

**Emerging Leaders Conference
Mentor Team
November 2009**

Del Brown – In Memoriam

Del was the Dean and Professor of Theology at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, Dean and Professor of Theology at Iliff School of Theology in Denver, and professor of Religious Studies at Arizona State University. He published a number of books and articles on process and liberation theologies, the Bible and theology, tradition and innovation in religion, and progressive Christianity. “What Does a Progressive Christian Believe? A Guide for the Searching, the Open, and the Curious” was published by Seabury Books in February 2008. Del’s work in retirement continued to be focused on progressive Christianity in American religious institutions and civic life.

Erik Christensen

Pastor Erik Christensen was ordained and called to serve as pastor of St Luke’s Lutheran Church of Logan Square, Chicago in October, 2006. St Luke’s is widely known for its diverse congregation, welcoming homeless or home-blessed, gays, lesbians, straights, bisexual and transgendered people.

Prior to receiving the call at St. Luke’s, Erik served as the Director of East Coast Operations with StandUp for Kids, a national nonprofit organization working with and for runaway and homeless youth. He is a graduate of Macalester College, Candler School of Theology/Emory University, and the Lutheran Theological Seminary of Philadelphia. Erik is rostered for ministry by Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries (ELM) and serves as co-chair of their governing body. ELM works for the full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the life and ministry of the Lutheran Church.

Eric Elnes

Eric is a biblical scholar with a Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary. Currently Senior Minister of Countryside Community Church (UCC) in Omaha, he has also served as Senior Pastor of Scottsdale Congregational United Church of Christ in Arizona, known for its innovative, multi-sensory worship experiences. Eric served as co-president of Crosswalk America, an organization committed to resourcing, strengthening and celebrating the emerging progressive Christian faith. He authored the original version of the Phoenix Affirmations, twelve affirmations that reflect commitments to environmental stewardship, social justice, artistic expression, and openness to other faiths. He is most widely known for his book Asphalt Jesus which documents his cross-country walking journey of progressive Christian dialogue with congregations across the United States.

Kate Farrell

Kate Farrell is a four-time Emmy Award winning television producer and director with a 20-year career leading projects for NBC, ABC, CBS, HBO, PBS, ESPN and WEtv.

She has served as Media Producer for Middle Collegiate Church in New York. There she has produced DVD documentaries and created a Webby Award winning website. Currently she is the Communications Consultant for Middle Project, Inc., an innovative progressive social cause institute dedicated to preparing ethical leaders for a just society.

Jim Gertmenian

Jim Gertmenian is Senior Minister of Plymouth Congregational Church and a founder of the Plymouth Center for Progressive Christian Faith. His leadership at Plymouth has advanced a nationally recognized progressive Christian pulpit rooted in a vibrant, living congregation. His vision has led to the creation of the emerging leaders conferences, bringing together seasoned leaders of progressive Christianity with younger seminarians from around the country. Jim is a graduate of Oberlin College and Union Theological Seminary and has served pastorates in New York, Connecticut and Minnesota. In Minneapolis he has worked closely with the city's Mayor, co-chairing a commission of eighty people to formulate a ten-year plan for ending homelessness, and he currently serves on the steering committees of Heading Home Minnesota and Heading Home Hennepin, organizations that address homelessness issues. He has served for ten years on the Board of United Theological Seminary. He is a hymn-writer, and several of his works appear in various denominational hymnals.

Anne Howard

Anne is Executive Director of The Beatitudes Society, a new organization building a national network for progressive Christian seminarians. Before coming to The Beatitudes Society in September, 2006, she served as Associate Rector at Trinity Episcopal Church in Santa Barbara, California. She is now Preacher-in-Residence at Trinity, and is the author of "Claiming the Beatitudes: Nine Stories from a New Generation" (Alban, 2009). Prior to ordination, she was Executive Director of the Interfaith Center to Reverse the Arms Race at All Saints Church in Pasadena, CA. Since ordination in 1988, she has served as Associate and Interim Rector at All Saints by-the-Sea of Santa Barbara, Canon to the Ordinary for Bishop Fred Borsch in the Diocese of Los Angeles, and Director of Mt. Calvary Invites, an adult education program of Holy Cross Monastery in Santa Barbara. She is a graduate of the University of California Santa Barbara and the Episcopal Divinity School. She serves on the Advisory Board of the Capps Center for Ethics, Religion and Public Life at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Steve Jacobs

Steve has chaired the planning teams of the Emerging Leaders Conferences since their inception in 2007. He was born in Kansas City, graduated from the University of Kansas, studied two years at the University of Kansas School of Medicine, and went on to graduate from Princeton Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity degree in 1976 and was awarded senior prizes in homiletics and pastoral ministry. At the age of 31, he became Senior

Minister of the Wilton Presbyterian Church in Wilton, Connecticut, well known for its progressive Christian faith, a church which shares facilities, staff and programs with its congregational partner St. Matthew's Episcopal Church. Following his work in Wilton, Steve lived in Kenya where he was a field officer with Harvard University's WorldTeach program. He is currently Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs at Regis University in Denver, one of twenty-eight Jesuit universities in the United States, where he has served in various leadership roles since returning from Kenya in 1988. Steve coordinated the development of the Jesuit Distance Education Network, and is co-founder and advisory member of the Jesuit Commons, which links the work of Jesuit universities with Jesuit social justice work worldwide.

Kimberly Knight

Kimberly Knight serves on the staff of the Beatitudes Society as Circuit Rider, building, resourcing and networking professional networks. She graduated from Georgia State University with a BA in Religious Studies and received her Master of Divinity from Candler School of Theology/Emory University. Prior to seminary she worked nearly five years as a public school activist in the city of Atlanta. She brings to The Beatitudes Society more than fifteen years of experience across a broad spectrum of technology settings including multimedia production and instructional technology. She currently serves as the pastor of an online congregation that has been gathering for over two years in the cyber-world of Second Life.

Michael Neuroth

Michael is the Policy Advocate for International Issues in the Justice and Witness Ministries of the United Church of Christ in Washington, D.C. Michael has previously worked for Church World Service in its United Nations Office. He has served as a consultant for the World Council of Churches as well as the Chicago-based Parliament of the World's Religions. He holds degrees from Xavier University, Princeton Theological Seminary and Rutgers University. His policy portfolio is focused on international peace and the Iraq war; the crisis in Darfur; Sudan; global poverty; and supporting institutions such as the United Nations and the International Criminal Court.

Fr. Michael O'Connell

Father Michael is pastor of The Church of the Ascension in Minneapolis. For seventeen years he served as the Rector of the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis. During his tenure there, he began a visionary dialogue between Catholics and Jews and has been a prime driver of the interfaith movement in Minnesota. In the mid 1990's he founded the Jeremiah Program which provides housing, child care, and mentoring for single mothers who are enrolled in higher education in Minneapolis. The program now has a separate facility in St. Paul and is in the process of developing a national presence. Father Michael was recently elected as President of the Board of Trustees of the Hazelden Foundation, a world-renowned addiction treatment organization.

Gary Simpson

Gary is Senior Pastor of Concord Baptist Church, Brooklyn, NY. After receiving a BA in Religion and Black Studies from Denison University (1984), and a Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary, New York, (1987), he earned a Doctor of Ministry degree from United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio (1995). He has served as Adjunct Professor at New Brunswick Theological Seminary and lectured at Union Theological Seminary and Princeton Theological Seminary. In 1997 he delivered the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Lectures at the University of Greifswald, Greifswald, Germany and in 2004 he delivered the Howard Moody Lecture at Union Theological Seminary. In 2002, Gary was chosen by the Lilly Endowment of Indianapolis, Indiana to create and implement a Pastoral Residency Program for young seminary graduates. He currently serves as Assistant Professor of Homiletics at Drew University Theological Seminary.

Rebecca Voelkel

Rebecca is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ and is the Institute for Welcoming Resources and Faith Work Director for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Before coming to the Task Force, she served as Interim National Coordinator for the United Church of Christ Coalition for LGBT Concerns, as pastor of Spirit of the Lakes United Church of Christ and as Program Staff for the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. Rev. Voelkel is the author of *Preventing Sexual Abuse: A Course of Study for Teenagers* (Pilgrim Press, 1996) as well as numerous articles and sermons which have appeared in such journals as *Spirit Currents*, *The Journal of Religion and Abuse*, *Creating Change*, and *Parenting for Peace and Justice*. She is a faith-based community organizing trainer as well as workshop presenter on a wide variety of faith-based justice issues. She is a graduate of Earlham College and Yale Divinity School and is currently working towards a Doctor of Ministry at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities.