

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

STUDENT PLACEMENT GUIDELINES BETHANY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

I. TWO BROAD CATEGORIES OF STUDENT PLACEMENTS SHOULD BE DIFFERENTIATED

- A. Persons who are primarily part-time pastors and secondly students will serve in pastoral or pastoral staff positions. They will go through the Church of the Brethren placement process and will generally be called to an open-ended agreement for service. These persons will be understood to have "student placements" (see II below).
- B. Students who require ministry experiences as a part of their seminary program will be placed in various defined-length ministry positions through seminary contacts. These persons will be understood to have "Ministry Formation Placements" and will work through the seminary Ministry Formation office (see III below).

II. STUDENT PLACEMENTS

- A. Interpretation will be important for both congregations and the pastors who seek to serve in student placements. In general, it will be understood that since the student pastor must have adequate time for school and study, a balance must be found between school and ministry. This balance should be a part of the negotiation, agreement, and ongoing evaluation between the student pastor and the congregation, with the assistance of the District Executive/Minister as needed. Perhaps churches could expect 20-25 hours per week. Certain pastoral situations, like funerals, would take precedence over school.
- B. The basic understandings regarding the Church of the Brethren placement process would apply to student placements. Although the District Executive/Minister will be the key organizational person, the faculty for Ministry Formation at the seminary should be informed as a part of the process.
- C. Any person desiring a student placement in a Church of the Brethren congregation may start the process but must secure *admission* to a seminary before placement is finalized. The student's interest in a student placement should be noted on the seminary application.
- D. Students from various areas in the Church of the Brethren who express interest in student pastorates near the main campus of Bethany Theological Seminary, the Susquehanna Valley Satellite, or a non-Brethren seminary will go through their own District

Executive/Minister to begin the placement process. The process, for those not ordained, is to have an interview with the appropriate District Ministry Commission.

- E. When the Pastoral Profile is filled out, it should have a letter of affirmation from that interview attached for circulation. It is appropriate for the Pastoral Profile to be restricted to a particular district when general placement is not being considered.
- F. If problems arise for a pastor in a student placement, the first call will be to the District Executive/Minister for that congregation.
- G. When a pastor who has been attending seminary graduates, the District Executive/Minister should facilitate a congregational/pastoral review to determine the appropriateness of continuing the relationship.

III. MINISTRY FORMATION PLACEMENTS ¹

- A. The faculty for Ministry Formation and the District Executive/Minister will work directly with congregations and other church agencies to develop ministry opportunities for students. These opportunities will generally be for a fixed length of tenure and part-time in nature. The primary decision on the part of the congregation or agency will be to participate in the Ministry Formation program of the seminary. Within the context of that existing decision, individual candidates will be considered in terms of their ability to participate in the program, not essentially on the gifts or graces they already bring to the position.
- B. Students will submit an application to be considered for placement in the Ministry Formation process by mid-February of the academic year prior to the experience. Names of students who have applied for a Ministry Formation placement are shared with faculty and the District Executive/Minister of the Sending District.
- C. Upon acceptance into the Ministry Formation placement process, the students are notified of potential sites for placement. The seminary will advertise opportunities among students and students will express interest to seminary personnel. After consulting with the District Executive/Minister of the Receiving District, the seminary will invite a congregation or agency to consider a particular new student for the Ministry Formation placement. This faculty contact will allow conversation about the use the student will make of the placement in his/her program.
- D. Proposed student placements are shared with faculty and receiving District Executives/Ministers prior to the onset of the student working in the congregation/ministry setting.

1. In the Church of the Brethren, credentialing of ministers through licensing and ordination is assigned to districts by Annual Conference. Therefore, licensed and ordained ministers are accountable to District Ministry Commissions and District Boards, and the District Executive/Minister acts as the placement person on behalf of the district. This policy is operative for the *student placement* mentioned in this paper. The congregation where the student serves and the sending district may be held legally liable for the student minister's moral, ethical, and professional misconduct. Ministry Formation placements, however, are uniquely different in that Bethany Theological Seminary carries the primary placement responsibility, as defined in this paper. Therefore, as the placement institution, the seminary assumes the liability that could result from the student minister's moral, ethical, and professional misconduct.

- E. If the congregation or student experiences problems in the placement, they will notify Ministry Formation faculty who will keep the District Executive/Minister informed as deemed appropriate. If the District Executive/Minister becomes aware of a concern in placement, he/she will notify the Ministry Formation faculty.

Approved by Bethany Theological Seminary and the Office of Ministry of the General Board in consultation with the Ministry Advisory Council, October 1999.

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