

**PROPOSAL to Synod 1998**

re: *Certificate of Pastoral Proficiency* program

Esteemed brothers:

**Introduction**

From discussions with the churches and with our students, it is clear that some more practical orientation can be beneficial to students preparing for the ministry, especially to those who have some misgivings concerning the nature of the work involved. Given the tight program structure at the College, it would be very difficult to incorporate more practical elements in the existing program without damaging the academic standard of the courses. We therefore propose to implement a practical component added to the regular training, leading to the *Certificate of Pastoral Proficiency*. This is not part of the Master of Divinity degree, but an additional notation to the degree strictly for ecclesiastical purposes. We propose that the requirements of this *Certificate* program be considered a part of the requirements for admission to the ministry as regulated by the Church Order, Article 4 B 1, ("...and have successfully completed a course of studies as required by the churches.")

The professor of diaconiology and ecclesiology should not be burdened with the organization of this *Certificate of Pastoral Proficiency* program. The Board of Governors should appoint an experienced minister as the coordinator for this task, (cf. Canadian Reformed Theological College Act Art. 11 C). As such he will not be a member of the faculty, and does not need to be appointed by the upcoming General Synod, (Act, Art. 11 D). He will work in consultation with the professor of diaconiology, and be accountable to the Senate. He will be invited to a Senate meeting at least once per year to discuss the execution of the program. The Senate will report on the execution of the program in its yearly report to the Board of Governors.

**The program**

We propose the following program for the *Certificate of Pastoral Proficiency*:

1. In the *freshman* year, we propose to invite one or more of the ministers in the federation for a two-hour orientation session on all aspects of the ministry. This will be held specifically for first year students, but will be open to all students of the college. This part of the program will be organized by the coordinator. Lecture hours in the Diaconiological department will remain unaffected.
2. At the end of the students' *sophomore* year<sup>1</sup>, if at all possible in May, we propose one week of in-house training by each student under the leadership of a designated minister. During this week the student will be required to follow through with the minister in all the activities of his work week as far as is possible. This will involve sermon preparation, visitation, hospital visitation,

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<sup>1</sup> Note that this is the individual student's sophomore year, not the sophomore year in the academic program.

preparing and attending a consistory meeting (council), and participating in any given outreach function. During this week the student will prepare a sermon outline on the same text as the minister is working on. The student must also submit a report of all his activities to the coordinator as well as the professor of diaconiology. An evaluation of the outline and of all the student's involvement in the work of this week will be done by the designated minister in consultation with the coordinator.

3. All students in their *junior* year should be engaged in a catechetical instruction program, in which they take some of the classes of one of the ministers of the congregations in the area of the College for a minimum of four hours. They will be monitored by the minister (and/or elders) with respect to their proficiency in giving instruction in the catechism. The students must submit a report of these supervised activities to the coordinator as well as to the professor of diaconiology. An evaluation of the students' involvement in the work of catechetical instruction within the program will be done by the designated minister in consultation with his consistory and the coordinator.

All students pursuing the *Certificate of Pastoral Proficiency* will be required to take lectures in pedagogy to be given at the Theological College. The lectures will be given during the course Catechetics 3513 and will be taught by a qualified lecturer in pedagogy. Students must attend these classes, upon which they will receive a certificate of participation which will be incorporated into the final evaluation by the coordinator.

4. Students in their *senior* year will be required to participate in a number of seminars (up to four) on practical aspects of pastoral counselling, e.g. crisis counselling, marriage breakdown, abuse cases, etc. These seminars will be organized by the professor of diaconiology (Thursday mornings), and the participation will be factored into the final evaluation of the students.

After completion of their *senior* year we propose a fixed internship of three months, to take place as soon as feasible, in which the student is exposed to the work of ministry. This period will also involve intensive discussions on the work of the ministry with the designated minister. The student will normally be obligated to prepare and deliver one sermon per week throughout his internship, as well as participate as much as the local pastor and consistory deem appropriate in all other ministerial activities.<sup>2</sup>

Students may apply to complete all or a part of the internship after the *junior* year in consultation with the coordinator.

5. An initial evaluation report concerning the student's progress in the internship will be drawn up by the designated minister in consultation with the consistory supporting the student. All this will be factored into the final evaluation of the student which will be determined by the program coordinator in consultation with the professor of diaconiology. The final evaluation will also incorporate a student's self-evaluation with regard to his performance at the various ministerial tasks, and his suggestions on the program he followed. A full report of the student's progress will be provided by the coordinator for the Senate and the professor of diaconiology.

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<sup>2</sup> This requirement presupposes the successful completion of the classical examination for permission to speak an edifying word.

6. Since it is a part of the over all training for the ministry, reimbursement of the coordinator is the responsibility of the College. The reimbursement of the students participating in the program shall be the responsibility of the churches where they serve, in conjunction with the Fund for Needy Students, Article 20 C.O.
7. The list of ministers who can suitably function as designated mentors will be drawn up by the coordinator, in consultation with the professor of diaconiology. Once a minister has been designated for these functions, he must receive the full cooperation of his consistory and congregation. He should be sure this is in place before accepting this position.
8. Completion of this program for the practical training will result in a *Certificate of Pastoral Proficiency* to be issued to the student for his application to classis for admission to the ministry. This will not have any direct academic status, but will be added to the declaration given by the Senate to the student for his preparatory classis examination. The Senate will only issue the *Certificate* upon receiving a favourable report of the student's participation and work from the coordinator. This report will be based on the student's participation in the program throughout his years at the College, and will include input from all parties involved in the *Certificate* program.
9. This program will be reviewed regularly by the Senate and the Board of Governors. Changes in the program require the approval of the Senate and the Board.
10. Details of the *Certificate of Pastoral Proficiency* program will eventually be added to the College Handbook.

#### **The coordinator**

It will be the task of the coordinator to :

- a. invite a number of ministers who can suitably function as mentors or assist in the orientation sessions of the freshman year;
- b. instruct these ministers with respect to the guidance and tutoring of students participating in this program;
- c. link the students with their respective mentors and instruct them regarding the expectations and requirements of this program (and design suitable standards of evaluation for that purpose);
- d. collect and assess the evaluations of the mentors, consistories, and others involved in this program;
- e. consult with the professor of diaconiology regarding this evaluation and together with him make recommendations to the Senate on the participation and work of the students in the program;

Although the implementation of the program will consume some time, its actual administration, organization, and coordination shall not materially hamper his pastoral work in the congregation. However, this matter should be resolved in a discussion between the coordinator and the consistory of his church prior to granting him permission to function as coordinator.

respectfully submitted,  
for the Board of Governors,

Rev. D.G.J. Agema, secretary