



Some extravagance

Colton Lott

Senior Minister
First Christian Church
El Reno, Oklahoma

Opening Chapel Service
Mark 14:3-9

September 29, 2025

VOL. 95 | NO. 1-2 | 2025



Colton Lott asks what “anointing” is needed for these times and how a certain extravagance can be an act of faith.

It is a curious story. This woman, with her very costly nard in an alabaster jar, has the rare distinction of appearing in all four Gospels.

Matthew copy-pastes Mark, as he’s prone to do. John identifies the woman as Mary of Bethany, once more outshining her sister Martha. Luke changes much of the story, most critically from anointing for death to anointing for ministry. He also calls the woman a sinner and adds in tears, hair, and kisses.

In each Gospel, she is remembered: for her devotion, for her act of faith, and for her extravagance.

To my ears, extravagance is more than good hospitality. Extravagance exceeds sensibility and knocks on the door of poor taste.

Theologian and biblical scholar Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza wrote that the Anointer of Bethany “is the paradigm for the true disciple.” She comprehends that this moment, commingled with life and death and the whispers of resurrection, calls for preparation, and not just meagerly.

Her act raises the disciples’ ire. They scold her. Doesn’t she know what this could do if

she weren’t so wasteful, so prodigal, so silly? But Jesus defends her fiercely. She has done what she could. She did, perhaps, what he needed.

It’s a curious way to prepare for the end of Jesus’ world, for the end of his ministry, his very life. Contrary to the disciples’ scolding, she is faithful because of her extravagance, not despite it. She understands what is needed, even as it verges on being too much.

Whether this anointing takes place in the home of Simon the leper or of Mary and Martha, it does not surprise me that Matthew, Mark, and John each place this scene in the town of Bethany, which is the place where Jesus found solace and rest in his ministry. Jesus is surrounded by friends there. Of the places where Jesus goes, Bethany seems the most like a home for him.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16



**Disciples Divinity
House of the
University of Chicago**
1156 East 57th St.
Chicago, Illinois 60637
773.643.4411
ddh.uchicago.edu

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Pamela James Jones
President
Gaylord Yu
Vice President
Mareta J. Smith
Treasurer
Melinda Keenan Wood
Secretary

Joan Bell-Haynes
Larry D. Bouchard
Patricia A. Duncan
J. Marshall Dunn
W. Clark Gilpin
Claudia A. Highbaugh
Sandhya R. Jha
Angela A. Kaufman
April J. Lewton
Cynthia G. Lindner
Colton D. Lott
Chad H. Martin
Vy T. Nguyen
Laura Jennison Reed
Antonio Rodriguez
Aaron L. Smith
Paul A. Steinbrecher
David A. Vargas
Alexis K. Vaughan

STAFF
Kristine A. Culp
Dean
Daette G. Lambert
Administrator
Bruce T. Gumm
Building Maintenance
Ryan Haefke
Development Associate
Heidi Haverkamp
Director of Programs, Writer-in-residence
Parag M. Shah
Director of Finance

BULLETIN
Winge Design Studio
Adam Frieberg
Charissa Johnson
Photography

Habitation

A year to “begin again” and stay “rooted while moving.”

This special double issue of the *Bulletin* covers the entire 2025 year—or attempts to. It’s been a busy year. DDH’s 1928 building has been renovated to prepare for this and future generations of students.

By the day after graduation in June, all students had moved out of DDH. The graduates began new opportunities. Others dispersed across the US and around the world to internships, language study, and other various adventures. In this *Bulletin*, you can read all about graduates and continuing students and meet the new students who joined us this fall.

Demolition began immediately. The crew removed the old dropped ceilings (circa 1950s), exposing more height overhead—in one area, a dramatic fourteen-foot-high expanse. The costliest part of the effort was the gut renovation of the restrooms, which included incorporating former student room 38 to provide for more privacy and greater capacity. The most anticipated part was adding air-conditioning. Increasingly hot and humid summers made that a necessity. Advances in HVAC technology over the last dozen or so years made it possible to add an energy efficient heat pump system with relatively little intrusion into the historic building.

At the heart of the \$2.4 million renovation are three orienting commitments: to education for ministry and scholarship that is critically engaged with the suffering and hope of the world; to the importance of face-to-face education and dialogue; and to a physical space that can generate and nurture communities of transformation.

Returning and entering students moved in just before the academic year convened in late September. In his sermon for the opening chapel service, Colton Lott spoke about “some extravagance,” musing on its role in preparing for difficult work in difficult times.

A few weeks earlier, I had returned to DDH one evening after the workers had left for the day. In the stillness and with the daylight lowering, the old spaces appeared familiar, but they had become more than I ever imagined—glorious perhaps. Many individuals had planned, adapted, hammered, and painted, but they couldn’t possibly know all that this building would hold. Indeed, the rest of us can only begin to glimpse it now that students have rehabinited “the House.” It will take their generation and then another and another before anyone really begins to know. On the threshold, just out of sight, are new ideas and forms of pedagogy and practice that are just beginning to emerge.

With gratitude, Kristine A. Culp, *Dean*



CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER RIGHT
Hayden Skaggs, Allison Nash, Fiyori Kidane, Annika Fuller, Brandon Roberts, Ella Johnson.

Brandon Roberts (MA) is a 2025 honors graduate of Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, where he majored in History and Educational Studies. Originally from Portland, Oregon, he became a member of the Gerlaw Christian Church while at Knox. He has been named the *Henry Barton Robison Scholar*. His interests are in biblical studies and critical theory; he has already given several conference papers. He is also an accomplished musician and DDH’s new librarian.

The *William N. Weaver Entering Scholar* is **Hayden Skaggs** (MDiv), a 2025 honors graduate of Eureka College, where he studied Sociology and Religion. He was an intern at Eureka Christian Church and with Be the Neighbor. He was a Lincoln Academy of Illinois Student Laureate, a HELM Leadership Fellow, a Phillips University Leadership Fellow, and a campus leader at Eureka. This summer, he walked the Camino de Santiago across northern Spain.

2025–26 Disciples Divinity House Scholars

Fourteen individuals have received scholarships to pursue vocations of service, thought, and action.



she majored in Religion and Politics. A leader of Disciples on Campus at TCU and involved at University Christian Church and Galileo Church in Fort Worth, she was also a HELM Leadership Fellow and a Be the Neighbor intern. She was raised in the Heart of the Rockies Christian Church in Fort Collins, Colorado.

Scholarship awards provide full tuition, housing, and stipends that allow for immersive preparation at DDH and through MDiv, MA, or PhD degree programs at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

New Scholars

Annika Fuller (MDiv) is a 2025 graduate of the New College of Florida, a UCC-related school, where she majored in Psychology and Religion and pursued music performance. She has been a lifelong member of Palm Lake Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Florida, active in regional camps and the regional youth council, and a HELM Leadership Fellow. She is the *M. Elizabeth Dey Scholar*.

Ella Johnson (MDiv) has been named the *Martin Family Scholar*. She was the valedictorian of the 2024 graduating class at Texas Christian University, where

Continuing Scholars



Rachel Abdoler (PhD, History of Christianity) is the recipient of the *Barbara and Clark Williamson Scholarship* in recognition of her commitment to interreligious understanding. She studies the Coptic-Islamic milieu in Egypt through medieval Christian texts written in Arabic. A Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship is underwriting her research in collections of the Vatican Libraries and in Cairo.



“Captured by the vision”

The first Jim and Peggy Powell Scholarship has been awarded to Fiyori Kidane.

The celebration had been in the works since 2018. On April 27, the Board of Trustees took formal action to create the Jim and Peggy Powell Scholarship. It honors their ministry and expresses their lifelong desire to find, support, and educate leaders for the church to serve the world. Jim and Peggy joined the

trustees for the announcement. “We have been captured by the bold vision and rich history of DDH,” they said.

They were delighted to learn that Fiyori Kidane, a member of Allisonville Christian Church in Indianapolis, their own congregation, would be the first recipient. Prior to becoming a DDH

Scholar and starting the MDiv program at the Divinity School, Fiyori served as the People-to-People Program Coordinator for Global Ministries.

Much of Jim’s ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was through Church Extension, which he served as its president. His work sparked the development of new congregations and enabled funding for church buildings and infrastructure. After retirement, Jim worked extensively with DDH to undergird and embolden its mission.

However, the relationship goes back to an uncle and a second cousin, both also named James Powell, who were alumni.

The scholarship, which will help ensure full tuition, stipend, and housing support, was spurred by the Powells’ children, Drew, Than, Elisabeth, and Laura, and by family friend Gaylord Yu. Other family members, colleagues, and friends joined to raise the \$250,000 endowment. ♦



CONTINUING DDH SCHOLARS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3



Delaney Beh (MDiv) has been awarded the *M. Ray and Phyllis Schultz Scholarship*, which recognizes promise for pastoral ministry.

This summer brought a formative opportunity to preach and lead as the sabbatical minister at First Congregational Church UCC in Loveland, Colorado, where alumna Thandiwe Dale-Ferguson serves as minister.

Grace Dearhamer (MDiv) has received the *Florence Drum and Eleanor Tenant Scholarship*. She is doing field education at First Christian Church of Arlington

Heights with alumna Allie Lundblad. A summer internship sponsored by Week of Compassion in partnership with National Council of Churches of the Philippines, provided hands-on experience and reflective learning about disaster relief and international sustainable development.

Katie Varon (MDiv) is the *W. Barnett Blakemore Scholar*. She and Grace Dearhamer worked alongside each other in a summer internship in the Philippines (see above). She is interested in the intersection of religion and politics and plans to pursue the dual MDiv/MA in Public Policy program. She serves as DDH’s Head Resident.



RIGHT Grace Dearhamer and Katie Varon learned about local conditions in the Philippines.



This summer, **Marialsabelle Garcia** (MDiv) was immersed in the life of Allisonville Christian Church in Indianapolis. Under the mentorship of Associate Minister Sarah Zuniga, Isabelle

learned about community outreach, preached her first sermon, and helped to create an alternative third worship service. Now engaged in field education at University Christian Church in Chicago,



Graduates sent forth

On June 6, DDH celebrated the conclusion of its 130th academic year and ten graduates.

The 2025 Convocation service was held in the Chapel of the Holy Grail on June 6. Convocation speaker Sandhya Jha took Jesus’ parable of the sower as the text for their remarks (also in this *Bulletin*). Jha, an alumna, trustee, and the author of five books, is a PhD candidate in the University of Pennsylvania’s School of Social Work Policy and Practice.

The service celebrated seven Disciples Scholars and three Ecumenical Residents who earned master’s or doctorate degrees. MDiv and MSW degree recipient, **Marissa Ilitzki**, was recognized by the Divinity

School with the 2025 Joseph Gray Rhind Award for excellence in training and promise for religious leadership. Her MDiv thesis explored what hospital chaplaincy can learn from the art, theory, and practice of improvisation. **Kylie Winger** (MDiv) now teaches religion at DePaul College Prep in Chicago. **Justin Carlson** (MDiv), whose thesis explored ecological biblical interpretation, has returned to the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. **Morganne Talley** (MDiv) was ordained to the Christian ministry on July 26 at Timberlake Christian Church in Lynchburg, Virginia. Stephanie McLemore, an alumna who had been Morganne’s chaplain at Lynchburg University, preached.

Graduates **Muhammad Hassan** (AMRS), **Kevin Poe** (MA), and **Nate Travis** (MDiv), began PhD studies this fall at the Divinity School, the University of Oregon (Philosophy and Ecology), and the University of California-Santa Barbara (South Asian Religions). Ecumenical residents **Tyler Ashman** (MDiv/JD) and **Bridget Gilchrist** (JD) will clerk for federal judges. ♦

Virginia Johnston White (PhD) successfully defended her dissertation on May 28. Titled *Confronting Structural Evil: Lament and Laughter as Moral Practices through the Works of Judith Butler and Paul Ricoeur*, it offered an exploration of our tragi-comic humanity and of the power of lament and laughter to lessen evil’s hold on our imaginations and action.

Her ordination followed days later on May 31 in the Chapel of the Holy Grail. Preaching was William Schweiker, the Edward L. Ryerson Distinguished Service Professor in the Divinity School and Virginia’s dissertation advisor. Her mother, Rev. Mary Lu Johnston, gave the ordination prayer and her father, Ted White, co-chaired at communion. She now holds a two-year appointment as a Divinity School Teaching Fellow. ♦



of the Christian Church in Memphis, Tennessee, July 12–15: Grace Dearhamer, Isabelle Garcia, Ella Johnson, Fiyori Kidane, Allison Nash, Hayden Skaggs, Tristan Spangler-Dunning, Morganne Talley, Katie Varon, and Virginia Johnston White. They participated in business sessions, workshops, exhibits, worship, and the DDH luncheon. ♦



ABOVE Alumna Thandiwe Dale-Ferguson with Delaney Beh in Loveland, Colorado.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Wallace Bubar (former resident) is now Senior Minister of First Presbyterian Church of Granville, Ohio.



Kristel Clayville (2001) gave the Northey Lecture at the University of Divinity in Melbourne, Australia, on *“Dei Ex Machina: The Images of God in our Conceptions of AI.”*

Hiatt Allen (2018) will be the new Director of Transformational Programming at Kamp Kaleo in Burwell, Nebraska.

Judith Guy Thomas (2013) is now pastor of Cascade Christian Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



MORE NEWS on Facebook and our website: ddh.uchicago.edu



On the rocks

And he told them many things in parables, saying: “Listen! A sower went out to sow....”

Sandhya Rani Jha

Convocation sermon, June 6, 2025
Matthew 13:1-9

A fair number of times while I was at Chicago, I thought I might be the rocky soil where nothing would be able to take root. I had a classmate who had worked for a national non-profit, one who helped negotiate post-war peace in Guatemala, one who had lived with Buddhist monks in Thailand, one had helped run a program for homeless people in Indiana, and one who was an artist and was raising a whole human being who at the age of three had already learned that “h” is for hubris and “i” is for iniquity. One night halfway into our first quarter when we were sitting in the backyard of DDH, we each learned that everyone else in the class thought *they* were the one who didn’t belong.

In this passage, Jesus talks about four different things that happen to the seeds. I’m pondering what they mean for our work —the graduates for sure, but the rest of us also. The work you have done here will, as you know, carry out into the world and have palpable consequences for the world around you. Even though this passage hasn’t always been interpreted systematically or structurally,

it’s a passage saturated in the challenges of the systems we inhabit.

Jesus talks about the rocky soil being about people who get very excited about the good news but aren’t rooted in tradition or community, so there’s no way for their joy to survive the harsh conditions of the world. I’ve worked with a group in Oakland, California, named the Movement Generation. They talk about how to move from what they term an “extraction economy” into a “living” or “generative economy.” They might point out that, while some soil is naturally rocky and unyielding, a great deal of unfarmable soil has had its nutrients stripped from it to extract profits through cash crops. Four corporations control access to over half of the seed worldwide. War and colonization have stripped people from their farmland and from humanitarian aid in Sudan, Palestine, and across the globe. Part of our calling in this moment in time may be to ask, “who is it who made this land unyielding? Can it be made lush again? What is our role in fighting forces that strip the soil? What is our role in creating the structures and systems that help sustain growth—structures that create a root system so that people are not as vulnerable when hardships show up in their lives?”

The sower’s goal is to cast the good news as far and as wide as possible, to let it take root where it can.



These are questions for every system we encounter, from healthcare to education to the judicial system to child welfare.

The seed that lands in the thorns, explains Jesus, is about how the cares of the world or the pursuit of wealth can choke our connection to the good news. In the 1700s, John Wesley had this to say about the thorns of greed: “The deceitfulness of riches ... they smile, and betray.... They put out the eyes, harden the heart, steal away all the life of God; fill the soul with pride, anger, love of the world; make men enemies to the whole cross of Christ! And all the while are eagerly desired, and vehemently pursued, even by those who believe there is a God!” (Did he read the 2025 Congressional budget proposal?) Perhaps we are called to help those around us whose origins and intent are good, to help them stay grounded in the possibilities of community, of interdependence, of investment in each other. The thorns can grow so quickly and easily. Simply by providing tempting alternatives to compassion, systems can degrade from democracy to authoritarianism. In this moment, we have a lot of work ahead to navigate the thorns.

There’s the seed that falls in good soil, where the good news lands in the heart of a person able to receive and do something with it, yielding much fruit. The punchline of some other convocation address might be that you were already receptive soil, your time here has kept the thorns away, and you will bear much fruit as a result.

The first seed Jesus mentions is the seed that falls on the path and gets eaten by the birds. Jesus says this is about people who



Even though this passage hasn’t always been interpreted systematically or structurally, it’s a passage saturated in the challenges of the systems we inhabit.

have no understanding, so when they hear the word, it gets plucked away from them. Yet, six chapters earlier, Jesus talked about how we should live with less fear and more trust. The example he uses is how God feeds the birds of the air without requiring them to labor, harvest, or store grain.

In this story, the parable of the sower, not the parable of the soil or the parable of the seeds, the sower is the main character. The sower is abundant, almost chaotic, in spreading the seed, the good news. The sower doesn’t worry about worthy and unworthy, of time well spent or not. The sower’s goal is to cast the good news as far and wide as possible, and to let it take root where it can. In the original telling, God is the sower, and the word or good news or Christ is the seed, and we are the soil.

Any pastor, teacher, chaplain, or social service provider I’ve met has a story of the person they knew they would never reach, and yet that person came back decades later, transformed by their investment. It’s a reminder that our work will involve both resisting oppression and casting vision, that it will take on structures and systems almost too big to comprehend, and that it will be deeply personal, even intimate. We will have the opportunity and obligation to serve people whom we may *think* are rocky or thorny soil, on whom society has told us not to waste time or seed, and we will be completely wrong.

The Seed of the Sacred Fig is a film about the horrors and violence of authoritarianism, and how that can manifest in a government or in a household, and often in both. Its metaphorical seed is consumed by a bird, then dropped on the leaf of a host tree, which it then grows out of until it splits the tree open, strangles it, and replaces it. Many of the people who made the film had already been imprisoned for denouncing the Iranian regime; they made the film in secret and ultimately had to flee the country on foot. In its dire parallel to our parable, the film is a reminder that telling the



Kris Culp (1982) traveled to Wadi el Natrun, Egypt, in October for the Sixth World Conference on Faith and Order. Four hundred theologians and church leaders from around the world marked the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.



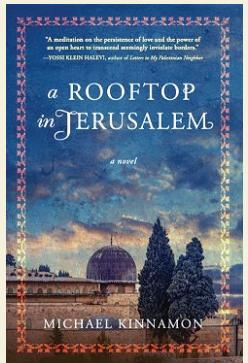
Luther Young (2022) returned to lead a forum on November 17. He became Assistant Professor of Religion and Society at Boston University School of Theology in January.

Profound gratitude to **Aaron Smith** (2007) and **Laura Jennison Reed** (2009) for their leadership as co-presidents of the Alumni/ae Council. On January 1, they will be succeeded by **Andrew Packman** (2009) as president and **Katherine Raley Alexander** (2008) as vice president.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



Melinda Keenan Wood (1998; trustee) has become Secretary of the Board of Trustees. She picks up the pen after **Paul Steinbrecher's** exemplary service from 2015–24.



Michael Kinnamon (1973) has written a third novel, *A Rooftop in Jerusalem*. Yossi Klein Halevi says, "In his beautiful book, ... Kinnaman's spirituality infuses his prose, and he comes as close as any outsider possibly can to understanding the inner reality of Israelis and Palestinians."

MORE NEWS on Facebook and our website: ddh.uchicago.edu



Beacon, pastor, blessing

Laura Jean Torgerson and Lee Hull Moses celebrated Distinguished Alumnus Marshall Dunn with these introductory remarks at the DDH Luncheon during the General Assembly in Memphis on July 15, 2025.

Torgerson began —

I have had the privilege of a "front row seat" to much of Marshall Dunn's ministry.

Well, that's not quite right. My mother Judy, my siblings, and I always sat in the *third* row at University Christian Church—and we almost always arrived about fifteen minutes after the early service had begun. But I have certainly witnessed firsthand, from the third row in the sanctuary, while marching together outside the South African Embassy chanting, "Apartheid no, Freedom yes!" working side by side at church camp, sitting in a circle of care with other young ministers, and across many shared tables—I have seen the "beacon of goodness" that shines forth from Marshall.

It's thanks to Marshall that I didn't know until preaching class in seminary that you don't have to start every sermon with a joke. *And*, it's thanks to Marshall and the congregation of University Christian that I didn't know until I left home in the late '90s how rare it was for a congregation to be one of these things, much less all of them: multi-racial, multi-generational, committed to serving neighbors in need, top supporters of Week of Compassion, thriving.

As his daughter Kristen said eloquently: "He truly has a passion for ministry in all of its aspects and at all levels. He's a gifted speaker, organizational leader, and peace

maker (with occasional as needed rabble rousing).... He loved every member of his congregations, and they felt it."

We felt it. I felt it.

Associate General Minister and President Yvonne Gilmore had an interlude in which she revealed herself as one of Marshall's church campers—albeit an unconventional one.

Hull Moses shared —

I am not a former classmate of Marshall's, I'm not a camp kid of Marshall's, and he was never my pastor. But my life has intersected with his many times over the years, and I'm always grateful when it does. When I was in my first call, in the Capital Area region, Marshall, who was just recently retired from University Christian, convened a small group of young pastors, most of us just out of divinity school and most in our first formal ministry roles. We got together once a month or so, but what I most remember is that the group was such a safe space.

Marshall could have played the role of veteran minister, the mentor who shared wisdom and told how it all should be done. And he did share lots of wisdom—but mostly he just created a space for us to be together, to form friendships with each other.



I heard Marshall say once that ministry is one of the last great generalist professions; you have to know something about a lot of things; you have to know a little bit of Hebrew and a little bit of Greek and a little bit about church history and theology and also about organizational leadership and you have to know how to plunge a toilet and how to say a prayer at the bedside of a dying church member, and sometimes you have to do all those things in the same day.

Marshall embodied that so well—and not just at University Christian. When what was needed was someone to run the young adult camp, Marshall was there. When DDH needed a board member, Marshall was there. After his retirement, when a congregation needed an interim associate minister for a few months, Marshall was there. When the OGMP needed someone to serve along Sharon Watkins in a transitional time, Marshall was there. Marshall knew the call to ministry wasn't about any one way of being church, but about serving the church in so many ways.

One of the greatest gifts he has given the church has been in the way he has continued his ministry after his retirement—not only in all the ways he's served the wider church, but also in the way he has modeled being a pastor emeritus. He's done that with the same pastoral graciousness that he exudes in all parts of his life.

If you've ever even had a conversation with Marshall, you know what I mean: he embodies pastoral presence. He wants the best for you, cares about you, and holds all that dear. If you're in the same room with him, he's your pastor.

Torgerson concluded —

Marshall was my pastor for over twenty years, but he was my mother's pastor for thirty-one years and three months.

Judy Torgerson was a keen observer. I knew that Marshall valued holding our congregation together through difference and conflict. My mother pointed out to me a really powerful practice that helped make this possible. Whenever there was



LEFT Alumni/ae Council Co-Presidents Aaron Smith and Laura Jennison Reed congratulate the awardee.

ment," and how his father, John Dunn, also a Disciples pastor, had been a Barnabas for him. Marshall, you have been my Barnabas, a faithful encourager, and it is not just me. You have been a Barnabas for generations of youth, for members of congregations in Chicago, Blue Island, Hyattsville, Mount Rainier, for Sharon Watkins as General Minister and President, for your colleagues in ministry, for Disciples Divinity House, and through those and even more ways, you are a beacon and a blessing to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and to the world that God loves. 

Laura Jean Torgerson is Associate Professor at Berkeley School of Theology.

Lee Hull Moses is Director of the Proclamation Project.

Often frustrated but never bored! Thirty-six years in pastoral ministry!

In his Distinguished Alumnus Address, Marshall Dunn speaks about a remarkable journey.

J. Marshall Dunn

Minister Emeritus, University Christian Church, Hyattsville, Maryland, and DDH Trustee



I thank the Alumni/ae Council for this honor, and Laura Jean Torgerson, Lee Hull Moses, and Yvonne Gilmore—three of my favorite people—for their introductions.

I'm sure the most exciting period of my career was when I moved to Indianapolis to work with our GMP Sharon Watkins, living apart from my wife of then forty years, and doing a job that largely required what I had thought were my least honed skills, administration. They did give me a title to always remember, I was the Temporary Associate General Minister and Vice President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada!

It turned out to be a great joy and honor to work with Sharon, who was and is an amazing person, but it still pales next to my years of congregational ministry. [CONTINUED ON PAGE 10](#)

Ellie Leech (2019), **Burton Guion** (2016), and baby Gus have moved to Virginia. Ellie became the pastor of Ashland Christian Church on October 1, Burton works at the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, and August John Thomas Guion will celebrate his first birthday on December 7.



Terri Hord Owens (1999) has published *Staying at the Table and Facing Jerusalem: A Lenten Journey with Jesus*. She began a sabbatical in November.

Cynthia Lindner (1978; trustee) is co-director of *Risky Preaching: A Shared Experience*, a new initiative for Chicago-based practitioners of preaching funded by the Compelling Preaching Project of the Lilly Endowment, Inc., and hosted by the Divinity School.

MORE NEWS on Facebook and our website: ddh.uchicago.edu

Dunn CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Right after graduation, I pastored two churches on the southside of Chicago, in West Pullman and Blue Island. After sharing me for two years they voted to unite, sell the one building and become one congregation with co-board chairs, two worship chairs, two property chairs, etc. My greatest leadership and people skills may have peaked when I was 27 years old!

After being there for five years, I got a call one night from Bill Crowl: "Marshall, I put your name in for a church in the Capital Area." I said, "Don't you think you should have asked me first?" He answered, "No!"

That fateful phone call eventually led to my becoming the senior minister of University Christian Church in Hyattsville, Maryland, for thirty-one years. Those thirty-six total years, in three very different congregations, were the *most rewarding years of my career*. I'm going to try to help you understand why.

First, I note my passion for working with youth and young adults in over fifty years of CYF camp counseling and twenty-five years of directing the Young Adult Conference in the Capital Area.

Congregational ministry is SO complex, so challenging, and so varied. I used to say I was often frustrated but I was never bored.

How could you be bored with sermons to write every week and hundreds of weddings, funerals, and baptisms, most in the church's



Jha CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

whole truth often comes at a very real cost. Jesus was already beginning to grasp this reality by the time he took to a boat to share this story with the crowd on the shore, having alienated the pharisees and his family, with his village soon to follow.



ABOVE Michael Kinnamon, Laird Thomason, and Doug Job greet Marshall Dunn.

baptistry but more than forty in the Atlantic Ocean where our Maryland congregation had an annual retreat. One unforgettable moment came when a huge wave sent me and the young man tumbling over and over in the surf. He came up sputtering, "My minister let go of me!"

It was challenging but rewarding to live and work on the edge of Washington, DC, and preach after President Nixon's resignation, 9/11, and many other lesser but powerful moments in our nation's history. It was exhilarating being with so many of our members protesting apartheid at the South African Embassy and watching with our children as my courageous wife was arrested on the front steps of that embassy.

It was exciting being part of mentoring nine seminarians, ordaining Laura Jean Torgerson and five other members from the congregation, and working closely with so many extremely talented and deeply spiritual colleagues as associate ministers. Joan Bell-Haynes was one of those.

Here's the thing, though. The sacred fig, *ficus religiosa*, has another name, one more familiar to me: the bodhi tree. It's the tree that the Buddha sat under to receive enlightenment—the tree holy to Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and Buddhists. It's the tree my grandmother walked three miles to from her village in order to pray to the goddess Kali that my father, then an infant burning with fever, would survive—the tree she knelt and prayed under unceasingly until someone from the village came to her eight hours later to let her know my father's fever had broken.

Jesus ends this passage with "let anyone with ears listen"—as if his story was so clear. I took a course with David Tracy during my second quarter at the Divinity School.

It was wonderful being part of our church's active ministry to homeless persons and sponsoring a childcare center for children whose teenage moms were students at the high school next door. But congregational clergy are also asked to share some of life's most tragic moments.

I loved our congregation's commitment to ministries of compassion and justice, advocating with state and national legislators, sponsoring two large refugee families from Laos and Bosnia and commissioning many of our members to go on mission trips to Appalachia, New Orleans, Jamaica, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Nicaragua.

Meanwhile the church continued to grow in its racial and cultural diversity, with more than eighty people taking anti-racism training. We declared that being an anti-racist church was a core value.

I treasured being a rabbi as well. I began and taught an adult Sunday School class during my entire ministry at University.



Those thirty-six total years, in three very different congregations, were the most rewarding years of my career.

Yes, pastoral ministry has been a remarkable journey. I am very grateful to DDH and the Divinity School for an excellent education and emotional and financial support. I thank God for the many wonderful lay leaders who have taught me about faith and courage, colleagues who have been amazing, and, most of all, my wife Barbara and our children, Kristen and Eric. They have been my rocks, my refuge, my counselors and friends.

Finally, I thank my mentor and role model, my Disciple minister father, John Dunn. His courage around confronting racism inspired me, his wise counsel about congregational ministry was invaluable, and his example of being a husband and father surely made me a better human. Dad, you are my polar star. And thank you all! Amen. ♡



Alexa Dava (2020) is now an associate minister at LaSalle Street Church in Chicago. She recently concluded a secondment to the World Council of Churches related to reproductive health.

Mark Lambert was awarded a Compassionate Community Grant from the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM) to support his development of a chaplaincy rotation for fourth-year medical students.

A Louisville Institute sabbatical grant allowed **Thandiwe Dale-Ferguson** (2009), her two children, and her parents, Tod and **Ana Gobledale** (1975), to visit places of "home and belonging" in Zimbabwe and South Africa.



It turns out, if you listen long enough, the world might fall into place a little more clearly.

Halfway through the quarter, I finally confessed to a PhD student who was in the class that I didn't really understand more than half of the content. He reassuringly said, "Sandhya, no one understands more than half of what David Tracy says." So I used my ears to listen, even when I couldn't always understand. That turned out to be a useful skill in the church and in the housing policy and labor organizing and racial justice work I went on to do. I listened to fast food workers and undocumented immigrants and

Black Panther party members and survivors of AIDS. I didn't have shared experience with them any more than I did with David Tracy, but I had ears to listen. It turns out, if you listen long enough, the world might fall into place a little more clearly.

Whatever is next, you have critical work ahead: to make stony ground viable, to tend land constantly so it isn't swallowed by thorns, and to spread the news of love, opportunity, inclusion, and the possibility of joy for everyone, to worry less about *where* it is spread than *that* it is spread. If some of it falls on the path, you may have contributed to the continuation of sacred trees of rest and prayer and healing as well. We need more abundant, generous sowers like you in this crisis moment. I for one, am grateful you have signed up for the task. Amen. ♡

BEGIN again

How can a 1928 Gothic building be readied for a future that is beyond present imagining?

On September 29, the DDH student community celebrated the re-habitation of “the House” and the first Monday dinner of the new academic year with a ribbon cutting and blessings for the renewed residence.

A few days earlier, twenty-one students had moved into the newly renovated second and third floors. Their rooms had new Marmoleum flooring in a deep warm red, refinished woodwork, fresh paint, restored limestone window



surrounds, light-blocking roller blinds, and new sit/stand desks. Old acoustic tile ceilings were removed, adding an extra three inches of ceiling height, and svelte ceiling fans were installed.

The old skylight was replaced with a handsome framed structure with energy efficient, light-filtering glass.

Perhaps most anticipated were air-conditioning “mini-split” units that will make the increasingly hot and humid Chicago summers more livable.

The space of former student room 38 has been incorporated into sparkling all-gender restroom facilities. There are fully enclosed showers with private dressing areas and individual toilet rooms with bidet toilets. The second-floor restroom now includes three energy-efficient, stacked washer/dryers and a dedicated laundry sink.

The atrium is grander, brighter, and more welcoming, painted in a terracotta pink hue with globe light fixtures hanging from a raised ceiling. And in a few other places, there is azure blue overhead, reminiscent of the heavenly ceiling in the Chapel of the Holy Grail, where chalices with wings soar above. ♦



A work in progress...

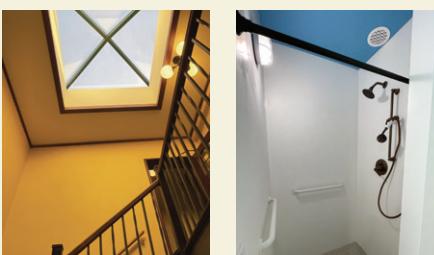


Room 38 was tucked under a dormer on the third floor, across the alley from the practice room in the neighboring church. For nearly 100 years, the book-lined student room was where languages and texts were studied and papers and dissertations were written. Students will still pursue that learning in twenty-two other study-bedrooms at DDH, but this summer, Room 38 was taken up into the grand renewal of the residential floors.



A home renewed

The fully renewed second and third floors are ready for new generations of students, their vocations, ideas, and dreams.



The refurbished guestrooms are ready for students' families, Monday dinner speakers, prospective students, alums, and friends.



President of Augsburg University, **Paul Pribbenow** (former resident), was honored as the 2025 Divinity School Alumnus of the Year.



Sarath Pillai (former resident) is now the A. Kenneth Pye Visiting Assistant Professor of South Asian Studies at SMU. He is pictured with four generations of DDH Head Residents: himself (2021–22), **Justin Carlson** (2022–23), **Kylie Winger** (2023–25), and **Katie Varon** (current).

In April, **Victoria Wick** (2017) became Executive Minister of National City Christian Church, Washington, DC.

MORE NEWS on Facebook and our website: ddh.uchicago.edu



Into the past to prepare for the future

What draws us together? What do we leave behind? What do we take with us? These questions opened a Board of Trustees retreat held September 12–15, 2025.

On September 12, the trustees gathered with special guests from the area at the historic Meeting House at Cane Ridge, Kentucky. Joel Brown, President of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society and a PhD alumnus of DDH, joined us for the day. He and trustee Claudia Highbaugh explored truth-telling and tradition. Cane Ridge, Joel said, “is not just a backdrop for our tradition’s origin story. It is a lens.”

The first day’s theme, **Learning from the past**, continued that afternoon when the retreat formally convened at Shaker Village in Pleasant Hill, Kentucky. After a walking tour of the historic site, trustees received an update on DDH’s renovation by House Committee chair Marshall Dunn and member Paul Steinbrecher. At dinner in the appropriately named restaurant, The Trustees’ Table, Lindy Wood, chair of the retreat planning committee, offered a welcome and a blessing.



The trustees convened for formal business the next morning. Afterwards, they learned about “Shaker Music” in the Meeting House. Two fishbowl presentations framed Saturday’s theme, **How do we vision amidst these times?** How can DDH prepare for a future that is beyond our present imagination? How do we create space for forms of learning and ministry that we cannot even glimpse now?

The first panel, led by April Lewton with Tish Duncan, David Vargas, and Alexis Vaughan, asked, “What does one place teach you?” It invited reflection on DDH’s commitment to in-person, face-to-face education and the cultivation of community life.

Cane Ridge was not only large; it was ecumenical, interracial, improvisational.



LEFT Pamela James Jones, President of the Board



How does one think about vocation in these times? A second panel invited reflection on the relationship among the well-being of others, responsibility to others, and the cultivation of self, work, knowledge, and love. Colton Lott moderated the panel with Larry Bouchard (see below), Sandhya Jha, Aaron Smith, and Gaylord Yu. Divinity School Dean Jim Robinson joined the Board for the entire retreat. Saturday concluded with a dinner celebration, Bluegrass in the Barn.

This question of temporality and vocation brought to mind advice I heard during a crisis, a quarter century ago.

My family had moved to Princeton’s Center of Theological Inquiry in early September 2001 for a year’s sabbatical with a dozen or more theologians and biblical scholars. The day after 9/11, we gathered for our Wednesday luncheon, in dread about the sudden future. Some were wondering, what was our purpose after such horror.

The director, Robert Jensen, gave us wise and simple advice: remember why you came. In other words, “Stick to your last.” The word “last” refers not to the End Times but to the foot-shaped form cobblers use to make leather shoes. A last, then, is a vocation, a calling. My last, at that moment, was to write about theater, especially New York theater. So the advice was, “Go see plays and think



Sunday’s theme, **Moving forward in hope**, asked, What do we take with us? Where do we go from here? Board committee chairs led the reflections: Tish Duncan (Scholarship), Chad Martin (Development), Claudia Highbaugh (Nominations), Maret Smith (Finance), and Marshall Dunn/Colton Lott (House).

The retreat closed in worship with an invocation by Lindy Wood, music by Sandhya Jha and Belva Brown Jordan, Vy Nguyen’s homily, “Rooted while moving,” communion led by David Vargas and Tony Rodriguez, and a benediction by Cynthia Lindner. ♦

More to come: Look for Joel Brown’s remarks at the Cane Ridge Meeting House and Claudia Highbaugh’s reflections in the next *Bulletin*.



about them. And think theologically about the fear in the air.”

Societal, geo-political, and climate crises today leave us far more vulnerable than 9/11 and all that followed. Yet the advice remains: we stick to our last, to the continuities of our vocation, however much the forms of ministry and teaching change in ways we can and cannot foresee. The good news is that Christian ministry and higher education are designed for fraught times. And all times are fraught times. — **Larry Bouchard**



Sandhya Jha (2001; trustee) and Nabil Arnaoot married on August 23, with wedding festivities in San Francisco and Oakland.

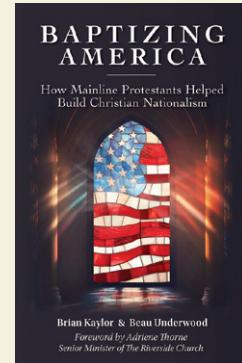
Andrew Packman (2009) published “The consolation of studying theology” in the January 2025 issue of *The Christian Century*. In September, he presented a paper at the quadrennial *Internationaler Schleiermacher Kongress* in Kiel, Germany.

Rebecca Anderson (2007) preached a bold, rollicking sermon, *The Last Will and Testament of Gilead Chicago*, for Gilead’s final service on May 4, closing the storytelling church as an act of hope and defiant faith.

Laura Jennison Reed (2009) graduated from an intensive Bachelor of Science in Nursing program at Loyola University of Chicago and now serves at Loyola Medical Center.



Baptizing America: How Mainline Protestants Helped Build Christian Nationalism, co-authored by Brian Kaylor and Beau Underwood (2006), won an Associated Church Press Award of Excellence and a 2025 Religion Communicators Council Derose-Hinkhouse Memorial Award for Best in Class Book.



April Lewton (2004; trustee) was a headline speaker for the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Memphis.



MORE NEWS on Facebook and our website: ddh.uchicago.edu



Rooted while moving

At their retreat, the trustees were drawn into memory, rooted in place, and invited to imagine what lies ahead. Vy Nguyen offered not a conclusion, but a kind of commissioning.

Isaiah says, “Do not remember the former things... I am about to do a new thing.”

It’s a startling word from the prophet, especially for those of us who hold the past dear. But to hear it fully in the present, we must remember the context: these words were first spoken to a people in exile. Israel had lost home, temple, and power. Their identity was fragile. In that liminal space, between what was and what would be, God spoke through the prophet: *Do not cling to what is gone. I am still here. I am doing something new, even here, even now.*

Exile is not only an ancient condition; it is true for us now. During seasons of upheaval—in the church, in theological education, in our world—we, too, live between memory and possibility. It is precisely in this liminal space that the question arises, what is our purpose now?

In my work with Week of Compassion, I spend most days with communities upended by disaster or conflict. What I have learned in this work is that in the most fragile places—in the rubble and waiting rooms and shadows—people are still asking, *Where are the Christians?*

They’re not only asking in war zones or refugee camps, but in boardrooms and seminaries, in congregations and classrooms. The question is not only about physical presence, but also about moral clarity, public witness, and formation.



Lott CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

A few weeks ago, the Board of Trustees went on retreat at the Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, Kentucky. Among our reasons for going, the most salient was seeking wisdom—from one another, from the past, from within and without—all to meet a future fraught, uncertain, and teeming with possibilities and fears.

The Shakers aren’t the worst companions for such a time as this. The United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing, more commonly known as Shakers, were convinced that they were at the end. They were peculiar in their convictions of pacifism, egalitarianism, and that Jesus would return as a woman (probably). They formed communities in

England, then across New England, and came to Kentucky in the wake of the Cane Ridge revival.

Devoted to living Christ-like meant living celibately and holding all possessions in common. Their labors became part of their worship. And in the face of the end, what the Shakers did was build homes. A curious response.

The Centre Family Dwelling at Shaker Village is a grand, limestone building—at one time it was the largest such structure west of the Allegheny Mountains. It would have been considered generous and spacious compared to families living in small cabins, perhaps eight to a bed. It was sparsely appointed but not desolate. There were individual beds and

After Typhoon Haiyan devastated the Philippines, our ecumenical partners were among the first on the ground. But instead of rushing in with pre-packaged aid, they paused to ask: What do local leaders say is needed first? Where are the gaps that outsiders cannot see? Some of the first funds went not to relief trucks, but to repairing fishing boats. Without boats, families could not return to the sea, and the community might not survive. That decision was not flashy. It was local wisdom leading the response. It was, in a sense, *decolonizing* compassion: refusing to impose from above, choosing instead to be led from the ground. That choice restored dignity, agency, and hope.

At Cane Ridge this weekend, we reflected on *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* (1802). That radical act declared the voluntary death of a body for the sake of the Body of Christ at large. It was a relinquishment of control, a refusal to cling to status, a willingness to sink into something bigger so

Exile is not only an ancient condition; it is true for us now.

that unity and life might flourish. Sometimes the “new thing” requires letting go.

That same kind of posture—courage to release control, humility to listen, and trust in local wisdom—is exactly what the Disciples Divinity House must cultivate in its leaders. Leaders who know when to let go, when to be guided, and how to perceive God’s new thing rising from the ground up. It’s not a dismissal of history, but a caution against worshiping it.

space provided to each inhabitant, under the hope that they would have the resources necessary to be reflective.

Time is growing short, things are changing, and yet this liminal space requires some extra-ness. Each Shaker would have enough to be better followers of Jesus, to prepare themselves, to order the world around them to be prepared for the ending of a world. Some extravagance.

I’m thinking about these homes, in Shaker Village and at Bethany, because of our own grand divinity house that has recently had some extravagant improvements of its own.



Like the Springfield Presbytery, sometimes we must release what we have cherished for the sake of new life.

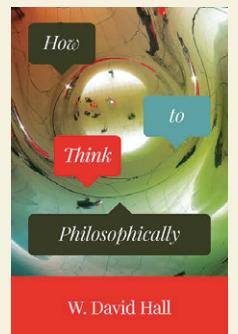
Barbara Brown Taylor reminds us that holiness is not found in stillness but in balance, in keeping steady while the earth moves beneath us.

When the world shifts and the next generation asks who will walk with them—will we be standing still? Or rooted deeply enough to move? DDH has always formed leaders. The leaders we need today must be more agile, more globally and ecumenically shaped, more attuned to both systems and stories. They must be bold enough to name injustice, humble enough to build trust across difference, rooted enough to move. It will require



Ayanna Johnson Watkins (2000) is the co-executive director of MLK50: Justice through Journalism in Memphis.

W. David Hall (1989) has written *How to Think Philosophically* (Fortress Press). He is the W. George Matton Professor Emeritus at Centre College and the Visiting Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Augsburg University.



Jack Veatch (2016) and **Aneesah Ettriss Veatch** (2019) will celebrate Fletcher Rohan Veatch’s first birthday on November 30. Fletcher enjoyed his first GA this summer.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

IN MEMO RIAM

Robert W. Crowe died September 23, in Northfield, Illinois. He was 101. He served as a member of the Board of

Trustees of the Disciples

Divinity House from

1983–91, including

as Treasurer. A

graduate of the

College and the

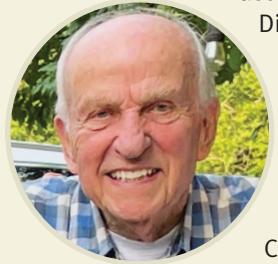
Law School of

the University of

Chicago, he became

VP, Chief Legal Counsel

for publisher R.R. Donnelley. Later, he was a pioneer in the field of mediation, establishing one of Illinois' first mediation firms. He was wise and gifted, a person of deep faith. An elder at Winnetka Presbyterian Church and a Stephen's Minister, he was a member of *The Christian Century* Foundation Board and the Divinity School's Visiting Committee, and he was devoted to ensuring affordable housing through the Good News Partners. He is survived by his wife, Elizabeth, four children, and four grandchildren.



Edward H. Kolbe, entering class of 1956, died July 10 in Lincoln, Nebraska. He was 91. A congregational pastor for forty years, he was a specialist in evangelism and an enthusiast of reading, gardening, football, current events, public television, and TCU's Horned Frogs.

He dubbed himself "Boy Recruiter" and regularly sent students to DDH. He served three separate terms on the DDH Alumni/ae Council.



Ed was born in Cypress, Texas, on June 8, 1934, to Louis and Emilie Kolbe. In 1956, after graduating from the University of Houston, he entered the University of Chicago as a Disciples House Scholar. "I was the last Disciples student of Dr. W.E. Garrison while he was teaching religion and philosophy at the University of Houston," he remembered. "This was the catalyst for a lifetime of influence of Disciples House in my life."

Ed and Mary Ruth Judd married in 1961; she taught nursing at universities and community colleges. He served congregations in Wichita Falls, Texas; Warrensburg, Ohio; Bedford, Indiana; Lincoln, Nebraska; Corvallis, Oregon; Seattle; and Arlington, Texas. He earned a DMin at Christian Theological Seminary. During their fifty-five years of marriage, they led educational tours to Israel and Europe, and volunteered in many clubs and organizations. Ed was active in Kiwanis wherever he lived.

In 2019, his family joined with him to establish the Edward H. and Mary Ruth Judd Kolbe Fund in remembrance of Mary Ruth, who died in 2017, and in celebration of his 85th birthday and DDH's 125th year. He is survived by three children, Ruth Cooper (Brian), Charles Thornton-Kolbe (Jennifer), and Tom Kolbe (Laura Salem), and six grandchildren.

Donald Aubrey Leak, entering class of 1960, died July 21 in the Seattle area. He was 89.

Born in Indiana on September 20, 1935, Don earned his BS degree at the Indiana University. He met fellow student Joyce Weigel, and they married in 1957. He entered the Divinity School, becoming a Disciples Divinity House Scholar in 1960 and earning his BD from Chicago Theological Seminary.

He served as an administrator for religious and nonprofit organizations, including for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Seattle

and for the YMCA. He and Joyce retired in the Seattle area. He is survived by Joyce and their two sons.



Patricia Gibson Stockdale died December 12, 2024 in Seattle. She was 95. She was the widow of alumnus and trustee, James E. Stockdale, to whom DDH's courtyard is dedicated.

Pat grew up in Peoria, Illinois, and attended college in Madison, Wisconsin, before marrying Jim and moving to Chicago, where he earned his BD degree as a DDH Scholar. In 1970, Pat and Jim moved to Seattle, where Jim became pastor of University Christian Church. Pat earned a graduate degree in Early Childhood Education and became curriculum coordinator at Seattle/King County Head Start. Later,

she enjoyed a twenty-year career in real estate. Pat maintained a lifelong commitment to equality and independence for women. She helped to lead adult education at the church. Pat and Jim were strong supporters of Seattle's performing arts.

Pat is survived by her children Mark (Nancy Gruber), Jennifer (K.C. Helmeid), and Jonathan (Zoe Donnell) and seven grandchildren. She was preceded in death by Jim and by her sister, Barbara Froemming.

Mark G. Toulouse died on March 2 in Dallas, Texas, following a cardiac event during a hand of poker. He was 73.

A leading historian and theologian of the Disciples movement, ordained Disciples minister, prominent theological educator, expert on religion and public life, and championship poker player, he was honored as the Alumnus of the Year by the University of Chicago Divinity School in 2018.

Born in 1952 in Des Moines, Iowa, he received his PhD in the History of Christianity from the University of Chicago in 1984, where he was a student of Martin E. Marty. He began his teaching career at Illinois Benedictine College and at Phillips Theological Seminary. He taught at Brite Divinity School, where he became Emeritus Professor of American Religious History, from 1986–2008, including three years as Dean and Executive Vice-President. He retired in 2017 as Principal and Professor of the History of Christianity of Emmanuel College at the University of Toronto. Under his leadership, PhD and

MA degree programs, and a certificate in Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy were introduced in conjunction with the University of Toronto, and Muslim and Buddhist Studies programs were created.

He wrote or edited ten books, including two editions of *Joined in Discipleship: The Shaping of Contemporary Disciples Identity; Makers of Christian Theology in America*; and *The Altars Where We Worship: The Religious Significance of Popular Culture*. With characteristic clarity, wisdom, and erudition, he engaged in theological discussions and ecumenical work, including in the Disciples-ELCA Bilateral Dialogue held in Chicago just days before his death.

In the last decade of his life he gave daily, devoted care of his wife, Jeffica, who is living with acute, end-stage Alzheimer's, diagnosed in 2013. He is survived by their three children, Joshua, Marcie (Kevin Hunt), and Cara (William Wallace), and six grandchildren. He is also survived by his late-in-life partner, Ann McDonald, extended family, and dear friends. A memorial service was held at South Hills Christian Church in Fort Worth, Texas. ♦



Lott CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

kingdom in academia or the church, we are woefully disappointed.

Perhaps you wonder about your own costly, extravagant sacrifices. Choosing the rigors and intensity of the university, pursuing a theological education, coming to DDH are their own curious response to this moment where life and death are commingled, where whispers of resurrection are scarce to be believed.

Dare we say—education is an extravagant ointment, too.

A story that informs my work as a trustee comes from my middle school language teacher, Nadine Cooper. Each December, she wore a beautiful brooch of golden bells complete with emerald and ruby appointments. Even middle schoolers noticed that it was stunningly beautiful jewelry.

If someone asked about it, as some student would each year, Mrs. Cooper would happily tell you that she had originally purchased this costly gift for her mother and that she subsequently inherited it. Eyes darting over her glasses, she would say, "The moral of the story—you give the best you can afford, as you never know what will return."

She was really talking about returning—yes, her mother's jewelry, but more so the story and legacy, the bonds of love and care. It was tangible, and also that which prepared her to live in a world where life and death and life again can commingle.

Scholars, residents, friends of this grand old house: We don't know what will return. We don't even know all that has yet to be given in the first place. The horizon has peril, yet possibilities persist. We are gathered here with the life we have amidst great suffering while whispers of resurrection surround us.

I believe that what is ahead of us will require giving the best we can summon as a lavish, costly, prodigal, silly, extravagant gift—not as an act of selfishness, foolishness, or apathy—but because whatever future is ours will require people anointed and people anointing.

Moments when life and death are commingled require a certain preparation and a certain community of hands and hair, tears and fingertips outstretched with our costliest ointments. It will require dwellings

where we learn this art of anointing, houses of spirituality, friendship, and learning. It will require places of belonging and resiliency where we carry on the ministry of the Anointer of Bethany and give the best we have in service to Jesus, whose family and whose way has no end.

You have been given the best we know how to give—an education and a dwelling. We don't know what will return, but we know that such extravagance will not be lost. We entrust it to you for the many ministries before you in church, society, and academy. Welcome to this extravagant home. Amen. ♦

A Recognition of Generosity

Through the generosity of these individuals and organizations, the Disciples Divinity House increases its capacity and support of its students. These gifts express remarkable care for this and next generations of ministers, thinkers, and leaders.

Between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025, gifts and grants received from 196 individuals, churches, and other organizations totaled \$219,078, with \$66,833 (31%) of that total directed for scholarship endowment and capital funds. Gifts for ongoing annual support totaled \$152,245, including \$32,991 given through the Disciples Mission Fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Ryan Haefke, Development Associate



Gifts are for ongoing support to the annual fund unless otherwise noted.

[†] Indicates deceased.

Trustees

Larry D. Bouchard and Peggy Galloway
Patricia Duncan and Brandon Cline
J. Marshall and Barbara J. Dunn
Claudia A. Highbaugh
Sandhya R. Jha
Pamela J. and Theodore Jones
April J. Lewton and Garry G. Sparks Jr.
Lewton Sparks Family Fund;
Annual Fund
Cynthia G. Lindner
Colton D. Lott and Kelsey Cobbs
M. Elizabeth Dey Fund;
Annual Fund
Chad H. and Crista Martin
Martin Family Fund
Vy and Linh Nguyen
Antonio Rodriguez and Elsa Acevedo
Mareta J. Smith
Paul A. Steinbrecher
David and Aida M. Vargas
Alexis K. Vaughan
Melinda K. Wood

Roger and Barbara Adams
Katherine and Nathan Alexander
In memory of Chuck Blaisdell;
Annual Fund
Ross M. Allen and Ryan Haefke
Amy and Roger Bertschausen
Kenneth and Emily Brooker Langston
Erica Brown
Joel and Erin Brown
Peter and Carol Browning
Browning Family Fund
Donald and Margaret Burk
Kristine A. Culp Fund
Susan and David Cabot
Kristel Clayville and Mandy Burton
David Cobb and Katy McFall
Douglas Collins
Brandon Cook
Danielle Cox and Samuel Bateman
William and Patricia Crowl
William E. and Patricia V.
Crowl Fund
Kristine A. Culp
Kent and Janice Dorsey
John Dungan and Jennifer Jesse
Stephen and Clara Duvall
Adam Frieberg
Liv Gibbons and Elijah Buck

Thank you
for your generosity
to DDH and its
students.



Please scan the QR code
at left to donate online.
—
Or visit our website at
ddh.uchicago.edu/giving

Yvonne T. Gilmore
Brian Grant
Timothy and Donna Griffin
W. David Hall and
Lori Brandt Hale
Lowell Handy
Frank Hoss
Laura Jennison Reed and
Joshua Reed
Michael Karunas and
Amy Ziettlow
Michael Kinnamon
Edward H. Kolbe[†]
Mark and Daette Lambert
Dennis Landon and
Lana Hartman Landon
Andrew and Rachel Langford
Don A.[†] and Joyce Leak
Timothy and Yeahwa Lee
Ellie Leech and Burton Guion
Brynolf Lyon and Ann Taylor
Bonnie and Mark Miller-McLemore
James and Mary Monroe
Lee Hull Moses and Robert Moses
Rory Osborne
Teresa Hord Owens and Walter Owens
Andrew Packman and Sarah Rohde
Stephanie Paulsell and Kevin Madigan
In memory of William O. Paulsell
Santiago Piñón and
Lizdelia Flores Piñón
Philip and Loris Points
Thomas and Jane Quigley
Brent Reynolds
Marilyn Robie and Arthur Shechet
Ritch C. Savin-Williams
Joy Joan Savin and Francis Charles
Williams Fund
Carol and Robert Sherman
Browning Family Fund
Aaron Smith and Kiah Vernon Smith
Michael Stone and Patricia Perry
Bradford Stull and Maggie Kim
Michael Swartzentruber
Laird Thomason
Laura Jean Torgerson and Tim Donaghy
Beau Underwood and Casey Osterkamp
Jim and Peggy Powell Fund;
Annual Fund
Shawn Van Dyke
Benny VanDerburgh and Isabel Neal
Jack Veatch and Aneesah Ettress Veatch
Kerry Waller Dueholm and Ben Dueholm
William and Lisa Wassner
Norman Wells
Paul Williams
Rob and Juli Wilson-Black
Sarah Zuniga
Jim and Peggy Powell Fund;
Annual Fund



A wish! **Claudia Highbaugh** marked a milestone birthday in August. For forty-five years she has given visionary leadership in higher and theological education including twenty-five years as a DDH trustee and her service at Yale University, Harvard Divinity School, and Connecticut College. She was the first Black woman ordained as a Disciple after the 1968 Restructure and Merger.

Many friends celebrated with a gift to the Highbaugh Family Fund, which also honors Richard and Dolores Highbaugh. As Barbie and Loring Fiske-Phillips say, "We know we are not alone in our deep appreciation for Claudia's life and work." To date, the fund has reached \$37,081.

Friends

Don and Peggy Allan
In honor of W. David Hall and
Lori Brandt Hale
Ron Allen and Linda McKiernan-Allen
Thomas Andrews
Lynne Armstrong
Jeanette and Vince Autrey
William E. and Patricia V. Cowl Fund
Laura Bailey
Arvil Bass[†]
Thomas Beale and Laura Nash
Joseph A. Bessler
Benjamin Bohren
Ann Bromley
In memory of Robert L. Bromley
Karen Brown
Wallace Bubar and Gabriele Albrecht
Jane Cahill
Amos Chenoweth
Clara Copeland
Robert[†] and Elizabeth Crowe
D. Duane Cummins
Terry and Ann Daniel
Rick Durance
Karen Fields
Jacquelyn Foster and David Boger
Bruce Fowlkes and Carolyn Roper-Fowlkes
In celebration of Eureka College
alums at DDH
John Foulkes
Debra Gardner
Edward H. and Mary Ruth Judd
Kolbe Fund
Kate Gerike and Kevin Gregory
Neil Gilpin
In honor of W. Clark Gilpin
Richard and Carolyn Gray
Savannah Gross
Lana Hasenyaer
Heidi Haverkamp
Robert L. Hill
In memory of Chuck Blaisdell
Pamela and Ross Hollinger
Chris Jaeger
Deborah and William Jennison
Janette Jha
Liza Johnson
Mary Lu Johnston and Ted White
JoAnne Kagiwada
Cinthia Kim-Hengst
Jerry and Donna Martin
Martin Family Fund
Richard and Mary[†] Martin
W.B. Blakemore Fund in memory of
George L. Seaton
Jerry and Ginny McCoy
Holly McKissick and Joe Hatley
Ron McNeill
Geraldine Miller
In honor of Bonnie and Mark
Miller-McLemore
Peter and Lynne Morgan
Rolland G. and Leverne B. Pfile Fund;
Jim and Peggy Powell Fund;
In honor of Joel Brown
Lester Palmer
Stephen Pavv
Michael and Valerie Pennanen
James and Carol Pinson
Paul and Abigail Pribbenow
Georgeann Ramsay and Louis Lang
Kate Raun
Paula Ritchie
James Rurak
Elizabeth Schmidkunz and
Glen Gibbons
Barbara and Randolph Schnabel
Parag and Jayshree Shah
Scribner and Pat Sheafor
Rolland H. and Laura Frances
Sheafor Fund
Martha Shine
Pete and Karen Smith
Garry and Pam Sparks
Lewton Sparks Family Fund
Sylvia Spangler
Richard and Diane Spleth
Jackson and Patricia Sturgeon
Guenter Thomas
Sonja Vaughan
Charles and Jane Watkins

Jim and Lois Whitaker
Ann White
Lewton Sparks Family Fund
John and Lucy Williams
Carol Wilson
Deborah and Johnny Wray
In honor of Tabitha and Shane Isner

Highbaugh Family Fund

Includes gifts celebrating Claudia
Highbaugh's birthday in August 2025

Benjamin Bohren
Kristine A. Culp
Barbie and Loring Fiske-Phillips
April Garrett
Charisse and Donald Gillett
Martien Halvorson-Taylor
Claudia A. Highbaugh
Belva Brown Jordan and
Antoinette Jordan
Mark and Daette Lambert
Julie Miller
Dale Peterson
Severn Taylor
Rachel Thomas
Bery Tishkoff
Emilie Townes
Rebecca Lee Wiggs

Amy A. Northcutt Scholarship Fund

James Barrett
Susan and David Cabot
Kristine A. Culp
Mary Lynn Dell and
David Vandermeulen
Ann Dunkin
Ana and Tod Gobledale
In honor of Thandiwe Dale-Ferguson
M. Scott and Diane M. Hedden
G. Kay Lehman and Michael Hassell
Cynthia E. McGowan
Bob and Fern Melton
Craig Middlebrook and
Stacey Carlson Helberg
Sylvia Spangler
Nancy and Winston Trench
Barbara L. Watts
Shirley Weeks
Michelle Wyman
In memory of Christine Dinter Wyman





The Gertrude Gary Sutcliffe Society

Established in 1994, the Sutcliffe Society recognizes individuals who ensure the mission of Disciples Divinity House by providing for a gift through their estate. It is named in tribute to the woman whose vision and gifts built the original endowment, furnished the building, and completed the chapel. The Society honors those who carry forward the tradition of vision and action.



Churches and church-related organizations

Bethany Christian Church,
Fort Washington, Maryland
Christian Church Foundation
Disciples Mission Fund

Organizations and foundations

Community Foundation of
Tompkins County
*Joy Joan Savin and Francis Charles
Williams Fund*
Github, *matching gift*
Lilly Endowment, Inc., *matching gift*
Omega Chapter of Psi Upsilon Fraternity
USG Foundation, Inc., *matching gift*

Annual gifts through permanent funds held with the Christian Church Foundation

Katherine Raley Alexander and
Nate Alexander Fund
Austin Boulevard Christian Church
Legacy Fund
Harold and Alberta Brown Fund
Fuller Family Fund
Gambs McCaw Fund
Irving Park Christian Church Fund
Ralph E. Lindner Fund
Rev. Jess E. and
Patricia Jean Moore Fund
Schroeder Family Fund
Rolland H. and
Laura Frances Sheafor Fund
Robert G. Sulanke Fund
Irene Van Boskirk Fund

Estate Gift

Patricia G. Stockdale[†]

Polly Scribner Ames[†]
Robert V. and Bonny Andelson[†]
Thomas W. Andrews
Arthur A. and Norma Jane Azlein[†]
John R.[†] and Julia P. Bean
Miriam Bellville[†]
Amy and Roger Bertschausen
Wallace W. Bubar
Ann W. and Benjamin F. Burns[†]
L. Del and Ann Butterfield[†]
Gene R. Cleveland[†]
Annie Mae Cooke[†]
Robert W.[†] and Elizabeth Crowe
William E. and Patricia V. Crowl
Kristine A. Culp
Katherine A. Dey[†]
Burrus Dickinson[†]
J. Marshall and Barbara J. Dunn
Bruce D. and Helen Hempfling Ervin
F. McDonald and Jean Ervin[†]
Malcolm S. and Ruth M. Ferguson[†]
Samuel F. Freeman Jr.[†]
Adam Frieberg
W. Clark and Nancy Gilpin
Elizabeth H. Guonjian and
Joseph S. Pettit
John W. Harms[†]
Harvey C. and Ruth S. Hartling[†]
Isabelle Havens[†]
Wilbur S. Hogevoll[†]
Dorothy Hunter[†]
Lewis G. Joachim[†]
JoAnne H. Kagiwada
Leslie L. and Elizabeth M. Kingsbury[†]
Maurice F. Knott[†]
Ralph E. Lindner[†]
C. Harvey and May Sweet Lord[†]
Frank C. and Winifred A. Mabee[†]
Chad H. and Crista L. Martin
John and Maxine McCaw[†]
Cynthia McCrae[†]
Holly C. McKissick
Craig H. Middlebrook and
Stacey Carlson Helberg
Bonnie J. and Mark Miller-McLemore
Kay L. Northcutt
B. Ernest[†] and Judy C. O'Donnell
Angela E. Pfile and Douglas Job

Permanent Funds and Major Capital Gifts

The mission of the Disciples Divinity House is sustained by gifts to the permanent endowment and for major capital projects. The following represent gifts or commitments of at least \$10,000 (\$5,000 or more before 1975).

Permanent funds

YEAR ESTABLISHED

1901	Ellen M. Thomas Fund
1906	Old Endowment Fund
1906	R. A. Long
1906	Ella L. Ford
1906	Nell B. Ford Torrey
1906	Stella D. Ford Schlottman
1906	W. S. Brannum
1906	E. MacDonald Bowman
1913	New Endowment Fund
1913	Philip H. Gray
1930	Gertrude Gary Sutcliffe
1945	William Henry Hoover Lecture Fund
1949	Lizzie K. Schermerhorn Memorial Fund
1958	Harry R. Moore
1964	Arthur Burton Keller Memorial Fund
1968	Samuel M. Jasper
1973	Hugh T. Morrison
1975	W. Barnett Blakemore Scholarship Fund
1979	Henry Barton Robison Scholarship
1979	Edward Scribner Ames Scholarship
1979	M. Elizabeth Dey Scholarship
1982	Melvin Ray and Phyllis Ann Schultz Scholarship
1983	Drum and Tenant Scholarship
1987	Oreon E. Scott Entering Scholarship
1987	William N. Weaver Entering Scholarship
1987	William F. Rothenburger Memorial Fund
1989	Illinois-Wisconsin Scholarship Fund

1993-96 CENTENNIAL ENDOWMENT FUNDS

John R. and Julia P. Bean Fund
Browning Family Fund
David and Margie Bryan Fund
Solomon and Victoria David Fund
H. Robert Gemmer Fund
Gordon W. and Anne Hoerner Hagberg Fund
Wilbur S. and Marcia Hogevoll
K. Barton Hunter Fund
David T. and JoAnne H. Kagiwada Fund
Clarence E. Lemmon Fund
Frank and Winnie Mabee Fund
Eugene May Fund
Lotus M. McLemore Fund
Chester I. and Lois Miller Fund
Thelma Vaden Northcutt Fund
Kunihiko and Rebecca Onishi Fund
Jack V. and June E. Reeve
Dennis and Mary Lou Savage Fund
Rolland H. and Laura Frances Sheafor Scholarship Fund
James E. and Patricia G. Stockdale
Robert A. and Marjorie M. Thomas
Paul G. and Ruth S. Wassenich Fund
John Norton and Grace Lord Williams Fund

1998 S. F. and Mary Elizabeth Freeman Sr. Fund
1998 Barbara and Clark Williamson Scholarship Fund

1999 Lloyd V. and Vera G. Channels Memorial Fund

1999 Martin Family Scholarship Fund

1999 Jo M. and Rebecca M. Riley Fund

2000 Arthur A. and Norma Jane Azlein

2000 Mable Topping and Samuel F. Freeman Jr. Fund

2002 Ellen M. and Clyde Curry Smith

2003 P. Hunter Beckelhymer Fund

2004 Robert and Frances Sulanke

2004 Bernard F. and Annie Mae Cooke Scholarship

2004 Orchard Street Christian Church Ministerial Education Fund

2005 G.L. "Andy" and Dorothy Coffman Messenger Fund

2005 Lewis G. Joachim

2005 Baringer-Butterfield Fund

2011 Rolland G. and Leverne B. Pfile Fund

2015 William E. and Patricia V. Crowl Fund

2015 Woodrow W. and Marie T. Wasson

2017 Kristine A. Culp Scholarship Fund

2017 Amy A. Northcutt Scholarship Fund

2017 Jean L. and F. McDonald Ervin Fund

2018 Dr. Geunhee Yu and Mrs. Geunsoon Yu Scholarship

2018 Jim and Peggy Powell Scholarship

2018 Edward H. and Mary Ruth Judd Kolbe Fund

2019 Carl B. and Esther L. Robinson Fund

2019 Lewton Sparks Fund

2020 Teresa M. Gilmore Fund

2022 Benjamin F. and Ann Wallace Burns

2022 Highbaugh Family Fund

2023 In memory of Samuel C. Pearson for unrestricted endowment

2023 Richard E. and Marcia D. Starkey

2024 Joy Joan Savin and Francis Charles Williams Fund

Capital gifts

YEAR ESTABLISHED

1923	Myrtilla A. Colbert Jones
1923	William Darnell MacClintock
1923	Samuel Sweeny MacClintock
1923	William Henry Hoover
1928	Gertrude Gary Sutcliffe
1965	Illinois-Wisconsin Capital Funds Appeal
1992	Burrus Dickinson
1994	L. Del and Ann Butterfield
1995	Hoover Foundation
1995	Herbert L. Willett, III
2005	Chapel 75th Anniversary Renewal
2009	Capital Area Library Refurbishment
2020	University Christian Church, Seattle, in honor of James E. Stockdale
2020	Theodore and Beulah Beasley Foundation
2020	Thomas V. Stockdale memorial, Richard Hunt commission
2025	Edward H. Kolbe, Renovation
2025	Thomas W. Andrews, Renovation



4

Fiyori Kidane
named first
Powell scholar

PAGE 4

8

Marshall Dunn
as beacon and
blessing

PAGE 8



12

Renewing
“the House”:
A photo report

PAGE 12

Disciples Divinity House
of the University of Chicago
1156 East 57th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637

RETURN ADDRESS REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 100
Oak Brook, Illinois

DDH FALL 2025



DDH students wrap up a busy year. ❄️ Wishing you peace and joy in 2026.

