

# Press Release

## Charles H. Cook Foundation to be Launched

The Trustees of Cook School for Christian Leadership recently approved the recommendation of the Strategic Planning Committee to create the Charles H. Cook Foundation. The decision, made at the Board Meeting held on October 11 and 12, 2007, was the culmination of a six-month study which explored many options, including significant conceptual designs to renovate and rebuild the campus. The study eventually focused on what was needed to continue the rich tradition of Native ministry, and ensure financial stability while continuing to fulfill the mission of “empowering Native Americans for leadership in churches and communities.”

Dr. Larry R. Norris, President of Cook School, says: “This is a courageous decision of historic proportion, one in which the Board of Trustees has acted to preserve the priceless legacy of Cook School and guarantee the future of Native ministry for generations to come.” The concept of establishing a Foundation to continue the work of Cook School was seen as the most viable and responsible use of the School’s resources. The Rev. Judith Wellington, Chairperson of the Board and Associate Pastor for a developing Native American Fellowship at La Mesa Presbyterian Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico, says, “Times have changed and we can no longer deny that we must cultivate new ways to support Native American ministries, especially when there is the possibility of meeting people where they live and serve daily.” The Foundation will ensure a program that will survive in perpetuity by selling the existing Cook School property. The funds from the sale will establish the initial financial base of the Foundation.

The possibilities of the Foundation allow greater flexibility and stability. All programs that are currently in place will continue. This includes the Commissioned Lay Pastors’ Program, Workshops on Wheels, Winter and Summer Terms, and the newly developed Community Leadership Program. The Foundation will also be positioned to respond to critical issues in Native churches that involve education, youth, and lay leadership training. New opportunities will emerge to partner with community and church programs, awarding scholarships to Native students, and using the vast resources of Cook School to offer consulting services. All this and much more will be possible through the Foundation.

Robert Lewis, the Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees and the Racial-Ethnic Associate for Indian Ministry to the Presbytery of Grand Canyon, says, “I believe the transition of Cook School provides an opportunity to continue the historic mission of the school in new ways that respond to contemporary needs of Native/Indian Ministries. A new institutional form will provide means and

opportunities for creative programs and services that will strengthen and enable Christian ministry and leadership in Indian communities, both urban and rural.” The Rev. Martha Sadongei, Pastor of Central Presbyterian Church in Phoenix, Arizona, says, “With this decision regarding Cook School comes new life and an opportunity to become proactive in Native American ministries.”

The next six months will be a time of implementing the decision to create the Foundation. Dr. Norris states, “It is vital that, as the process unfolds, those who have supported the ministry of the School continue to embrace the new direction and understand the enormous potential. Once the Foundation is birthed, it must grow and mature. This takes time and energy and the commitment of many supporters to ensure that growth.” The Cook School campus will be closing at the end of May, 2008. All programs will continue as part of the Foundation. A time of celebration in remembrance of the gift of our land and the ministry it has nourished for forty years, will be held on Thursday evening, May 8, 2008. It will also be a time to reaffirm with thanksgiving the work of this School for almost one-hundred years, and to move into the future with the assurance that God will bring forth a work through the Foundation that we can only begin to imagine.

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