

Memories from Disciples Seminary Foundation's Time in Claremont, CA (1959-February 8, 2021)

Rev. Dr. Don Sarton (CST/DSF Doctor of Religion Graduate, 1972 • Former DSF Board Member and Board Chair)

There are many good memories I have of DSF. Some come from my days as a student, others from the days I served in congregations and would return to campus, and others while I served on DSF's Board of Trustees. Two significant memories come to mind, and I offer prayers of blessings for two significant people in the life of DSF.

The first would be Mildred Whitworth. She came from Indianapolis with Don as his administrative assistant. She was invaluable. Whenever a student entered the office, she had the most cheerful, gracious, and welcoming smile. Organization was her strength as well. When I had an appointment with Don, everything needed was arranged on his desk. If I didn't have an appointment, it didn't take long for the needed information to arrive. She always had time to listen, share a story, and wanted to know about family and the church we were serving at the time and what class was giving us fits. She was a blessing. She kept in contact with several of us following graduation with an encouraging note and always a newsy Christmas card.

The second memory that sticks out is the day Don Reisinger showed me around the new facility. He was so proud and even though he tried, he could not contain himself. What a journey he led, what a story he lived, what a blessing Don was for DSF. I will always be grateful for the mentoring, guidance, and collegial friendship Don provided.

Rev. Dr. Edwin Linberg (DSF/CST D.Min. Graduate, 1975 • Former DSF Board Member)

My memories of DSF fall into three categories: first, as a ministry that supported the clergy of the Pacific Southwest Region (PSWR). For me personally, this included many learning opportunities for continuing education as well as the opportunity to earn degrees, as I was able to do. I received my D.Min. in 1975 while serving Temple City Christian Church.

Second, as a vital unit in the life of the PSWR. In this phase of its life, I was privileged to be a member of its Board of Directors for many years as well as to experience its presence as one of the units represented on the Board of Directors of the PSWR. The key players in this role, of course, were its presidents, initially Don Reisinger and later Mary Anne Parrott. Not to be overlooked was Rod Parrott, who provided great leadership in DSF's offering of many continuing education opportunities for clergy of this Region, as well as the regions of Northern California and Arizona.

Third, as an employer of a family member. After [my wife] Mariette and I retired from ministry and returned to California following my last full-time pastorate in Kansas in 1999, she was hired as a part-time staff member by Don. She had the privilege of working with him and Mary Anne, who succeeded Don as president. Her duties included secretarial work, overseeing the

Discipliana collection in the library, as well as providing hospitality for the many events hosted by DSF for clergy and others in the PSWR. She had a wonderful experience as a member of the staff for several years.

It will be very different not to visit the building [in Claremont], which has housed DSF for so many years. We extend our best wishes for the future of this important ministry in the PSWR as it continues its ministry in Fullerton.

Rev. Young Sook Kim (DSF/SFTS M.Div. Graduate, 2002 • DSF Director of the Korean Church Studies program from 2003-11 • Director of Certificate of Ministry Studies from 2010-11)

After Mary Anne Parrott became the president of DSF, she offered me the position of Director of the Korean Church Studies program, and my time at DSF under her incredible leadership will forever remain one of my greatest blessings. Mary Anne embodied the highest ideals of DSF in her thoughts and actions, and I learned so many invaluable lessons during our time together.

I was deeply moved by her humility, wisdom, heart, how conscientiously she strived to be inclusive of other cultures, and how she took care of the people around her. She held many gatherings at her own home for Korean students, which provided great comfort and strength to them while balancing school, family, and financial obligations far away from home in a foreign country.

Board meetings were arranged with meticulous thought and care. Ceramic was used instead of disposable dishes, along with wooden tables that were heavy to fold but contributed to a sturdy elegance. These touches may seem old-fashioned now, but these deliberate choices reflected Mary Anne's depth and the value of good stewardship. After board meetings, she would help with the cleanup, washing the dishes as Dr. Ron Parrott and the late Dr. Mark Parsons vacuumed and folded up the heavy tables.

On one occasion, an affiliate organization filed for bankruptcy, which shocked many as it seemed to be infallible, and I asked her how this could happen. She offered this analogy – A tsunami is caused by many different factors occurring all at once, and it happens financially as well. As a hawk watches its prey with precise sharpness, never losing sight of it, so must every penny coming in and out must be watched. She exhibited similar acuity in managing DSF's finances.

Rev. Dr. Tamara Rodenberg (DSF/GTU Ph.D. Graduate, 2006 • Former Dean/Interim President of DSF)

The first memory I want to share is as a student with two young children, attending graduate studies at the Graduate Theological Union. On this particular week, [my husband] John and I were under considerable financial pressure with our small church salary and paying for my dreams of a Ph.D. We had considered several options when a letter came in the mail from Mary

Anne Parrot, President of the Disciples Seminary Foundation, filled with words of support and encouragement. Also included in the letter was a check covering precisely the amount we needed, and even a little more, in order to stay afloat as a family. Words cannot express the impact this kind of giving has on a person's life and desire to give back in service. Thank you.

The second, fast-forward, following graduation, with a newly minted Ph.D., I was invited to work for DSF as Dean and then finally as Interim President. I endeavored, in that sacred space, to follow the example of those who went before me. I worked to write thoughtful letters supporting the generation of ministers in formation behind me – putting those checks in the envelope lovingly and prayerfully. When I think of that sacred space, I think of it as a place where the faithful work of many hearts and hands touched the world in meaningful and transforming ways. Thank you DSF for the many ways you stood by me and stand by those you are called to serve. Truly, only God can know the timing and the impact of these good works.

Rev. Dr. Young Lan Kim (SFTS M.Div. Graduate, 2004, DSF/CST D.Min. Graduate, 2018)

I studied my M.Div. at San Francisco Theological Seminary, but at that time, I had never heard of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and didn't know about DSF. In 2004, my husband, Young Jun Yang, and I joined an early morning prayer at DSF with three Korean Disciples pastors who attended or worked at SFTS. We met every morning for nearly three years, meditating and praying. We served different churches but shared a sincere, earnest desire to serve God. The other ministers moved on to their ministries, and sometime later, my husband and I decided to continue the prayer meetings at DSF. Since then, DSF has been a meaningful and spiritual place for us.

With the support of the DSF scholarship, I was able to attend Quadrennial, where my husband and I started talking about the ordination/full standing process of the Disciples of Christ. After my husband and I became representatives of PSWR NAPAD, the DSF building, and its ministry, influenced much of our ministry. Through DSF, I was able to create opportunities to share information about the DOC with Claremont students and ministers. DSF also gave me the opportunity to begin my studies in the Worship and Arts Doctor of Ministry program. DSF was a meeting place for new ministers who did not know about the DOC, a place where we felt warm and comfortable. Living in Claremont, I am sorry to hear that DSF is leaving. I will remember many good memories whenever I pass the building.

Rev. Jefferson Beeker (DSF/SFTS M.Div. Graduate, 2012)

The drive from Studio City to Claremont and the DSF office is not a short one. On my first drive out, I didn't at all know what the outcome of this visit would be. In 2007, I was in the process of becoming a Licensed Minister and was exploring how my future would proceed. This particular day, I had an appointment with then DSF President Tamara Rodenberg to explore my options.

As I drove east, my mind was awash with many thoughts about ministry, but what my next step was to be was still unclear.

I arrived at the DSF building and something about it, even from the parking lot, seemed very inviting. Needless to say, I was intrigued. As I walked through the doors, it was apparent I was at a special place. Others had made the same journey I was about to undertake and the collective energy and vibration of those students from the past, as well as the collective hopes of those who would follow me, was greatly felt.

This first meeting with Rev. Dr. Rodenberg would result in her encouraging me to go to seminary and making sure I had all the right introductions at San Francisco Theological Seminary in Pasadena, a place she felt would be good fit, while also assuring me that both she and DSF would always be with me for support. That drive, that walk into the DSF building for the first time, and that meeting were life changing. With the help of DSF, I graduated from SFTS in 2012.

In the following years from that first entry into the building, there were many wonderful visits to DSF: meetings, workshops, use of the library and picnics on the roof, but each and every time I entered the building the memory of that first time, and walking through the doors, would always come to mind. Buildings are brick and mortar, and they can house many different things. The Foothill building became a symbol for new possibility that was forged through a collective desire of so many to do something good and positive for the world. When I think about the building, and imagine it in my mind, I can't help but have a warm feeling made real by the dedication of all those who filled those rooms with the unconditional love of God.

Rev. Dr. Jo Ann Bynum (DSF Director of Student Life, 2012-2020)

“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future.’” - Jeremiah 29:11

In January 2011, it was with much excitement, enthusiasm, and gratitude that I joined the staff of Disciples Seminary Foundation as its Director of Student Life. I happily served in that capacity until 2020. The DSF building and the property on which it is conveniently located at 300 West Foothill Boulevard - at the corner of Foothill and Indian Hills Boulevard in Claremont - has proven to be welcoming and conducive to the multiple aspects of ministry that have taken place at that location over the years.

I rejoice immensely as I reflect upon just a few of my memories of events that took place in our DSF building.

My Memories and Reflections of:

- The commitment, camaraderie, and congeniality of staff and other colleagues in working together, as we sought to fulfill the vision and expectations of the president, the Board of Trustees, and students in meeting needs.

- The extraordinary diversity, giftedness, achievements, and faithfulness of our students in academically preparing themselves for the fulfillment of accomplishing their goals.
- The use of our facility by Claremont School of Theology.
- The use of our facility by the Certificate in Ministries Study program.
- The coming together, as a community, when life challenges were imposed upon any of our students or staff members and their families.
- Special Ministries:
 - Seed Planters: designed for future church planters and new ministries, participation by special guests
 - @The Table: bi-weekly student fellowship gathering
 - DSF Revival: worship services planned at DSF and shared in the Kresge Chapel at Claremont School of Theology
 - The welcoming of new and returning students at semester dinners, our annual Thanksgiving worship and celebrations at DSF
 - Outreach of the community
 - Graduation celebrations for graduates, families, and friends
 - Our established Prayer Chapel on the second floor of the building!

Those above and many, many more memories will reside with me.

To our many donors over the years...and even now – Thank you for your past, present, and future support!

Rev. Susan Gonzales Dewey (Co-Regional Minister of the PSWR from 2007-2019, Former Board Member)

For many years, DSF held a summer intensive class for DOC History and Polity. I had the opportunity to join that class and share about the region as part of that class. We met in the main room and shared learning and time together. One year, the class was held on my birthday, so there was cake. It was always a comfortable and inclusive setting with new faces and new thoughts. I was blessed to be a part of life in the building for these events and so many others.

Clarence L. Johnson (DSF/SFTS D.Min. Candidate, DSF's Director of Pastoral Formation 2014-2020)

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See I am doing a NEW THING! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” - Isaiah 43:18 & 19

“They devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching and to fellowship, to breaking bread and prayer...they broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts. Praising God and enjoying favor of all people and the Lord added to their numbers daily those who were being saved.” - Acts 2:42, 46b & 47

The Holy Hub, The Grateful Walk and Tables Prepared with an Abundance of Good Things

There were midday meals during Board of Trustees meetings. There were opportunities for bonding and fellowship rituals. There were roundtrip group walks across six lanes of fast-moving traffic, which were required for attending worship at CST’s Kresge Chapel, adorned with magnificently colored stained-glass windows reaching from the floor to the high ceiling. Hurriedly, joyfully and safely crossing the wide thoroughfare in random groups, which invariably led to “Hopeful Hub-Huddling” around conversations about the city installing a crosswalk for our protection and comfort. Though the crosswalk was not constructed, hope springs eternal. Indeed, teamwork makes the dream work! There was also food along with great company at the board meetings. What a joy!!!

Rev. Larry J. Morris III (DSF/CST M.Div./MTS Graduate, 2019)

My favorite memories are the @The Table gatherings. Those times of connecting with community over food and praying with each other helped to sustain me during seminary. I am confident that the sustaining and liberating presence of God will continue to journey with DSF as you all journey with students.

Richard John (RJ) Lucchesi (DSF/CST M.Div. Candidate, 2021)

I have so many way-making memories at Disciples Seminary Foundation in Claremont. For the better part of the last decade, it has been my community, my spiritual home. Truly, it has been my church. Memories woven together through the breaking of bread, through prayer, through celebration, through grief, through love.

One evening years ago, after sharing a meal in community, and with the building mostly empty, a classmate of mine and fellow DSF student stayed behind with her family after the dinner. Somehow, I was the only other student there as well. At the time, she was experiencing kidney failure, and in the midst of fighting for her life. At the prompting of, and together with her family, Rev. Dr. JoAnn Bynum and myself laid hands on my classmate and prayed prayers of healing. Today, I can happily say my now dear friend is healed and healthy, and we are partners in ministry on several projects. Building the Kin-dom of God, together. God is good, all the time.

2021 – Jess Kim (DSF staff 2014-present, DSF/CST M.Div. Candidate, Class of 2021)

Working at DSF for the past seven years has been one of the greatest blessings in my life. It has been a privilege to work with our amazing students and graduates, many of whom inspired me to attend seminary, and I have enjoyed connecting with the wider DOC community. I am also grateful to my colleagues, past and present, who work(ed) tirelessly to promote the mission of DSF. While the church is not a building, I will forever cherish the memories of our time at 300 W. Foothill Blvd. in Claremont.

Rev. Lori Tapia (DSF/CST M.Div. Graduate, 2017, National Pastor for Hispanic Ministries, CC (DOC))

Disciples Seminary Foundation is more than a building, it's a family. Yet, with that said, every time I entered that sacred space, I was transformed through relationship, love, and empowerment by all those I encountered. As an alumnus, a board member, and a general ministry partner, I stand in awe of the accomplishments of DSF and the countless ways that this particular ministry space has touched the lives of students and friends. We are called to continually move forward and look to new horizons. God is always doing something new; can't we perceive it? In this celebration of moving from one ministry space to another, may we stop to let the memories steep, may we sip and savor that which we have experienced in the Claremont building, may we take time to grieve as that becomes necessary, and then may we look to that which is upon us. There are new possibilities, through new ministry space and partnership, and so much more yet to be discerned and lived into. No doubt, God is already at work!

To God be all the honor and glory! ¡A Dios sea toda la honra y la gloria!

Rev. Dr. Ben Bohren (DSF Board Member)

Personally, I have so many, many memories of events and relationships nurtured in the DSF building/space. After many years on the Board, I am aware that these memories are mostly about people! The DSF space brought faithful Disciples and UCC leaders together on the Board, who in business deliberations exchanged ideas, passions, and visions for the enriching of the journey of vocation for hundreds of seminarians. In our Board meetings, we met people we never would have met and in meetings and breaks and meal times, the Spirit bonded us across many borders of race, ethnicity, theology, LGBTQ+, education, etc. into a "Beloved Community."

Beyond the value of Board relationships, the opportunity to interact with so many seminarians was a gift and blessing. How thrilling to hear the words and feel the hearts and sense the souls of those who were already providing dynamic leadership, but we could see that the Disciples church and broader faith were in the hands of passionate and committed followers of The Way.

Prayers: Deconsecration and for Future Ministry

As you deconsecrate the sacred space at 300 W. Foothill Blvd., I share my prayers for the continued witness and support the Disciples Seminary Foundation provides for persons in formation for ministry. Leadership, in faith and service, is necessary in our world. My prayer is for all the students who will benefit going forward from your new home at the Disciples Ministry Center and for your renewed vision and commitment to this ministry. Amen.

- Rev. Dr. Tamara Rodenberg
(DSF/GTU Ph.D. graduate, 2006 • Former Staff)

Eternal God, our Creator,

For the marvelous light of remembrance, yes hindsight, we give you thanks!

For encouraging friendships established, yes insight and wisdom, we give you praise!

For all that is yet to come: mask wearing; working from home; observing social distancing; frequent handwashing; sheltering-in-place; so that DSF continues its distinctive ministry among emerging CC(DOC) scholars and preparing for its move to Fullerton we say emphatically, we give you an emphatic yes!!!

- Rev. Clarence L. Johnson
(DSF/SFTS D.Min. Candidate • Former Staff)

Creator God, our force of inspiration, we thank you for DSF, for its mission, for its nurture, and for its vision. May what had begun on Foothill Blvd. in Claremont now continue to thrive in its new quarters in Fullerton. May the same doors of inclusive welcome swing widely to welcome all who desire to serve you boldly. One chapter may be closing, but an exciting new chapter is just beginning. With thanksgiving for what has been and excitement for what is yet to be, we give you praise for the glorious witness that will unfold. Amen.

- Rev. Jefferson Beeker
(DSF/SFTS M.Div. Graduate, 2012)

My prayer is that DSF carries these values [humility, wisdom, inclusivity, hospitality, stewardship, and vigilance] forward while overcoming its challenges in order to give birth to true disciples and shine the light of Jesus.

- Rev. Young Sook Kim
(DSF/SFTS M.Div. Graduate, 2002 • Former Staff)

I pray that DSF does not lose its great calling and passion in their new place.

- Rev. Dr. Young Lan Kim
(DSF/CST D.Min. Graduate, 2018)

An Acrostic Upon Leaving the DSF Building in Claremont, 2021
Dr. Richard J. Follett, DSF Board Member

We Depart in Peace

We have been nurtured and educated in this building,
Enlightened both by our professors and our companions.

Daily, this building beckoned as a welcoming
Environment, a stable place of solace,
Patiently witnessing our struggles, sorrows, and joys,
Always there on the corner
Reliably giving us shelter, both physical and spiritual,
To continue to learn to serve Christ for our world.

It is now the time—yes, now—
Now for us, led as good stewards, to move beyond this site.

Perchance those memories made right here will remain
Everlasting in our minds and hearts and very souls,
And we shall gaze with fondness upon this special place.
Called in the urgency of now to move on, we go in peace.
Ever grateful for our foundation here, we now depart.

3 February 2021