

FTE  
**ANNUAL  
REPORT**  
2018



# risk talkers change makers



# risk takers

BOLDNESS

INNOVATION

RESILIENCE

DETERMINATION

COLLABORATION

INSPIRATION

BRAVERY

FAITH

COURAGE

# change-makers



# What would it take to change the world?

Boldness. Innovation. Resilience. Determination.  
Collaboration. Inspiration. Bravery. Faith. Courage.

To change our schools, our communities, our congregations, our world....

## **We need risk takers and change-makers.**

The ones who are willing to stand up and stand out.  
Who aren't afraid to be different to make a difference.  
Who know it takes faith to build faith in others. Who believe a better world is possible. Who strive to build God's beloved community.

FTE is proud to support young Christian leaders who are following the call to be visionaries and revolutionaries in their generation and beyond. They are the ones who will influence the present and shape the future through communities of faith.

## **They are risk takers and change-makers.**



# We all long to be a part of beloved communities

*But in such a polarizing world, where do we turn to find such places? How do we create courageous, bold, and beautiful communities in today's world?*

*Do we look for community in our own cultural, social-economic, theological, or ideological bubbles? Or do we seek to build community across differences?*

*In the face of such extreme intolerance, violence, and brokenness in this world, isn't it the role of Christian leaders to build beloved communities that we so desperately need?*

**F**ifty years ago, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his courageous contemporaries cast a vision of beloved community that rejected racism, militarism, exclusion, and economic exploitation.

It was a vision of community rooted in the Biblical imperative to love and live in right relationship with our neighbors—all our neighbors. It was a vision for a community that acknowledges and believes that everyone is God's beloved, everyone is invited to participate, and everyone can join together in pursuit of abundant life. It was the kind of community Jesus proclaimed.

This kind of community doesn't happen by chance, but instead, by choice.

It takes a courageous leader to choose something new—to design and build a better community where all of God's people can thrive and pursue their divine potential. It takes someone who isn't afraid to take a risk to make a change.

Because this road isn't without hardship. Choosing to build something different is costly and fraught with challenges. Dr. King and many of his allies lost their lives fighting for beloved community. Many of Jesus' early followers lost their lives proclaiming and building this kind of community. Yet they continued their faithful efforts in spite of fear and consequences. They did it on behalf of you and me today, so that we might experience what's possible when we roll up our sleeves and work together to create a better world.





I am inspired by the diverse, faithful, and courageous leaders we encountered in FTE's work this past year. Motivated by faith and stirred by conviction, these leaders are the ones the church, academy, and world have been looking for. They are the ones continuing this beautiful legacy of building beloved communities.

Read about their inspiring and courageous work in this report. Watch the videos that tell their stories at [fteleaders.org/stories](https://fteleaders.org/stories). Listen for their hope and abiding convictions. And join us in supporting them!

These are the social architects, moral engineers, and scholarly entrepreneurs of our time, working to build a better world. Standing on the shoulders of a great cloud of faithful witnesses who paved the way

before them, these leaders are taking their rightful place among followers of Jesus called to the work of building God's beloved community for all people.

They are the risk takers and change-makers our world needs.

A handwritten signature of Stephen Lewis in black ink.

**Stephen Lewis**  
**President, Forum for Theological Exploration**



# Inspire courageous leadership

# ministry



*FTE is committed to supporting and empowering young leaders of faith who are working tirelessly to change hearts, worldviews, and lives for the better. Faith leaders like Zoie Sheets are working to address issues in their communities, campuses, and congregations from a fresh perspective. We believe it takes courageous leaders to truly make change, and we're proud to support those who are boldly stepping into their calling—a calling to transform the world.*

I would've never gotten to do the work I'm doing now if it wasn't for my experience with FTE.

As a person with a disability, I've always wanted to see the places in my life become more accessible and inclusive to people like me. Churches, communities, campuses—I want all of them to be spaces where people like me can feel fully welcomed, accepted, and able to participate just like everyone else. But helping others understand and embrace that kind of change isn't an easy task.

That's why I'm so grateful for the support of an organization like FTE.

My experiences with FTE planted the seeds for a calling on my life, and those seeds have grown as I've continued my work in my own context. Their

programs, retreats, and forums have helped me figure out exactly what my calling might look like and how my passions for things like medicine, education, disability justice, and ministry could align together.

I'm working specifically to lead disabled students at my school to help make our campus and community more emotionally and physically accessible for those like us. I'm meeting with advisors, faculty members, and other leaders to talk about disability in a way that a non-disabled person can grasp and begin to understand. I've even been a part of making changes in my church community to make the worship services more inclusive and accessible for *all* people.

FTE has given me the courage to step into these spaces with confidence. They've been sort of a laboratory for me, allowing me to inform them of ways





## ministry by the numbers

### In working with young adults this year, FTE...

- Hosted **2** Regional Discernment Retreats designed to help **125** young adults from **32** states and **1** Canadian province explore their purpose and calling.
- Brought together **73** young adults from **25** states and **2** Canadian provinces to navigate what it looks like to build beloved communities.
- Awarded **29** grants totaling **\$36,500** to support projects that explore innovative ministry with a mentor.
- Provided **4** enrichment opportunities for **17** young adults and students.

### In working with church and faith leaders, FTE...

- Gathered **246** leaders from **117** institutes across **29** states to speak into and cultivate the gifts of young Christian leaders.
- Brought together **105** campus ministry organizations serving students in **33** states to help campus leaders discover a clear purpose and calling.
- Gathered **67** leaders from congregations, Christian communities, and faith-based organizations to share insights on how to ignite the leadership gifts of young adults.
- Hosted **50** new pastors from **19** states to provide a community of peer support for those moving into church leadership.
- Awarded **28** grants totaling **\$340,500** to develop resources, create internships, mentor, recruit, and build capacity to support young adults exploring ministry.

they could be more inclusive to those with disabilities in their own programs and even letting me try things I'm curious about in their context first.

The work I'm doing scares me every single day. I'm going into places of higher education, medicine, and ministry to tell them that what they're doing isn't working for people with disabilities. And sometimes, that message isn't well received.

That's why the support, encouragement, and feedback of a place like FTE has been so vital to me. Their network of friends and mentors has given me the courage to keep going. It's reminded me that my work is important in this world.

—Zoie Sheets, FTE Participant, Regional Discernment Retreat and Christian Leadership Forum



# Courage to build

# education



*FTE is proud to support a diverse group of scholars and educational leaders who are leading the charge to change their campuses and communities through academic programs and scholarship. Ericka Dunbar is one of those scholars cultivating a new approach to theological studies and changing the worldview of others in the process. FTE is honored to have made an impact on her studies, which are impacting the world.*

**W**e want to help you win.

That's the message I've received from just about everyone I've met through FTE. Every mentor, colleague, fellow student—they've all offered their unconditional support to me, not just for the work I'm doing through my scholarship, but for me as a person. Wholistically, they want to see me succeed, and that message has been so important to me in this journey of continuing education.

As a PhD student, my work focuses specifically on reading the book of Esther through the lens of sex trafficking. It takes a story that's been read one way and looks at it in a new light—one that impacts and reflects the world we live in today. It's building a new framework for reading this book of the Bible and in turn, hopefully building a framework for how we

can address instances of sex trafficking in our own communities.

Sometimes my work is met with questions. It's a new approach to an old text. It's different, untraditional, and challenges the "teach only what's been taught to us" mentality with which so many look at Scripture. It's taken a lot of confidence to build this project because it goes against the grain, but it's something I believe matters in changing a dark part of our world.

And FTE has afforded me the courage to keep building.

My fellowship has not only given me the financial support needed to focus solely on my PhD program, but it's opened doors and facilitated conversations about my work on a global scale. FTE has partnered





with me not just to talk about the issue of sex trafficking in our communities, but to move toward activism that addresses the issue of sexual violence, particularly toward minorities and women of color. While some may push back on that work, FTE has stepped up to support it. They've given me the platform to have conversations about my work not just through school, but in places all throughout the community. They're allowing me to build something that I think could change a deeply broken part of our world.

Why? Because they believe in it.

And they want to see me win.

—Ericka Dunbar, FTE Fellow

## education by the numbers

### In working with doctoral students, FTE...

- Provided **32** doctoral students stipends to attend professional development meetings and workshops.
- Hosted **71** doctoral students from **36** institutions at the Forum for Theological Educators for networking, vocational exploration, and mentoring.
- Offered a workshop on writing and publishing to **15** students working on their dissertations.
- Selected **32** FTE Fellows from **18** institutions and awarded fellowships totaling **\$750,000**.
- Celebrated **18** scholars who completed their doctoral programs.

### In working with institutional leaders, FTE...

- Gathered **18** leaders to share best practices on recruiting and mentoring a diverse group of students of color.
- Gathered **53** institutional leaders, faculty members, and doctoral students from **31** cities at a consultation to explore new ways to create spaces for scholars of color to thrive in theological education.



# Call to be courageous

# community



*FTE knows there are many young Christian leaders with a deep desire to see their faith move outside the walls of the church and into the broken places in their communities. That's why we created DO GOOD X, a program that catalyzes a diverse group of Christian social entrepreneurs to launch ventures that address their community's greatest problems. Julius Jessup Peterson is one of those leaders working to make an impact on his community through his courageous work.*

**T**here's a divide.

It's one of the things I'm most certain of in this life.

Between us and them, between those who are afraid and those they're afraid of, between the ones we perceive to be like us and the ones we believe are different, there's a divide. It's what separates us from each other and tears down our communities.

And it's that divide that my work with DO GOOD X is trying to bridge.

As a program that propels a diverse community of Christian social entrepreneurs to address the world's greatest problems, DO GOOD X was exactly what I was looking for to help spur my work forward. I have always longed to build something that spoke to a

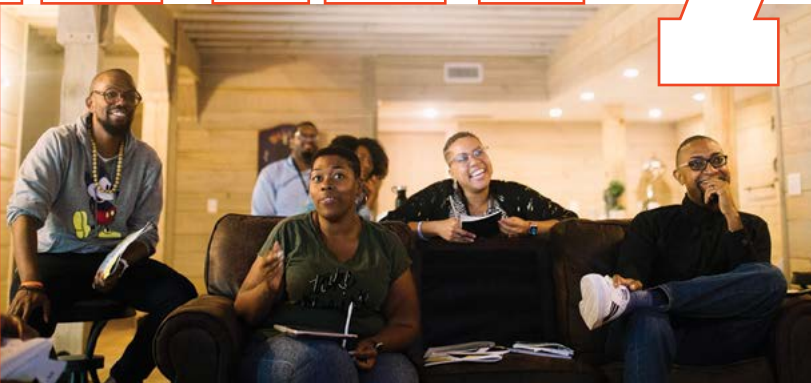
very specific need in our world—the need to address the divide—and DO GOOD X afforded me the opportunity to do just that.

As both a counselor and an ordained minister, I see that divide in my office every single day. My work focuses specifically on the racial divide, addressing the perception of threat underneath racial aggression and violence. It deals with the trauma of racial aggression at its source by focusing not on the victims, but on the perpetrators. That means everyday I sit across from individuals who have engaged in behaviors or operated with a system of beliefs that has caused injury to other people. They are people who don't necessarily want to bridge the divide between themselves and those whom they perceive to be different.





# nity



Is it risky work? Certainly! As a Black man, I have to be willing to step into the divide with them. I have to sit with their aggression, their anger, their tension, their misconceptions about people like myself. It's required a courage I didn't even know I had, but DO GOOD X has given me the support to keep working by coming alongside me as I go.

From beginning to end, being a part of DO GOOD X has helped me refine my work, narrow my focus, and walk boldly with a confidence that what I'm doing is important. The program has helped me create something that I truly believe has the power to change systems and hearts.

Something that has the power to bridge the divide.

—Julius Jessup Peterson, DO GOOD X Fellow

## community by the numbers

### In working with Christian innovators & entrepreneurs, FTE...

- Launched an accelerator program with **9** change-makers from **7** states who are committed to being faith leaders starting projects for social good in their communities.
- Hosted **68** leaders in **4** different cities to explore Christian innovation.

## FTE online

### Connecting Christian Leaders

- **11,720** followers on social media

### Stories of Faithful Change-Makers

- **25** videos highlighting risk takers and change-makers leading the way in Christian faith
- **70** days, **12** hours, and **47** minutes spent inspiring viewers watching FTE's stories

### Insightful FTE Resources

- [“2018 Christian Leadership Forum Reflections”](#)
- [“Calling for More ‘Than We Have Got Thus Far’: 2018 Status and Resource Report on Scholars of Color in Theological Education”](#)
- [“Create the Conditions for Scholars of Color to Thrive: 2018 Doctoral Consultation Report”](#)



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**O**ur deepest appreciation to our devoted donors. Please join them. Your support today will help the risk takers and change-makers of tomorrow influence and shape the future through diverse communities of faith. Make your gift to FTE today.

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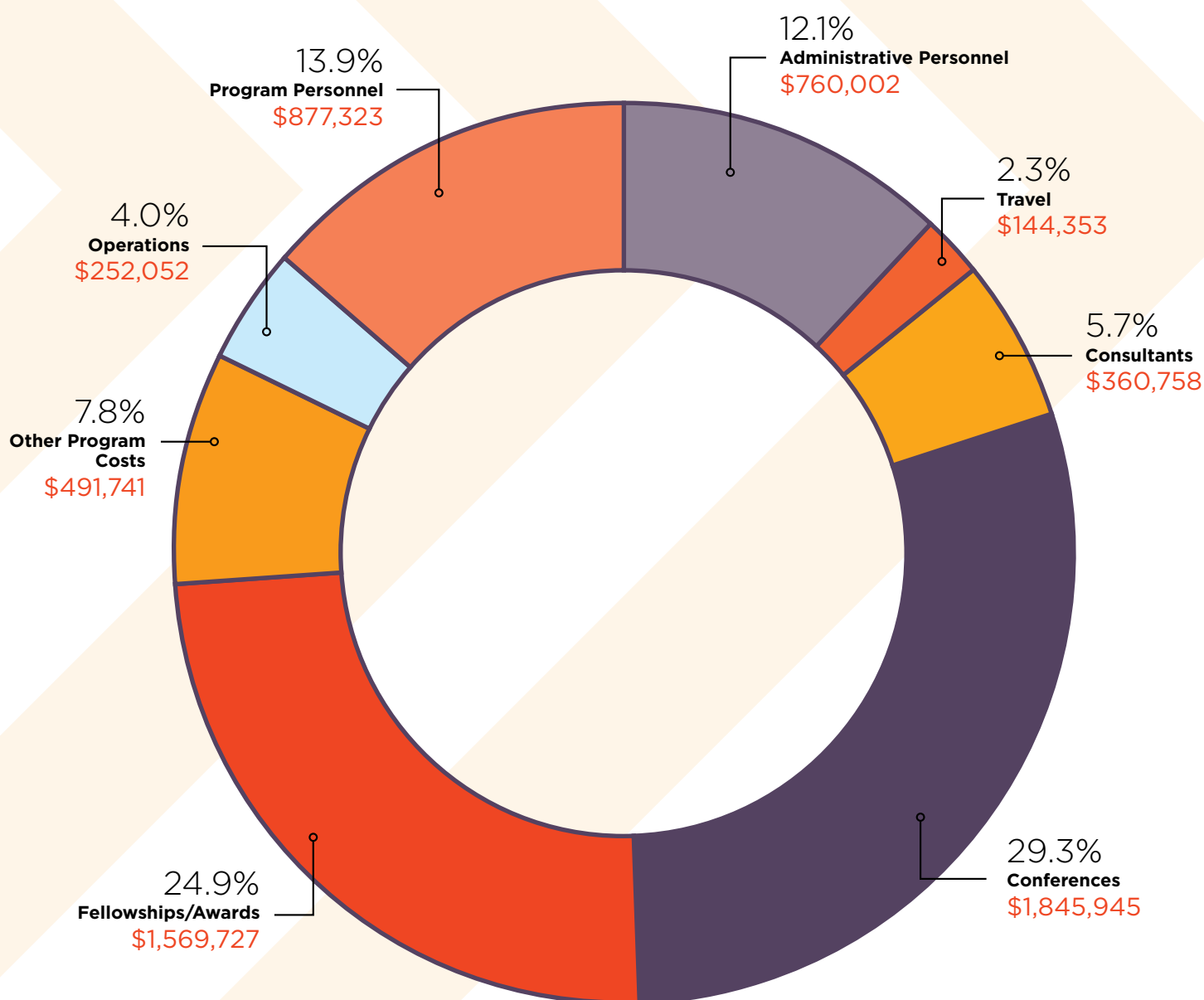
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## 2018 Statement of Financial Activities (Unaudited)

### Revenue

FTE is primarily funded through foundational grants, investment income from those grants, and contributions from the FTE community.

### Expenses





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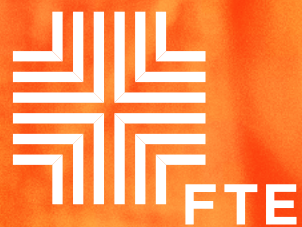
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