

SLI report

FALL 2007 VOL. 2 NO. 1

Revelation Becomes A Thriving Reality

Behold, I will do a new thing;
now it shall spring forth; shall ye
not know it? I will even make a
way in the wilderness, and rivers
in the desert.

—Isaiah 43:19

By Mark Whitlock

Following my graduation from the Summer Leadership Institute in 1998, God created “a new thing” in my miniature ministry as a community development officer and senior minister of the fledgling Christ Our Redeemer AME Church (COR) of Irvine, California. The SLI opened my eyes to business resources, business partners, and funding possibilities.

As president of FAME Renaissance, the community/economic development corporation of First AME Church, Los Angeles, I was guided by the SLI in the

Marcus Halevi



birth of “a new thing” in Los Angeles. Cornel West called it an “improvisational and experimental” pragmatic approach to meeting the immediate needs of a long-suffering South Central community.

The Los Angeles community had been experiencing over 700 deaths annually, through murders by warring gangs, the Cripps and the Bloods. Unemployment, nonliving-wage jobs, and mothers in the projects begging for county-subsidized food stamps were all part of the way of life. Less than 20 percent of middle-class blacks owned their homes. Blacks who had low-wage jobs worked for whites, because less than 5 percent of the small businesses in South Central were black-owned and operated. Finally, the 1992 civil unrest resulted in the loss of 50,000 jobs, \$1 billion in property damage, and a 20 percent decline in South Central Los Angeles property values.

The FAME Renaissance vision was to create a “new hood in the hood without neighbors”—including the transformation of an abandoned telephone switching station into a premiere business center. The 54,000-square-foot

The Rev. Mark Whitlock, SLI '98, is senior minister at Christ Our Redeemer AME Church in Irvine, California.

red-brick building had become a “rock house” and brothel for “crackhead strawberries.” FAME Renaissance envisioned the first church-based “business incubator” in a beleaguered hood, providing small businesses with expertise, technical assistance, venture capital funds, three different business and home loan funds, a transportation program, entrepreneurial training, and, most important, an environment that says “I can.”

Before I attended the SLI, however, the incubator and its business services were simply a dream. For me, working through Harvard’s case studies was nothing less than revelations from God, turning a dream into reality. The work of the Rev. Dr. Charles Adams of Hartford Memorial Baptist Church in Detroit, the Rev. Michael Wayne Walker, the Ronald McNair Development Corporation (Brockton, Massachusetts), Joseph Roberts of Atlanta, Georgia, the Rev. Gardner Taylor, and the Rev. Calvin Butts, Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York, provided awesome examples of community development. I remember hardly being able to contain myself after class each night. The program was so rich.

I was encouraged to think critically about these cases and how they could apply to my situation. By the end of the two weeks, I wrote an “action plan” for my church and FAME Renaissance. The action plan included fund-raising, board development, employee development, and specific programs, including immediate, one-year, three-year and

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Stephanie Mitchell

From the Director

The Summer Leadership Institute had cause for celebration during its 10th year, in spite of the fact that plans for a grand reunion gathering of alumni/ae had to be postponed. We are joyful because of the continuing achievements of those who have graduated. The stories in this issue of *SLI Report* and the class notes detail some of these successes. The difficulties in the housing market and the economy must surely be affecting some of your work. Please let us know how your situations have changed; what you think we need to consider in order to help you cope; and what you think necessary in future teaching and learning.

Your help in recruitment enabled us to choose 38 well-qualified students for the SLI Class of 2007. This class, like the two previous classes, has made a class gift. The gift was the largest yet—\$11,000—and included a continuing gift of one scholarship in future SLI classes. These gifts are appreciated and needed because SLI does not pay for itself and is dependent upon sponsors and support from Harvard Divinity School.

The 10th year was also blessed by the appointment of Sushama Austin-Connor as coordinator of the Summer Leadership Institute.

Ms. Austin-Connor has done an excellent job of editing and producing *SLI report*, as well as managing all aspects of SLI's operation.

In April, I had the opportunity of performing the wedding of Heidi Brooks and Javit Drake. Heidi has been the supervisor of Action Plan Development for six years. Both Heidi and Sushama Austin-Connor are expecting their first children.

Our future activities and programs will be strengthened by the appointment of the Rev. Dr. Charles G. Adams as the first William and Lucille Nickerson Professor of the Practice of Ethics and Ministry at Harvard Divinity School. His appointment was a great and pleasant surprise. In addition, a gift by Robert G. Wilden (BD '61) has established the Charles G. Adams Leadership Development Fund at HDS. Leaving Hartford Memorial Baptist Church after 37 years of successful ministry was both a courageous and difficult act for Rev. Adams. We look forward to continuing to work with him and to supporting his leadership at HDS.

The dates for the next Summer Leadership Institute are June 16–27, 2008. Again, we request your assistance in suggesting students and your support of the SLI in every way possible. We will tell you more of our plans in the near future. Please continue to send us reports of your work and your suggestions about how we may assist you in your endeavors.

PRESTON N. WILLIAMS

*Houghton Research Professor of Theology and Contemporary Change
Director, Summer Leadership Institute*

Applying to SLI:

The 2008 Summer Leadership Institute will meet June 16–27, 2008. Tuition is \$4,000 and the deadline for application is March 19, 2008. Please continue to check for updates at www.hds.harvard.edu/sli.

Thriving Reality

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five-year objectives. It was as though fire shot up in my bones!

This action plan challenged FAME Renaissance to rethink its management structure, employee compensation and benefits, and deliverable tracking system. FAME's executive team implemented Harvard Business School systems for community nonprofit growth and management. Board development included recruiting a racially diverse executive board of directors, and among new board members were bank presidents, partners of major law firms, presidents of major entertainment companies, national politicians, and university professors. Through the SLI-inspired action plan, God favored FAME Renaissance with nearly \$50 million in resources, from private, state, and federal granting sources. The results of the SLI action plan can be measured. In 1996–2004, through FAME Renaissance, there have been:

- New jobs created: 4,000
- Business incubator: 54,000 sq. ft.
- Small businesses created: 125 owners
- Entrepreneurial program: 2,000 graduates
- Housing units: 800 low- to moderate-income
- New home loans: 225
- New home owners: 75
- Home loan funding: \$43,000,000
- Venture capital funds: \$25,000,000
- Small business loans: \$5,000,000
- Transportation program: \$75,000,000.

From the SLI a new church building and ministry was also born. Just three months after graduating from SLI, in August 1998, I was appointed to Christ Our Redeemer AME Church (COR) in Irvine, California. I worked at both FAME Renaissance and COR, as the new church was located two hours south of Los Angeles, in Orange

County, which has an African American population of 2 percent and is the largest right-wing conservative Republican county in the United States.

COR was the first black church in Irvine, formed on the campus of the University of California, Irvine (UCI). It had had six pastors before I was assigned in August 1998. The 10 church members remaining were disenchanted and disgusted with the denomination and pastoral leadership. COR was literally without walls, seats, pulpit furniture, musical instruments, parking lot, or vision. Moreover, it was \$25,000 in debt, funds having been mismanaged and the membership evicted from a Pentecostal church. When I arrived, there was no place to worship, but a Lutheran church let us hold an afternoon worship service in its building.

COR's worshipping congregation of 10 members held weekly services at 3 PM from August 1998 to January 2000. My teenage sons set up the audio equipment, my wife was the choir, and my mother served as the finance committee. Again, the SLI action plan called for board development, fundraising for a new building, relevant community programs, and biblical preaching and teaching.

The results of the action plan implementation are measurable. Our first step was to move the service to a traditional time and new location. We returned to the UCI campus and held worship services in a large lecture hall—which gave us space to worship, seats, stage, podium, sound system, video screens, and ample parking. The UCI students were empowered to implement their vision for church, to start and manage programs and participate in service. COR finances were made public, and its annual report detailed income, expenses, major expenditures, programs, and the pastor's salary.

In 2003, COR voted to purchase a

new sanctuary in Irvine. The cost of one acre of land in Irvine is one million dollars, and the church had less than \$100,000 in the bank. We needed four million to give birth to this vision.

The birthing process required incorporating COR, securing traditional and nontraditional bank financing, membership financial guarantees and pledges, foundational grants, cash, and—most important—faith. Bishop John Bryant, one of Dr. Preston Williams's former students, encouraged the congregation to challenge friends and family to grant funds to the new development. This challenge delivered an unexpected one-time gift of \$350,000 from one wealthy donor. Among the first to give to our fundraising campaign were several SLI partners: Charles Adams, the Rev. Dr.

Cecil L. Murray, Bishop John Bryant, Bishop Charles Blake, Dr. Lula Ballton, Bishop Noel Jones, the Rev. Dr. John Hunter, and the Rev. Floyd Flake.

God has brought forth "a new thing," a newly constructed, 13,000-square-foot sanctuary, community center, pulpit furnishings, cushioned sanctuary seats, state of the art sound and video equipment, three television cameras, office furniture, and a five-acre parking lot. COR has grown from 10 members to 1,500. The average membership age is 32 years young. The congregation is 60 percent African American and 40 percent white, Latino, and Asian.

I owe so much to God for opening SLI's doors to me. Harvard's SLI has been more than a classroom experience. It is my partner in ministry. ❖

Charles G. Adams Joins Harvard's Faculty of Divinity

The Summer Leadership Institute's longtime friend, board member, and key confidant, the Rev. Dr. Charles G. Adams has joined Harvard Divinity School (HDS) as the first William and Lucille Nickerson Professor of the Practice of Ethics and Ministry, beginning July 2007.

For nearly 40 years, Adams has been the senior pastor of Hartford Memorial Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan, but his reach has been felt nationally and worldwide through his preaching, activism, and writing. Adam is a graduate of Fisk University, the University of Michigan, and Harvard Divinity School. He began his ministry in Boston at Concord Baptist Church and has always included an emphasis on economic development initiatives in his ministry. His expertise in this area has been a significant asset, not only in his lifelong mission and work, but also in his ongoing efforts with the SLI.

Adams has been on numerous other boards, including the National Council of Churches and Morehouse College. He is the recipient of 10 honorary doctorates. *Ebony* Magazine named him one of America's 15 greatest Black preach-

ers and one of America's 100 most influential African Americans. In 1992, the HDS Alumni/ae Association presented him with the coveted Rabbi Marvin Katzenstein Award, given annually to a distinguished alumna or alumnus.

He is married to Agnes Hadley Adams and is the father of Tara Adams Washington, M.D., a staff physician in the Department of Radiology Oncology at Harper Hospital in Detroit, and the Rev. Charles Christian Adams, assistant to the pastor of Hartford Memorial Baptist Church.

Marcus Halevi





Summer Leadership Institute 2007—Scenes include (from top left, clockwise to center) classroom instruction with Charles Coverdale; lecturer Ron Heifetz signs a book for SLI participant Christie Dasaro; a reading group meets to discuss a case study; keynote speaker Calvin Butts chats with SLI assistant Modupe Akinola and SLI coordinator Sushama Austin-Connor; the Class of '07 honors Preston Williams with a framed certificate and T-shirt; SLI graduation ceremony lunch; women of the Class of '07; men of the Class of '07; SLI assistants Sheila Glenn and Terri Cisse; Mark Whitlock, Robert M. Franklin, and Preston Williams; Professor Laura Morgan Roberts. Photos by Marcus Halevi.





Building Alliances, Promoting Literacy: An Interview with John Sibley

In a follow-up to our fall 2006 article “How to Build an Indoor Ministry,” about John Sibley, ‘00, and The Literacy Imperative, the SLI spoke with Sibley about a partnership between his organization, which is based in Knoxville, Tennessee, and Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago. Trinity UCC is a 10,000-member congregation of the United Church of Christ—the largest church of the denomination—known for its inspiring mission work, and as the home church of U.S. Senator Barack Obama.

What is TLI?

The Literacy Imperative (TLI) is a national not-for-profit entity whose mission is to promote literacy in underserved communities, while creating social enterprises that financially support the mission. Founded in 2001 by Mount Zion Baptist Church of Knoxville, Tennessee, TLI operates a Center of Literacy & Enterprise (CLE) prototype and Family Library pilot project aimed at expanding and promoting literacy nationwide in these communities. TLI’s national expansion strategy is based on developing and expanding prototypes and pilot projects.

The CLE prototype, created to address literacy in underserved communities, is a combination social cause/social enterprise facility located on Harriet Tubman Street. The center donates books and provides reading/meeting/discussion spaces for youth, adults, and seniors in other literacy programs; provides exhibit/stage areas to artists, poets, and others; provides satellite locations for literacy outreach programs of museums, libraries, and universities; provides office space for lease; and operates a bookstore and coffee shop.

The CLE prototype has been serving Knoxville’s underserved communities since 2003. A 2006 study of TLI by the University of Tennessee College of Business Administration MBA (UTMBA) program recommended that the CLE prototype be expanded to underserved communities nationwide.

The Family Library pilot project, created to address literacy in the home, provides a



Deacon Rosalyn Priester, Trinity United Church of Christ

John Sibley, president of The Literacy Imperative, provides an overview of the Knoxville center’s programs, services, and facilities as Darlene Watkins, a member of a delegation from Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, looks on during a visit July 13-14, 2007.

beginning library of 12 to 15 books to families in low-income housing programs, paid for by corporate sponsors whose brand is featured on the library. In January 2007, the federal Office of Patent and Trademark issued TLI a design patent for the Family Library.

TLI’s first Family Library pilot project was launched in 2004, providing a Family Library to every Habitat homeowner in the Knoxville area. The second pilot project, launched in 2006, provided a Family Library to every family in the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 8 Homeowner’s program in the Knoxville area. The 2006 UTMBA study recommended the expansion of these pilot projects to include all low-income housing programs across the nation. TLI’s national goal is a CLE in every community and a Family Library in every home.

What is your role at TLI?

My role is to facilitate the development, operation, and nationwide expansion of TLI’s tools of literacy and social enterprises ventures, such as the CLE and Family Library projects.

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Building Alliances

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What is the nature of the alliance between Trinity United Church of Christ and TLI?

The alliance is more of a collaborative operating within the context of an informal dialogue, wherein Trinity United Church of Christ has informally agreed to investigate the feasibility of its providing assistance in the expansion of the CLE prototype and Family Library pilot projects from Knoxville programs to Chicago programs to nationwide programs. The relationship between Trinity UCC and TLI, therefore, is not a "formal" alliance, in the legal sense of the word. Rather, preliminarily, before entering into any "formal or "legal" relationship, Trinity UCC has agreed, in support of the TLI concept, to engage in a "feasibility" review of the program's applicability in Chicago and surrounding communities.

How did this agreement come about?

Trinity UCC has agreed to determine whether or not its present literacy support ministry objectives can be expanded and/or modified to include collaboration with TLI, and will also investigate what resources, or other collaborations, might be available to support any such program in Chicago.

By way of history: in 2006, the UTMBA study called for the identification of national expansion partners in 2007 and the launch of a CLE in another city in 2008.

The Rev. Dr. Johnnie W. Skinner, Sr., senior pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Knoxville and board chair of TLI, provided the Rev. Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, senior pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ, with a copy of the *Greater Knoxville Business Journal* (during Wright's visit to Knoxville in January 2007). It contained a case study and write-up on TLI. Skinner expressed his interest in making this project a nationwide one. Wright and Trinity UCC then indicated the church's interest in exploring the feasibility of a partnership with TLI in April 2007. After a series of discussions and exchange of documentation, officials of Trinity United Church of Christ and TLI arranged for a site visit to TLI on July 13 and 14, 2007. Recom-

mendations for the proposed partnership have been prepared for submission to Trinity UCC's senior pastor, Wright, and its pastor the Rev. Otis Moss III.

What are some of the alliance's short- and long-term goals?

The following are some of the goals that TLI has for the program, and which have been articulated to Trinity UCC during TLI/TUCC discussions and in documents. They closely reflect recommendations from the 2006 UTMBA study. Trinity UCC, as part of its preliminary feasibility study, will examine whether or not any formal alliance they might decide to enter into with TLI would include any of the following:

Short-term goals

- Improvements to CLE prototype and Family Library pilot projects;
- Identification of potential national partners in public, private, and faith community sectors;
- Obtain services of national consultant to assist in the development and implementation of national expansion plan utilizing 2006 UTMBA study recommendations;
- Expansion of CLE prototype and Family Library pilot project in Chicago area;
- Launch of nationwide expansion of CLE and Family Library projects.

Long-term goals

- A CLE in every underserved community;
- A Family Library in the home of every low-income family;
- Social enterprises that generate revenue and provide jobs in underserved communities;
- Advocacy in underserved communities for national literacy initiatives, such as First Book, Imagination Library, Reading is Fundamental, and others;
- Establish CLE as a national literacy and social enterprise demonstration project.

How does this alliance further the work of your SLI action plan?

This alliance, if formalized after Trinity's feasibility study, will play a major role in the implementation of key recommendations (listed below) of the 2006 UTMBA study developed from the SLI action plan.

- Launch of a CLE in another city in 2008:

Trinity UCC now has extensive knowledge of the CLE and Family Library project. An alliance would increase the potential for the launch of a CLE in another city in 2008.

- Nationwide expansion of Family Library project: A Trinity UCC alliance, if formalized, would increase TLI contacts in the public, private, and faith community sectors, thus increasing the potential success for the Family Library project.

In what ways does an emphasis on literacy, and in particular TLI's program, impact economically disadvantaged communities?

According to the Humboldt Literacy Project, over 40 million Americans over the age of 16 have significant literacy needs. Forty-three percent of those with the lowest literacy rates live in poverty.

The CLE is designed to impact literacy in these communities through social cause and social entrepreneurship. By opening a CLE, partners can provide value to underserved communities by putting books in homes in their communities and by providing centers that promote learning and literacy. TLI estimates that the Family Library project will provide over 100,000 libraries to the homes of families in low-income housing programs across the nation each year, resulting in over 1.5 million books in the hands of these families.

Any final comments?

The Rev. Dr. Gardner Taylor, pastor emeritus of the Concord Baptist Church of Christ of New York and one of America's most recognized African American ministers, issued the following statement on The Literacy Imperative: "I salute most heartily the idea and implementation of The Literacy Imperative, Incorporated. Beyond question, arming children in deprived communities with weapons of literacy will conquer America's most critical domestic issue. This undertaking is inspired and must be served as a religious obligation."

TLI is looking to collaborate with organizations interested in exploring the development of a CLE and Family Library project in their respective communities. Interested parties should contact TLI by telephone at 865.673.8988 or by email at literacyimperative@comcast.net.

Class Notes

The Rev. **BILL ADKINS**, '07, writes: "My church is working on development of our action plan for housing for single-parent mothers. In addition, we will be utilizing the 'Willow Creek' model of 'Seeker Services,' beginning Saturday, August 25, 2007, at 6 PM. We are advertising on secular radio stations asking for unchurched persons to come and experience a Saturday evening with me at Greater Imani Church and Christian Center. The SLI was of great benefit to me and my efforts here in Memphis."

CHRIS FORD, '03, writes: "I have once again changed positions, following my work with the Harold Ford, Jr., campaign. I am now the executive director of Tennessee Conservation Voters, the Volunteer State's League of Conservation Voters. Our work is in environment and conservation legislation and electioneering, including issues of green building and sustainable development and the challenges of environmental standards, enforcement, and race."

DANIEL HILL, '07, writes: "As of September, River City Community Church is launching a new nonprofit organization, called the Oaks Corporation. The vision of Oaks Corporation is to be a gospel-driven, community-based, nonprofit organization designed to promote purpose, vision, and hope in the lives of children and families living in the under-resourced parts of the Humboldt Park Community of Chicago. We exist to promote improved outcomes for the children and families within our community."

JOSEPH HOWARD, III, '04, writes: "In 2000, Trinity Community Development Corporation built 25 houses for first-time home buyers. We have completed the Charity Lane Subdivision project. In 2003, Trinity CDC was awarded 3.9 million to build 50 houses for senior citizens. We met with opposition over the usage of the property, which turned into a two-year court battle. Trinity CDC prevailed in both the

At right, the Summer Leadership Class of 2007, with guests and SLI staff and faculty.

Superior Court of Georgia and the Appeals Court of the Supreme Court of Georgia. We are rapidly approaching ground breaking and construction. This is the first time that a project of this magnitude has been awarded to a community development corporation in Southwest Georgia. In addition, Trinity Learning Institute Christian Academy was organized to provide formal education for students seeking a biblical curriculum. The academy has expanded to the fifth grade, covering the foundational years of education."

TERRENCE L. JOHNSON, an HDS grad who worked for the SLI in 2000, married Jill Suzanne Gibson on June 17, 2007, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The nuptials were highlighted in a *New York Times* article the following week.

The Rev. **M. KEITH MCDANIEL**, '07, was accepted into the doctor of ministry program at United Theological Seminary, to begin with the January 2008 term. He writes, "I am truly excited about this!"

DENISE Y. MOSE, PhD, '04, writes: "A lot has happened since I graduated from the SLI! One of the biggest blessings has been the birth of my business. The idea came from a class that was taught at New Covenant Baptist Church of Orlando, my church. "Introduction to En-

Staying in Touch With the SLI

Please email us at slis@hds.harvard.edu to let us know what you have been doing since you graduated from the SLI, and include your graduation year. Please let us know if your mailing addresses, email addresses, or phone numbers have changed and whether you prefer to be reached at home or at work.

trepreneurship" is taught twice a year. I began my business, Simply D perfume and Beauty by DYM, in October 2006, and it has been growing every since! *The Orlando Sentinel* recently featured my story on its cover. My action plan helped me to make this a reality, as it centers on young people starting their own businesses and giving back to their community. For more information, please see www.dymbauty.com."

TALBERT W. SWAN, II, '00, was appointed assistant general secretary for the Church of God in Christ. In addition to this role within his denomination, he continues to serve as pastor of the Solid Rock Church of God in Christ and oversees HIV/AIDS counseling and testing, prevention and education, youth enrichment, child and family service, outpatient substance-abuse counseling, residential treatment, and re-entry programs through the nonprofit Northern Educational Services.

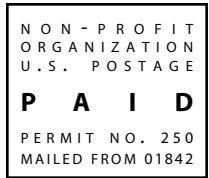
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