All of us are called to serve God with our lives. Some, however, feel called to serve in specific vocational ministries. For those who are discerning this calling, considering the possibility of theological education and where that might take place is crucial. Throughout the history the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and throughout the entirety of the Stone-Campbell movement, Disciples have been committed to the education and training of those serving in ministry. And while the context in which ministry takes place today is very different than in previous generations, the commitment to excellence in education continues.

Our schools of theology directly confront the feelings of lostness that many persons are experiencing today — a sense that everything is whirling out of control. Many in our congregations and institutional life are looking at how we can create a safer and more equitable future for all people. Disciples of Christ theological schools help us to confront the complex challenges facing us in ways that are beneficial to all of humanity. Today there are seven seminaries and divinity houses that are in covenant with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) across the United States. Each of them offers various degrees, certificates, and programs, as well as varying approaches in journeying with students. Prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic, many offered a traditional, residence-based experience, others had on-line classes with short on-campus intensives throughout the year, and still others had a blend of on-site and distance learning. Responding to a world amid a global pandemic Disciples theological institutions shifted to an online educational context and many of our theological institutions have continued to reach students with online theological education. The classes may differ in the format as well as specific degrees and programs, yet all have a commitment to journeying with students in discerning their calling, equipping them with the knowledge and experience to serve God in the wider church and world.

Established in connection with the church, through Higher Education and Leadership Ministries, the Council on Theological Education is an organized means of communication and cooperation both among its member institutions and between its membership and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The Council includes up to two voting representatives selected by each theological education institution affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Current Members: Brite Divinity School; Christian Theological Seminary; Lexington Theological Seminary; Phillips Theological Seminary; Disciples Divinity House of the University of Chicago; Disciples Divinity House at Vanderbilt University Divinity School, and Disciples Seminary Foundation. Responding to the realities of the pandemic, the Council on Theological Education met online for two years but joyfully returned to an in-person meeting March 2023 in Indianapolis and were hosted by Higher Education and Leadership Ministries at the Disciples Center. Highlights of the meetings include:
• Presentation from and conversation with General Minister and President Teresa “Terri” Hord Owens. The conversation focused on The Narrative Project, the Compelling Preaching Initiative and the goals and priority of the Office of the General Minister and President, as well at the church’s commitment to strong theological education institutions.

• Presentations from and engagement with leaders from the Association of Theological Schools. Rev. Chris Meinzer, Senior Director and Chief Operation Officer and Dr. Deborah H.C. Gin, Director of Research and Faculty Development presented data on enrollment trends at schools across North America, with a focus on Disciples schools and the numbers of Disciples students enrolled in ATS schools. CTE committed to engaging in strategic and intentional conversations and action around increasing enrollment of Disciples students at Disciples theological education institutions.

• The Council engaged in conversation with President Brien Lewis and Rev. Emily Miller, Director of Spirituality and Religious Life at Transylvania University and met with Dr. Gary Kidwell from the Christian Church Foundation.

• The Council acknowledged leadership changes at Brite Divinity School, Christian Theological Seminary, Disciples Divinity House at Vanderbilt, and Disciples Seminary Foundation since the last General Assembly. We welcomed the leadership of Mr. Michael Cooper-White, Interim President of Brite Divinity School; Dr. Michael Miller, Executive VP and Dean of Brite Divinity School; Rev. Dr. David Mellott as President of Christian Theological Seminary; Rev. Dr. Nancy Pittman, President of Phillips Theological Seminary; Rev. Dr. Belva Brown Jordan, Executive Director of Disciples Seminary Foundation; We celebrate the continued leadership of Dr. Kris Culp at Disciples Divinity House of the University of Chicago; Rev. Beth Pattillo, Interim Dean Disciples Divinity House at Vanderbilt; Dr. Charisse L. Gillett, President and Rev. Dr. Loida I. Martel, Dean and Vice-President of Academics at Lexington Theological Seminary. We are grateful for the support of Rev. Dr. LaTaunya Bynum and Rev. Ron Degges and former HELM President, Rev. Chris B. Dorsey.

• The Council offered thanksgiving for the witness of Dr. Newell Williams as president and scholar in his retirement from Brite Divinity School.

When you attend a seminary of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), you’ll learn how to bring the beauty and challenges that we share in our life in common into conversation with the variety of theologies, practices, and rituals of our Christian faith. In addition, you’ll be introduced to the wisdom available to us through other religions and world views, which will create meaningful opportunities to help us serve our communities together. Authentic and faithful Christian leadership today requires us to be able to reflect deeply on the world we share and to invite others into that reflection. It also requires us to pay attention to the ways our theology could liberate or could oppress. When you attend a seminary of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), you join God in the transformation of the world.