well as networking among other seminarians. The remaining work on resourcing and internship development as well as lifting emerging clergy voices continues to evolve as priorities in this coming year.

### **GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS:**

HELM remains committed to stewarding resources of the wider church, individual donors, and corporate donors toward establishing and distributing scholarships to Disciples students based upon specific scholarship criteria. In 2025, HELM issued \$145,000 in scholarships to 61 Disciples students. We celebrated the establishment new scholarships in 2025 and look forward to announcing another early in 2026. We remain thankful to the Christian Church Foundation for continued development of legacy scholarships for Disciples undergraduate and graduate theological students.

### **COUNCIL OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (CCU):**

HELM continues to work with the Council on Colleges and Universities to strengthen the relationship between Disciples schools and the church. HELM welcomed Rev. Dr. Douglas Searcy, Barton College as the Chair of the CCU serving a two-year term from (November 2025 – November 2027). Priorities for the CCU in 2026 include but are not limited to: (1) Facilitate opportunities for CCU member presidents to develop collegial relationships, share experience and expertise and to do so in a faith-based environment; (2) Consider together realistic and meaningful ways our institutions can engage the wider-church and collaborate with one another; (3) Determine useful ways to communicate with Disciples students (both perspective, current students and alumni).

### **COUNCIL ON MINISTRIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION (CMHE):**

HELM seeks to work alongside those who lead our campus ministries including our campus ministers, chaplains, and Disciples faculty at Disciples colleges and universities. HELM is currently leading several discussions as to the optimal way we, as a General Ministry, can be a source of collegial support, resourcing and professional development for those involved in ministry in a campus environment. The HELM Board reconstituted the CMHE at its board meeting in November 2025. Rev. Michelle Scott-Huffman will be the Chair of the CMHE as they begin their work together in 2026.

### **THEOLOGICAL SEMINARIES & DIVINITY HOUSES:**

The Council on Theological Education (CTE) exists to strengthen the relations between Disciples-related theological institutions and the church. Priorities for the CTE include but are not limited to: (1) Facilitate opportunities for CTE member presidents to develop collegial relationships, share experience and expertise; (2) Consider together realistic and meaningful ways to engage the wider-church and collaborate with one another; (3) Determine useful ways to communicate with Disciples seminary students (both perspective, current students and alumni); and (4) Facilitate opportunities to collaborate with the College of Regional Ministers and General Ministries to strengthen our theological institutions and develop leaders for wider-church community.

### **2025 GENERAL BOARD & GENERAL ASSEMBLY:**

### **AN ACCOMPLISHMENT FROM 2025?**

Our ministry is celebrating a full staff on board as well as the process of implementing our 2025-2028 Strategic Plan. We also celebrate formal partnerships with Disciples Overseas Ministry/Global Ministries, Week of Compassion and Christian Church Foundation. Similarly, we are pleased to have launched the Global Theological Fellows and the Young Adult Leadership Symposium in 2025 and 2026.

### **A HOPE FOR 2026?**

Our nation is in a time of turmoil as we submit this report. Our hope for 2026 is to empower leaders in formation through intentional peer groups and in a faith-based context. We hope our Fellows and Symposium students will apply what they have learned in their own local, regional and general location. We also work to continue to build on our core values to “LISTEN” to the changing needs for leadership development, to “ADAPT” our programs and approach accordingly, to “EMPOWER” our students to be effective and confident in their own voice, and to build “TRUST” in our process and integrity as a ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

### **CHALLENGES AHEAD?**

Like all General Ministries, we are working to adjust our ministry and to narrow our focus to ensure faithful stewardship of our financial resources and to continue to seek ways to extend our ministry through new financial commitments to HELM. We are also aware that we need to work more collaboratively across the life of the church to ensure young leaders are connected to the opportunities that will prepare them to lead. This is our calling to “bring students and resources together.”

### **A STORY OF COLLABORATION WITH ANOTHER PART OF THE CHURCH?**

HELM is actively collaborating on all of our programs. The Leadership Symposiums rely on speakers and mentors from across the church and from each manifestation of the church. Our Fellows programs both undergraduate and graduate are only possible in a deeply collaborative partnership with Disciples Overseas Ministries/Global Ministries and Week of Compassion. Similarly, we work to connect their signature initiatives to our students to ensure they are aware of possibilities open to them. Likewise, we are in partnership with Christian Church Foundation as we moved our investments to CCF in 2024. We actively work with CCF to identify donors that not only impact our ministry but others as well. In 2027, we look forward to partnering with The Pension Fund to participate in The Gathering and to host a “Seminarian’s Gathering” one evening during the event. In this, we support The Pension Fund’s offering and make it more readily available to seminarians to attend, network and learn together with others participating.

### **SOMETHING YOU DESIRE EACH MEMBER OF THE GENERAL BOARD TO TAKE BACK TO THEIR LOCAL CONGREGATION ABOUT YOUR GENERAL MINISTRY**

Our ministry is the primary location – a “one stop shop” if you will for information, connection, scholarship, internships and other opportunities for students. Please direct your students to the HELM Website for more information. Additionally, we are working to gather as many scholarships as possible that exist in our congregations, regions or general units and make sure they are listed on the HELM Resource Center so our students can easily location them and apply. We welcome all church-specific or region/area-specific scholarships, please make us aware if you have one to share in your church or region. Finally, please encourage your students, regardless of age, to get involved with HELM. We look forward to meeting them, encouraging and supporting them and making our resources available to them.

### **INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION**

#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

##### Executive:

Colton Lott, Vice Chair - Norman, OK  
 Chad Cline, Treasurer – Fort Worth, TX  
 Belva Brown Jordan, Secretary – Upland, CA

##### At Large:

Ben Bohren, Palm Springs, CA  
 Rodney Gould - Sherman Oaks, CA  
 Peter Goodwin Heltzel, Gloucester, MA  
 Ella Gordon, Corvallis, OR  
 Brandon Johnson - Burbank, CA  
 Timothy Lee - Fort Worth, TX  
 Jacqueline Marquez, Chicago, IL  
 Jose Francisco Morales, Chicago, IL  
 Nancy Pittman, Louisville, KY  
 Beth Silvers, Union, KY  
 Christian Watkins - Manhattan, KS  
 Angelina Whitenhill-Shields, Los Angeles, CA

##### Ex Officio:

Council on Colleges & Universities  
 Doug Searcy, Wilson, NC

Council on Theological Education  
 David Mellott, Indianapolis, IN

Council on Ministries in Higher Education  
 Michelle Scott-Huffman, Springfield, MO

General Minister & President  
 Terri Hord Owens - Indianapolis, IN

### **COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES**

Barton College  
200 ACC Dr. NW  
Wilson, NC 27893-7000  
(252) 399-6300  
Douglas N. Searcy, President  
[www.barton.edu](http://www.barton.edu)

Bethany College  
31 E. Campus Drive  
Bethany, WV 26032  
(304) 829-7111  
Jamie Caridi, President  
[www.bethanywv.edu](http://www.bethanywv.edu)

Chapman University  
One University Dr  
Orange, CA 92866-1005  
(714) 997-6760  
Daniele Struppa, President  
[www.chapman.edu](http://www.chapman.edu)

Columbia College  
1001 Rogers St.  
Columbia, MO 65216-4580  
(573) 875-7201  
David Russell, President  
[www.ccis.edu](http://www.ccis.edu)

Culver-Stockton College  
One College Hill  
Canton, MO 63435-1257  
(573) 288-6000  
Lauren B. Schellenberger, President  
[www.culver.edu](http://www.culver.edu)

Drury University  
900 N. Benton  
Springfield, MO 65802-3712  
(417) 873-7879  
J. Timothy Cloyd, President  
[www.drury.edu](http://www.drury.edu)

Eureka College  
300 E. College Ave

Eureka, IL 61530-1500  
(309) 467-3271  
Jamel Santa Cruz Wright, President  
[www.eureka.edu](http://www.eureka.edu)

Hiram College  
P.O. Box 67  
Hiram, OH 44234-0067  
(330) 569-2311  
Robert H. Bohrer II, President  
[www.hiram.edu](http://www.hiram.edu)

Jarvis Christian University  
PR 7631 at Hwy 80 E.  
P.). Box 1470  
Hawkins, TX 75765-1470  
(903) 730-4890  
Glenn Lee-Pruitt, President  
[www.jarvis.edu](http://www.jarvis.edu)

Midway University  
512 E. Stephens St.  
Midway, KY 40347-1120  
(859) 846-4421  
John P. Marsden, President  
[www.midway.edu](http://www.midway.edu)

Texas Christian University  
2800 S. University Dr.  
Fort Worth, TX 76129  
(817) 257-7000  
Victor J. Boschini, Chancellor  
[www.tcu.edu](http://www.tcu.edu)

Tougaloo College  
500 W. County Line Rd  
Tougaloo, MS 39174-9799  
(601) 977-7730  
Donzell Lee, President  
[www.tougaloo.edu](http://www.tougaloo.edu)

Transylvania University  
300 N. Broadway  
Lexington, KY 40508-1797  
(859) 233-8300  
Brien Lewis, President  
[www.transy.edu](http://www.transy.edu)

University of Lynchburg  
1501 Lakeside Dr.  
Lynchburg, VA 24501-3199  
(434) 544-8100  
Alison Morrison-Shetlar, President  
[www.lynchburg.edu](http://www.lynchburg.edu)

William Woods University  
One University Ave  
Fulton, MO 65251-1098  
(800) 995-3159  
Jeremy Moreland, President  
[www.williamwoods.edu](http://www.williamwoods.edu)

### **THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS/DIVINITY HOUSES**

Brite Divinity School  
Texas Christian University  
TCU Box 298130  
Fort Worth, TX 76129  
(817) 257-7575  
Stephen Cady, President  
[www.brite.edu](http://www.brite.edu)

Phillips Theological Seminary  
901 North Mingo Rd  
Tulsa, OK 74116-5612  
(918) 610-8303  
Nancy Pittman, President  
[www.ptstulsa.edu](http://www.ptstulsa.edu)

Disciples Divinity House, University of Chicago  
1156 E. 57<sup>th</sup> St  
Chicago, IL 60637-1536  
(773) 643-4411  
Kristine A. Culp, Dean  
[www.ddh.uchicago.edu](http://www.ddh.uchicago.edu)

Christian Theological Seminary  
1000 W 42<sup>nd</sup> St  
Indianapolis, IN 46208-0267  
(317) 924-1331  
David Mellot, President  
[www.cts.edu](http://www.cts.edu)

Disciples Divinity House, Vanderbilt University  
1917 Adelia St  
Nashville, TN 37212  
(615) 321-0380  
Yolanda Pierce, Dean  
[www.discipleshousevandy.edu](http://www.discipleshousevandy.edu)

Lexington Theological Seminary  
230 Lexington Green Circle, Suite 300  
Lexington, KY 40503  
(859) 252-0361  
Charisse L. Gillett, President  
[www.lextheo.edu](http://www.lextheo.edu)

Disciples Seminary Foundation  
115 E. Wilshire Ave  
Fullerton, CA 92832  
(714) 459-0976  
Christy Newton, President  
[info@dsf.edu](mailto:info@dsf.edu)

### **SEMINARY ASSOCIATES**

The Atlanta Disciples Divinity Center  
975 Gaines School Road  
Athens, GA 30605  
(585) 415-2249  
Darryl Trimiew, Director  
[www.thedisiplescollege.org](http://www.thedisiplescollege.org)

776 Ponce De Leon  
Yale Divinity School  
Office of Supervised Ministries  
409 Prospect St  
New Haven, CT 06511-2167  
(203) 436-5703  
Jennifer S. Davis, Director

Seminario Evangelico de Puerto Rico

[www.divinity.yale.edu](http://www.divinity.yale.edu)

(787) 763-6700

Juan R. Mejias Ortiz, President

[www.se-pr.edu](http://www.se-pr.edu)

San Juan, PR 00925-2207

### **SPECIALIZED INSTITUTIONS**

Christian College of Georgia

975 Gaines School Road

Athens, GA 30605

(770) 815-9078

Robert Harris, President

[www.thedisciplescollege.org](http://www.thedisciplescollege.org)

College of Churches of Christ (Disciples) in Canada

27 Hawkshead Crescent

Scarborough, ON M1W 2Z4, Canada

Robert Steffer, President

[Steffer9@sympatico.ca](mailto:Steffer9@sympatico.ca)

Phillips University Legacy Foundation

2615 E. Randolph

Enid, OK 73701

(580) 237-4433

Angela Kauffman, Executive Director

[www.pulf.org](http://www.pulf.org)

### **HISTORICALLY RELATED INSTITUTIONS**

Drake University

2507 University Ave

Des Moines, IA 50311-4505

Earl F. Marin, President

[www.drake.edu](http://www.drake.edu)

Bushnell University

*(Formerly Northwest Christian College)*

828 E. 11<sup>th</sup> Ave

Eugene, OR 97401-3745

(877) 463-6622

Joseph D. Womack, President

[www.bushnell.edu](http://www.bushnell.edu)