Shared meals, dish wands, and hymn singing bring a new spirit for a new school year

As we are living fully into this first semester of the 2019-2020 school year, our House is alive and filled with the Spirit. Students are constantly in and out, but the feeling when entering the house is the same sense of comfort and home that has always been present. This semester we are joining together for a variety of programs. Some center around games and community building while others facilitate skills for ministerial practice. From baptizing one another to gathering around tables for House dinners, students are both transforming and transformed in this place. The Disciples Divinity House continues to serve its purpose as a foundational space for Vanderbilt Divinity students while creating a community where we can rely on and learn from one another.
Meet the New Students:

Our first year students were given a few questions to be answered so you can get to know them better! The questions are as follows: 1) Tell us a little bit about you! 2) What’s an issue you are passionate about? 3) If you could vacation anywhere, where would you go?

Will Compton
1) I’m a recent graduate of Eureka College with a degree in psychology, philosophy, and religion. I’ve come from my hometown of Independence, Kentucky to receive my Master of Divinity, with concentrations in chaplaincy and prison/carceral studies!

2) My main academic interests consist of the broad intersections between poverty, homelessness, and incarceration. Recently, I’ve also attempted to learn more about low-church movements of simplicity, including the Restoration Movement.

3) I’d love to travel to Italy, especially to visit the Florence Cathedral!

Emma Gautney
1) My name is Emma Gautney. I am from Kansas City, MO. I am currently getting my Masters in Theological Studies, hoping to concentrate in both Religion, Gender and Sexuality, and Mediterranean and Near Eastern Studies. My dream is to be a professor in the Hebrew Poetical books.

2) I am extremely passionate about bridging the gap between the Hebrew Bible and our current social context, I believe the Hebrew Bible has the beautiful ability to speak to the various social problems we face.

3) My dream vacation would be to travel to a secluded beach and spend time reading on the sand, enjoying the sun.

Ashley Buchanan
1) I just graduated from TCU in May with a BA in Religion with minors in Classical Studies, Sociology, and Creative writing. I am a Nashville native who is seeking ordination with the CCDOC in Tennessee and currently pursuing my Master of Divinity with (possible) concentrations in prison/carceral studies and chaplaincy.

2) My passions include writing and camp. I love being able to see people through the words they write down and while they are getting slapped with shaving cream to the face- both show our truest forms. Theologically, though, I am passionate about showing the sacredness that lies within all of us and being able to remind people that ALL people- particularly those who are incarcerated- are deserving of love and worthy of service.

3) Dream vacation as of now is getting to go spend time with my Oma and other family in Humboldt County, CA. The Redwoods there hold a special place in my heart so being able to be around them for an extended period of time would be a dream come true.

Matthew Capestro
1) My home city is Jefferson City, Missouri. My undergraduate work was at Westminster College where I majored in religious studies, philosophy, and sociology (human services track). Currently, I am a dual Master of Divinity and Community Development and Action (M.Ed.) candidate.

My undergraduate research focused on the impact of homonegative teachings on individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+, specifically looking at increased rates of suicide and other mental and emotional scars that emerge from harmful teachings within the church.

2) I am passionate about continuing this academic focus at Vanderbilt so that I can cultivate ways to participate in change after graduation. Outside of my academic pursuits, I am passionate about music, friends, and cats.

3) My dream vacation would be Dollywood with friends, to include both a concert and getting to meet the legend that is Dolly Parton!

Continued on page 3
Meet the New Students (continued)

**Sheri Chambers**
1) I’m from Cleveland, OH but I’ve lived in Nashville for the past 8 years. I’m on the M.Div track with many concentrations in mind, and right now, the plan is continue on to a PhD.

2) Outside of faith and social justice, I’m passionate about friendships/community, black culture and history, living into my pettiness.

3) My dream vacation would be Cabo, Cancun or the Caribbean Islands.

**Jemma Suwa**
1) I am a first-year MTS student from Nigeria, but I plan to switch to the M.Div! The concentrations I am interested in are: Black Religion and Culture Studies, and Global Christianities and Interreligious Encounters. I am doing the dual degree program with Peabody College (Community Development and Action).

2) I love love stories, dancing, video production, going to the movies, trying out new spiritual practices, and listening to podcasts about people’s life-changing experiences.

3) I would go to Geneva, Switzerland! I have always dreamed of going there ever since I saw the pictures of my parents ‘delayed honeymoon’, seven or eight years after their wedding!

**Robert Kell**
1) Robert Kell is from Marion, Virginia. He is a M.T.S student concentrating in Religion and Economic Justice. He is also a fellow with the Wendland-Cook Program in Religion and Justice.

2) He is passionate about Appalachia and social justice.

3) His dream vacation is always a little getaway to New Orleans.

**Not pictured is one of our new DDH residents is Mediatrix Kisienya who is a first year MDiv student.*

**First Years gathered for a photo to celebrate their first few weeks at VDS!**

**The House community gathered to talk about what they wanted to this intentional community to look like for this school year.**

*discipleshousevandy.org
Weekly hangouts build connections

Resident Led Group Activities:
These are nights where students can pick anything they want or are passionate about and host it for the rest of the DDH community. So far this semester, we have had a card night—where a game of Phase 10 got a little crazy and Apples to Apples helped us discover each other’s humor a little better. The following week a group went to an improve night at Third Coast Comedy Club where residents shared in laughs and community building. Lastly (so far, there will be plenty more to tell you about as the semester progresses), we channeled our inner “Bob Ross” at a painting night! These nights are about connecting with our community and having a time to break away from the high demands of class, work, and other obligations we may have during the rest of the week.

Practice of Ministry Program focuses on Sacred Practice this Fall

The Practice of Ministry program is a six-semester series that will prepare students for a variety of ministry settings by learning about sacred practice, community practice, missional church and non-profit work, administrative practice, teaching and learning, and personal spiritual practice. If you would like to lend your experience and expertise to our conversations, contact Interim Dean Beth Pattillo and let her know of your interest. We are able to ‘skype’ in participants outside of Nashville!

As part of our ongoing Practice of Ministry series, students this fall are gathering on Monday evenings to learn about the sacred practices of ministry. Programs include baptism and child dedication, hospital and hospice visitation, pastoral care in times of crisis, funerals, cultural competency in the pulpit, and more. We appreciate our many alums and former residents, as well as VDS faculty and staff, who are spending time in conversation with our students around this topics.
We asked a few of our returning DDH residents, “What does the House mean to you?”

“Someone (I can’t remember who- so sorry, someone) said recently that ‘Home is where someone is waiting for you.’ DDH is a place where you are waited for- where your presence is a gift, and your absence is noticed. Every Tuesday after Disciples History, DDH waited in the hallway until everyone had finished talking to Mark (Miller-McLemore) so we could walk home together (or go to Happy Hour). DDH waits until you have time to get groceries (together). DDH waits (and is still there) when your school-work-field-ed anxiety spiral has kept you away from spending any time outside of your room for a week and welcomes you back with joy and love when you find them in the Common Room/the kitchen, the hill outside, sitting, together. DDH means I am known and missed and loved and waited for. I know that finding rich, supportive community is not at all common or easy in graduate programs, and I will never get over what an incredible opportunity and blessing this house is for so many who are able to experience it.” – Erin Perry, MDiv2

“To me the DDH means I am not alone. Divinity is a hard journey of ups and downs, achievements and hard learning moments, and it is easy to feel disconnected. The Disciples House provides me with the tools and support I need to get through it. At the DDH, I have found friends and colleagues to journey with, from late night study sessions or theological discussions on a random Tuesday night to watching football and exploring Nashville. The DDH has also connected me with alumni who have walked this walk and now provide guidance from experience. They come alongside me and cheer me on through the struggles and celebrate with me in my successes. Living at DDH also comes with a daily reminder that the Disciples Church as a whole is with me and supporting me. By helping me meet my needs of housing, tuition assistance, and often with food in the community fridge, the Disciples of Christ denomination is quite literally nurturing and affirming me as I follow God’s call for my life.” – Samantha Copeland, MDiv2.
Summer 2019 Photo Recap: Ordination and General Assembly!

Please join us in welcoming the Reverend Luther Young who was ordained at New Covenant Christian Church in Nashville, Tennessee on June 2, 2019!

General Assembly in Des Moines, Iowa was a blast! Thankful for all the new connections, old friendships, and bountiful blessings that were harvested during our July gathering!

Continued on page 7
General Assembly in Des Moines (continued)
As you can see from the proceeding pages, the Disciples Divinity House at Vanderbilt continues to thrive through this season of change. Community abounds — messy, vibrant, challenging, comforting, and, most of all, uplifting. We can be proud of our students, alumni, friends, and staff who all work together to make the Disciples House such a rare and special place.

Your support of the Disciples House makes the next generation of leadership possible. We are so thankful for all of you who give so generously to the House. We know that our world and our church are changing, but in the midst of uncertainty, I am confident that our students hold the future of Christ’s work in their very capable hands. Your gifts to our annual fund give tuition assistance to students so that they don’t have to take out loans to pay for semester hours. Your financial support allows us to keep the Disciples House in repair and to underwrite the now enormous cost of living in Nashville. (One of our parking spots alone is worth $200/month!) And your giving means that our students receive the benefits of programming like our Practice of Ministry series or attendance at General Assembly with its myriad opportunities.

We invite you to use the reply envelope enclosed or to donate online at www.discipleshousevandy.org (via PayPal). Every gift makes a difference in the lives of our students. Thank you for all the ways in which you support the mission of the House. We hope that you will keep us continually in your prayers, just as you are continually in ours.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Beth Pattillo (M.Div. ’90)
Interim Dean

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**Alumni Spotlight**

The Rev. Cara Gilger is ordained in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Her 15-year ministry has spanned congregational ministry, small group ministries and campus ministries focusing on spiritual formation and congregational connection, Cara is the editor of 99 Prayers Your Church Needs but Doesn’t Know It Yet as well as the newly released Prepare: An Advent Devotional.

She also serves as a preacher and congregational consultant helping churches align their practices and structures with their vision for how God is calling them to serve their community. In her personal time Cara is an uncoordinated fitness enthusiast. She enjoys reading and traveling with her partner, Tim, and their two daughters Adelaide and Everly as they work on their goal of hiking every National Park. The Gilgers live in North Texas. Rev. Gilger received her bachelor’s degree from Texas Christian University and Master of Divinity from Vanderbilt University Divinity School.

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**From the Interim Dean**

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