



Multi-Religious Fellows Program:

Leaders working together for social change

The Collegeville Institute was conceived by the monks of Saint John's Abbey in the 1960s as a center for ecumenical scholarly reflection within the Christian tradition. Over the decades, its mission has expanded to include workshops and short-term consultations for clergy and lay persons, focused on questions of meaning at the intersection of religion and culture. In 2013, the Collegeville Institute undertook a **Fellows Program** designed to strengthen the leadership capacity of Christian pastors for assuming more public roles in the Twin Cities.



This newest initiative continues that expanding mission by aiming at two increasingly significant features about Minnesota: **the striking nature of our religious diversity, and the central role our religious communities play in shaping civic life.**



Over the last 40 years, the Twin Cities have welcomed tens of thousands of new Americans. Many of these immigrants – especially those from Asia, Africa and Latin America -- brought their traditional religious practices with them. At the same time, some Minnesotans born and raised as Christians and Jews have sought out new spiritual homes in alternative religious identities and practices. **Such unprecedented movement has resulted in a remarkably different landscape of religious life.** Alongside hundreds of Christian churches, and a dozen Jewish congregations, our communities are now dotted with a burgeoning range of Muslim mosques, a growing presence of Buddhist temples and centers and one of the most impressive Hindu temples in the nation.



During this same time period the Twin Cities religious communities have undertaken an expanding set of programs designed to address significant human needs and help shape public policy: the **Jeremiah Project** that provides transitional housing and support services to single mothers and their children in both Minneapolis and St. Paul; the robust, multi-prong work of the **Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches**, with its core mission of uniting people of faith in serving those in need; and **MICAH**, the Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing, dedicated to alleviating homelessness. And there are many more comparable endeavors across our metropolitan area.

Students of American culture – historians, sociologists and experts in public policy – see in programs such as these a profoundly unique feature about American society: the central role that religious communities play in preparing civic leaders, who then assume roles of moral and spiritual influence in American civic life. But recently, many of these same experts have expressed apprehension about the diminishing level of civic engagement in our society. It appears that individuals and communities, both religious and non-religious, have turned increasingly inward, with potentially adverse consequences about the meaning and substance of our democracy and its historic reliance on broad civic participation.

The **MULTI-RELIGIOUS FELLOWS PROGRAM** brings together a group of young leaders, five to fifteen years into their professional careers, from five of the largest religious communities in the seven county Metro area. **These emerging leaders – from the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim communities – will meet with leaders from the world of government, business, education, criminal justice, health care and the non-profit sector.** Gathering together regularly with these prominent professionals, over a two year time frame, the Fellows will have the opportunity to learn about the unique opportunities and challenges residents of Minnesota are expected to encounter in the decades ahead.

The program seeks NOT to stake out advocacy positions concerning particular issues. Rather, the goal is to help attune a group of younger religious leaders to the complexity of important civic issues of common concern. By facilitating meetings and conversations that will enable these leaders to address difficult public matters in an informed and wise manner, we believe they and their communities will be in a position to significantly enhance public life.

Collegeville Institute Fellows:

- Attend, over 22 months, **eight meetings (late Sunday afternoon to early Monday evening)**: two at the beautiful, lakeside apartments of the Collegeville Institute and six at the Minnesota Humanities Center, a restored architectural landmark near Lake Phalen in St. Paul, that features comfortable hotel rooms with private bathrooms and delicious meals meeting the dietary requirements of the fellows.
- Receive, over the course of the programs, **stipends amounting to \$4,000**, and have all travel costs relating to meetings covered by the Collegeville Institute.
- **Hear from civic and professional leaders** and experts on key cultural issues.
- Meet with leaders of other religious traditions in settings that allows them to **learn more about one another**, and one another's traditions, even as they learn about key elements of the larger community they share in common.
- Sharpen their skills at **social analysis**, religiously attuned reflection, and societal change.
- Expand their horizons concerning the community for which they see themselves responsible as leaders and thus **expand their visions of themselves as leaders** of their respective religious communities.
- Gain the confidence to become **active participants in conversations** about matters of public import both within and outside the congregations/communities they serve.
- Receive an additional \$1000 in seed money to plan and implement a **leadership project** of their choosing for their religious community.

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The Collegeville Institute seeks to engage emerging leaders from religious communities across the Twin Cities in study and community action.

Buddhism

"To remain indifferent to the challenges we face is indefensible. If the goal is noble, whether or not it is realized within our lifetime is largely irrelevant. What we must do therefore is to strive and persevere and never give up."

-- The 14th Dalai Lama

Christianity

"Not everybody can be famous. But everybody can be great, because greatness is determined by service.... You only need a heart full of grace and a soul."

--The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Islam

"And be virtuous. Truly God loves the virtuous."

-- Quran 2:195 [The Study Quran]

Hinduism

"I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy."

-- Rabindranath Tagore

Judaism

"You are not expected to complete the task, but neither may you abandon it."

-- Rabbi Tarfon, Pirkei Avot 2:21

**To nominate candidates for this program or to apply, please visit:
www.collegevilleinstitute.org/fellows**

To receive a hard copy of an application, please contact Rabbi Barry D. Cytron, Program Director by email at bcytron@csbsju.org or by mail at 2475 Ecumenical Drive, Collegeville, MN, 56321.