

Susquehanna  
Valley  
Ministry  
Center



# ACTS

Instructor  
Handbook

# 2015-2016

# **Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center Academy Certified Training System (ACTS) Instructor Handbook**

(Updated May 2015)

Thank you for serving the church by teaching an ACTS course through Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center. The staff and students of SVMC are grateful for your commitment to share your time and skills as others are prepared for ministry.

This packet is designed to give guidance for expectations, requirements, timeline, Readiness for Ministry criteria, and general information about SVMC.

## **The Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center is...**

A Church of the Brethren Ministry Education Partnership between Bethany Theological Seminary, Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, and five Brethren districts: Atlantic Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Middle Pennsylvania, Southern Pennsylvania, and Western Pennsylvania.

## **Our Mission Statement...**

To equip leaders for ministry in a regionally based, Christ-centered, culturally relevant context in ways that bear witness to the beliefs, heritage, and practices of the Church of the Brethren.

## **SVMC Staff...**

Donna Rhodes, Executive Director  
Erika Fitz, Program Coordinator and Registrar  
Ray Flagg, Treasurer

## **For questions and clarifications, please contact:**

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or Donna Rhodes, SVMC Executive Director  
at her home office:

1830 Mifflin Street  
Huntingdon, PA 16652  
814-599-3680  
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## **A Description...**

The Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center offers Church of the Brethren ministry training opportunities at both the graduate and academy levels. This handbook focuses on information for ACTS instructors.

ACTS courses are usually offered simultaneously at local churches or Brethren institutions in the partnering districts. A certificate will be granted by the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership to non-degree students who complete all the requirements of the ACTS program.

The program is open to licensed ministers seeking to fulfill requirements for ordination, to laypersons seeking leadership training, and to ordained ministers pursuing continuing education.

To complete the program, students need to take 12 or more academic courses and the following non-academic requirements: supervised ministry and ministry formation programs supplement the learning experience and are available through the district. In addition, students participate in Annual Conference, District Conference, and an ecumenical, interfaith, or intercultural experience.

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# OVERVIEW

## Academy Certified Training System (ACTS)

Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center's ACTS program is one avenue by which a licensed minister can fulfill the ordination requirements set forth in the 2014 Ministerial Leadership paper:

Ordained Ministers shall...

(2.) Complete one of the following approved educational programs:

- The Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree from Bethany Theological Seminary or another institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools.
- The Training in Ministry (TRIM) program through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership provides an alternative for those who find it impossible or impractical to complete a Master of Divinity degree. It also offers appropriate ministry training to supplement the education of those who may hold degrees in higher education other than those named here.
- The **Academy Certified Training Systems (ACTS)** programs, district or regional programs certified by the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, provide still another alternative training track.<sup>1</sup>

This Academy Certified Training System (ACTS) was developed in collaboration with the District Executives of Atlantic Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Southern PA, Middle PA and Western PA districts, and approved by the Governing Board of the Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center and the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.

Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center believes strongly that our students in ministry training need to develop a spiritual rootedness as they prepare to be leaders in the church. Recognizing and embracing the fact that God is our foundation, we seek to encourage the students to deepen their spirituality using a variety of spiritual disciplines throughout their educational process. Students will be provided the opportunity for spiritual formation through groups, class work, and individual instruction.

Ministry training in ACTS occurs through structured courses, ministry formation experience offered in each district, and supervised ministry experience offered in each district.

- Courses are offered in regionally-based settings and online. Twelve courses are required.
- Ministry formation occurs in a setting where students share with one another about the unique experiences, questions, uncertainties, successes, and challenges. Together, the students learn about their own abilities, strengths, and weaknesses as they place themselves in the various ministry situations shared with the group.
- The supervised ministry experience occurs when the student is paired with an experienced minister. Together, they explore and experience the daily needs and challenges of doing ministry. This occurs approximately midway through the educational program.
- ACTS will be completed in three or four years depending on the individual district's schedule of courses.

The Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center staff, the SVMC Governing Board, and the District Executives will evaluate the program on a regular basis to monitor the educational and administrative progress.

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<sup>1</sup> 2014 Ministerial Leadership Manual, Church of the Brethren, Sect. V.D.21.

# SPIRITUAL PLAN

(Excerpt from “ACTS Plan”)

The Academy Certified Training System (ACTS) of the Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center (SVMC) believes strongly that our students in ministry training need to develop a spiritual rootedness as they prepare to be leaders in the church. Recognizing and embracing the fact that God is our foundation, we seek to encourage students to deepen their spirituality using a variety of spiritual disciplines throughout their educational process. Students will be provided the opportunity for spiritual formation through groups, class work, and individual instruction.

## **Biblical Foundation for Spiritual Discernment<sup>2</sup>**

In Christ, the believer is a new creation. (2 Cor. 5:17-18)

New life for the believer is defined as a change from old behaviors. (1 Tim. 3:2-13; Tit. 1:5-8; 2:2-8; Gal. 5:19-24)

The believer is being changed into the likeness of Christ. (2 Cor. 3:18)

The believer grows toward maturity. (Eph. 4:13)

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God. (Rom. 12:1-2)

Let each of you lead the life...to which God called you. (1 Cor. 7:17)

Followers of Christ live with integrity. (Matt. 5:33-37)

‘Whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me.’ (Matt. 25:40)

Christians believe that all of life is sacred. (Matt. 5:21-24)

Believers are committed to high values (Matt. 6:19-24)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly and do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. (Col. 3:16-17)

Followers of Christ abstain from those things that harm and destroy the body. (1 Cor. 6:19-20)

Sisters and brothers in Christ strive for healing and reconciliation. (Matt 5:25-26, 43-48; 6:12, 14-15; 18:15-17; Rom. 12:14-21)

Sisters and brothers in Christ live in a caring community where each part of the body is valued. (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4)

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<sup>2</sup> Scripture list from “Readiness for Ministry” paper in *Ministerial Leadership Notebook*, OM 230.1-2. This list has been reordered, and some additional scripture listed, to loosely represent the progression of new life, growth, commitment, community, and sending.

We are no longer strangers, but we are members of the household of God. (Eph. 2:11-22)

Jesus said to them..."As the Father has sent me, so I send you." (John 20:21)

The scripture continues to call us to the understanding that we are created new in Jesus Christ and are being changed into the likeness of Christ. Our journey is one of on-going growth calling us to high values and integrity. We are called to live the example of Jesus Christ by being Christ's hands, feet, and body on earth.

We are called to live out the teaching of Jesus Christ and embrace the values of our denomination as we minister with one another as students in ministry training, teachers equipping students, administrators of ACTS, and with those we encounter daily.

## **Spiritual Formation**

As students preparing for ministry and as seasoned ministers, our spiritual formation is ongoing. Richard Foster, in *Spiritual Classics*, makes some helpful statements about spiritual formation:

Spiritual formation involves a fundamental choice. Choosing to live for Jesus Christ may mean adopting a certain style of life, or perhaps more properly, a rule of life. We take on a series of spiritual practices that will open us to God's work in our lives. At the same time we need to remember that spiritual transformation is a work of grace. It is what God does in us...One more thing to remember: spiritual formation is ongoing. We need not be impatient; we need take no measurements.<sup>3</sup>

Spiritual formation is not as measurable as some other ministry skills may be. ACTS aspires to provide students with opportunities and examples; we trust in the transformative power and grace of God to work in the lives of students.

## **Incorporating Spiritual Disciplines into ACTS**

We seek God's guidance in our planning and our relationship to the students. Opportunities for spiritual disciplines are incorporated into ACTS in the formation of the students, the modeling of the teachers, and the administration of the program.

## **Students**

Each student is encouraged to be open to God through him/herself, congregation, counselor/mentor, District Executive, and District Ministry Commission. We should be open to discerning calls whether they come as a "bright light" or a "still small voice." The support of the student's congregation, counselor/mentor, and district can be helpful in the discernment of the call and guidance. The importance of the relationship among the student, counselor/mentor, and congregation should not be undervalued. Challenge, support, discernment, and understanding can be offered through these important relationships. The mentor will support the student, as well as challenge him or her to reach the next level of growth. Each district follows the counselor/mentor guidelines set forth by its ministry commission.

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<sup>3</sup>Foster, Richard and Emilie Griffin, *Spiritual Classics* (San Francisco: Harper, 2000), xiii-xiv.

Students are encouraged to journal throughout the entire educational process. In doing so, students may document personal interaction and reflection on their own personal theological and faith development as it relates to specific courses, assignments, and ministry incidents. This exercise allows students to record experiences and reflection and to monitor their personal growth throughout the training journey. Students may use this journal regularly with their supervisor for discussion and reflection. In addition, the journal will provide a valuable collection of responses that will help students evaluate their entire educational and ministry experience.

Students are encouraged to be cognizant of spiritual disciplines and have a devotional style and plan which should include prayer, Bible study, and meditation. The ACTS program recognizes that there is not a “one size fits all” devotional plan; rather, students should seek what contributes to their spiritual formation as they develop and deepen a spiritual rootedness. Exploration of the inner disciplines of study, meditation, prayer and fasting; outward disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission, and service; and corporate disciplines of confession, worship, guidance, and celebration is encouraged.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

# LEARNING PLAN

(Excerpt from “ACTS plan”)

## INTRODUCTION

The ACTS program requires successful completion of 12 academic courses and supplemental ministry experiences. It will generally require four years to complete. Students may enter at any point in the training cycle.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS

**To successfully complete the ACTS program, students will:**

- Complete the following **courses**:
  - 3 Biblical Courses (Introduction to the Old Testament, Introduction to the New Testament, Interpreting the Bible)
  - 3 Historical/Theological Courses (History of the Church, Church of the Brethren History, Introduction to Theology)
  - 5 Ministry Skills Courses (of these six: Church Leadership and Administration [**required due to polity component**], Introduction to Pastoral Care, Teaching and Learning in the Church, Preaching, Worship, Church Vitality and Evangelism)
  - 1 elective—(can be the sixth ministry skill course, Communication Skills for Pastoral Ministry, an online class, or another approved course.)
- Participate in **Ministry Formation**
- Participate in **Supervised Ministry**
- Attend one **district conference** and one **Annual Conference**
- Participate in an **ecumenical, interfaith or intercultural experience**

Courses and other components of ACTS will be designed to achieve the basic competencies for ministry established by the Ministry Advisory Council as a standard for all ministry training programs of the Church of the Brethren. The Ministry Advisory Council is a representative group of people from denominational staff, Bethany Theological Seminary, Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, Council of District Executives, and the Higher Education Association. The Ministry Advisory Council has as one of its goals: encourage and promote appropriate educational requirements and standards for ministerial leadership for the church.

## BRETHREN BIBLE INSTITUTE CLASSES

Persons in self-supporting ministry may be granted credit for courses taken at the annual Brethren Bible Institute at Elizabethtown College. The Brethren Bible Institute is supported by the Brethren Revival Fellowship. SVMC will accept up to six courses taken through BBI at fifteen contact hours per course. The students must provide documentation of completed course to the Executive Director of SVMC. The syllabus or course outline from BBI courses will be filed at the SVMC office.



## **COURSE CYCLE**

### **Atlantic Northeast, Middle PA, Southern PA, and Mid-Atlantic Districts**

*(Offered on a rotating cycle)*

(2015-16)

Church Leadership and Administration (MS)

History of the Church (H/T)

Introduction to Pastoral Care (MS)

(2016-17)

Introduction to the Old Testament (B)

Church of the Brethren History (H/T)

Teaching and Learning in the Church (MS)

(2017-18)

Introduction to the New Testament (B)

Introduction to Theology (H/T)

Interpreting the Bible (B)

(2018-19)

Preaching (MS)

Worship (MS)

Church Vitality and Evangelism (MS)

Communication Skills for Pastoral Ministry will be offered yearly.

## **COURSE CYCLE**

### **Western PA District**

*(Offered on a rotating cycle)*

Because Western PA meets for intensive Saturday classes, their schedule will be:

(2015-16)

Church Leadership and Administration (MS)

History of the Church (H/T)

Introduction to Pastoral Care (MS)

Church of the Brethren History (H/T)

(2016-17)

Introduction to the Old Testament (B)

Teaching and Learning in the Church (MS)

Interpreting the Bible (B)

Church Vitality and Evangelism (MS)

(2017-18)

Introduction to New Testament (B)

Introduction to Theology (H/T)

Preaching (MS)

Worship (MS)

# INSTRUCTORS

Instructors are chosen for the ACTS courses by the Executive Director of SVMC in consultation with the partnering district executives. Instructor criteria include:

1. Identify with the scriptural qualifications for ministerial leadership as noted in the Ministerial Leadership document of the Church of the Brethren
2. Exhibit skills and expertise in course topic
3. M.Div. preferred, although an undergraduate degree, completion of the TRIM program and experience in course topic is acceptable
4. Exhibit teaching skills
5. Work within the SVMC timeline of syllabus submission and course completion

## Instructor Compensation

Compensation for teaching ACTS courses is: \$600 honorarium, 1.5 CEU certificate, and reimbursement for mileage, copying and postage. The honorarium is \$750 for classes with 11 or more students. Instructors will not be paid until all evaluations of students are completed and given to the SVMC staff. Unfortunately, SVMC cannot reimburse textbook purchase.

## Timeline

The SVMC Program Coordinator and Donna Rhodes will work in close communication with instructors to get information to the students both prior to and at the close of the classes.

The following is a timeline for communication:

- Instructor will send syllabus and letter of greeting for the students to the SVMC office 2 months prior to the first class.
- Program Coordinator (PC) will send the letters and syllabus to the registered students. Students are expected to acquire the textbooks and begin on pre-meeting assignment/reading.
- PC will contact the host church/office two weeks prior to the first class and verify class times and arrangements.
- PC will send students addresses and roster to instructor at beginning of class; near end of class she will send evaluation forms and letter of instruction.
- One month after last class, instructor will send completed evaluations of students and projects to PC.
- PC will complete necessary paper work for the students' records; will send evaluation and projects to individual students.
- PC will send instructor's honorarium, compilation of students' evaluations and CEU certificate to instructor.

# COURSE PLANNING

## Expectations of Student Work

*Established by the Ministry Advisory Council as a standard for all ministry training programs in the Church of the Brethren<sup>5</sup>*

- **Fifteen contact hours**
- **Total class time, reading, and project work should total 50-65 hours**
- **Approximately 400 pages of reading material;** each course will have reading which includes a required text(s) plus assigned supplemental reading to adequately cover the subject area.
- **One or more major assignments/projects** will be required. Assignments could be a comparative book review, research paper, interviews, pastoral conversations, sermons, or teaching outlines. Assignments integrating reading or research with the student's ministry are especially desirable. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the policy on citation style and plagiarism in Appendix 3.
- Use measurable ways of evaluating work done: written projects, tests, congregational feedback instruments, taped sermons, in addition to classroom discussions and conversations between student and supervisor.

## Absences

With courses taught as intensives, **students are expected to attend every class** if at all possible. We recognize, however, that some absences are unavoidable. One absence, due to illness, death in the family, or dangerous driving conditions, may be excused at the instructor's discretion. Please communicate with the SVMC Program Coordinator or Executive Director if students request more than one absence, or absence on a different basis. Two or more absences generally lead to an automatic "no-credit," but exceptions can be made by petition to the Executive Director.

**Students that miss class must turn in additional written work (assigned by the instructor) to substitute for the missed class.** This could be an exercise that asks the student to reflect on issues covered by class discussion, a summary of assigned readings, or some combination thereof.

## ACTS Courses taken for Continuing Education Units (CEUs)

The following is the policy for ACTS courses counting as Continuing Education:

An ACTS course can count for 1.5 CEU. We are able to offer 0.1 CEU for every contact hour. Therefore, because certificate classes have 15 contact hours, each course can count for 1.5 CEU. To attain this CEU, the student should attend class, participate in discussions, and do the reading. The student is not expected to do the extra papers or projects, although they may do so if they choose.

The students will pay the audit fee as cost for the course and an additional \$10 CEU documentation fee.

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<sup>5</sup> Information excerpted from District Approved Training Program document in back pocket of *Ministerial Leadership Notebook*.

## OBJECTIVES FOR SPECIFIC ACTS COURSES

### Biblical

#### Introduction to the Old Testament

- Read significant portions of the Old Testament text
- Define the canon and describe differences between Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish canons
- Identify the books of the Old Testament and describe their literary type, as well as, the basic issues or themes
- Describe an overview of Hebrew history and identify 25 key figures or events in the timeline of the history
- Relate major themes of the Old Testament with present day life

#### Introduction to the New Testament

- Read significant portions of the New Testament text
- Identify the books of the New Testament and describe their literary type, as well as, the basic issues or themes
- Identify the different themes and “personalities” of the gospels
- Identify the features of Jesus’ ministry and message
- Relate major themes of the New Testament with present day life

#### Interpreting the Bible

- Use basic Bible study tools in biblical interpretation
- Demonstrate skills in exegeting a biblical passage and in using that exegesis as the basis for a sermon or teaching outline
- Articulate the role of the faith community in the process of biblical interpretation as understood in the Anabaptist tradition

### Historical/Theological

#### History of the Church

- Gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of the heritage of the Christian church from the early church through the Reformation
- Gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of the heritage of the Christian church
- Develop a sense of the rich diversity in beliefs, worship, and church practice within the Christian tradition
- Articulate where the Brethren heritage of Anabaptism and Pietism occur within the larger context of Christian history

#### Church of the Brethren History

- Describe the basic beliefs, values, and ministries which characterize the faith and life of the Church of the Brethren
- Articulate the value and meaning of the ordinances of the Church of the Brethren
- Engage in conversation about Brethren heritage and what the heritage means to the role of the church today

## Theology

- Challenge students to think theologically about their life and the world around them
- Develop an understanding of Believer Church tradition, theology, and vision
- Enable students to articulate a statement of faith that express personal beliefs about the Christian message
- Understand basic theological principles of the Christian church

## **Ministry Skills**

### Church Leadership and Administration

- Demonstrate the ability to work collegially
- Be familiar with Brethren polity and the organizational plan for the present congregation
- Compare different leadership styles and identify strengths and weaknesses in his/her style
- Define the issue of conflict and describe ways of dealing with conflict in the church
- Demonstrate skills in leading a meeting and/or leading a church group in planning and carrying out a particular task

### Introduction to Pastoral Care

- Articulate the meaning of and differences in pastoral care and pastoral counseling
- Demonstrate skills needed for pastoral care
- Demonstrate the understanding of the importance of referral in counseling
- Describe critical points in life for which the ministries of care and counseling are often needed
- Distinguish between situations appropriately dealt with by pastoral counselors and those which need referral for other help

### Teaching and Learning in the Church

- Articulate the varied ways teaching and learning take place in a faith community
- Demonstrate skills in preparing and leading a learning session
- Articulate an understanding of the stages of faith
- Name the qualities that Jesus demonstrated in teaching

### Preaching

- Articulate the biblical basis of preaching
- Demonstrate skills in exegeting a particular biblical passage and use the exegesis as the basis of a sermon
- Demonstrate skills in preaching

### Worship

- Articulate the biblical basis of worship
- Define the basic components of a service of worship
- Develop an integrated worship service clearly demonstrating the theme through scripture, sermon topic, hymns selection, and other pieces of the worship service

### Church Vitality and Evangelism

- Reflect on evangelism related to the person and ministry of Jesus and the experience of the early church, early Anabaptist movement, and the Church of the Brethren

- Articulate understandings of evangelism and church growth when considering issues of congregational life such as church size, dynamics, traditions and vision
- Assess your current congregation in terms of hospitality and vision for growth

#### Communication Skills for Pastoral Ministry

- Demonstrate effective writing and speaking skills
- Articulate an understanding of the importance of good communication skills for church leaders
- Demonstrate the ability to produce quality newsletter items, correspondence, and other pieces needed in pastoral ministry

## READINESS FOR MINISTRY COMPETENCIES<sup>6</sup>

The following list is from the *Readiness for Ministry Competencies* and is suggested as important to integrate as ACTS are designed and taught.

- Familiarity with the biblical sources of the Christian community and competency in interpreting those sources
- Familiarity with and ability to reflect theologically on the history and social context of Christianity
- Awareness of the contextual character of particular Christian traditions, especially found in the North American setting and in global settings of developing Christianity
- Familiarity with and ability to reflect theologically on the heritage of the believers' church tradition
- Ability to articulate faith in language that is theologically informed and culturally persuasive
- An understanding of the congregation informed by both theological heritage and learnings from the human sciences
- Ability to articulate a vision of ministry congruent with one's sense of vocation and appropriate to the ministry context in which that vocation will be practiced
- Ability to nurture and reflect critically on the spiritual formation of self and others, including ethics for ministry and life in community
- Skills in interpersonal relationships, in mediating conflict, and in building community
- Ability to provide effective leadership in congregational and other church-related arenas of ministry
- Ability to integrate biblical and theological understandings with the practice of ministry

***Please see Appendix 1 for a chart indicating how our courses meet the Readiness for Ministry Competencies.***

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<sup>6</sup> Excerpted from Readiness for Ministry paper in *Ministerial Leadership Notebook*. OM 230.6-230.9

# Suggested Syllabus Outline

**Course Title**

**Meeting Times and Location**

**Instructor name and contact information**

**Course Purpose:** 2-4 sentence description of course intent

**Course objectives:** use measurable wording

For example,

The student will be able to articulate....

The student will become familiar with...

The student will demonstrate...

**Required text(s):** List the text(s) you require. Please include the ISBN number. Also, while many of us assume the Bible will be regularly used in class, some students prefer to have the Bible listed as a required text.

**Additional resources:** (if this is a lengthy list, please include it as an additional sheet rather than including it in the body of the syllabus.)

**Preparation:** list any pre-meeting work or reading that you expect the students to do.

**Expectations/Assignments:** List your expectations (participation, deadlines, etc.) as well as assignments to be completed (pages read, written work, etc. for each class date) in order to receive credit for the class.

The syllabus should also contain this excerpt from the Policy on Citation Style and Plagiarism (for the full policy, see Appendix 3). This can be found on page 13 of the Student Handbook:

“Integrity is central to life in community. In the Christian academic community, integrity means giving proper credit to people for the ideas and information we receive from them. It also means that the work we submit and represent as our own is really work we ourselves have done. The Church of the Brethren 2008 Annual Conference Ethics in Ministry Paper (2008) Part III Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders states:

‘I will give credit for all sources quoted or extensively paraphrased in sermons and prepared papers. I will honor all copyrights’ (p. 8, Letter M).

Plagiarism is using the work of other people without giving them credit, whether in written assignments, oral reports and sermons. The consequences for plagiarism will vary according to the extent of the offense. These may range from rewriting the assignment, non-crediting the assignment, or non-crediting the course.”



## **SAMPLE SYLLABUS**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGY – SYLLABUS**

**INSTRUCTOR:** David Banaszak

**address** - Clover Creek C.O.B. 218 Rebecca Furnace Rd., Martinsburg, PA 16662

**telephone** – CHURCH 814-793-3524 HOME 814-793-9393

**e-mail** - [pasdav@atlanticbbn.net](mailto:pasdav@atlanticbbn.net)

**DATES & TIMES:** (2014 - All Thursdays) January 9, 16, 30; February 13, 27; 6:30 to 9:30 pm.

**LOCATION:** Middle Pennsylvania District, Center for Congregational Ministries  
1113 Mount Vernon Ave., Huntingdon, PA 16652

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**PURPOSE:** Theology is literally “Talk about God.” Who is God? How does God relate to human beings? Our course will emphasize the theological concepts inherent to the Church of the Brethren, particularly as understood by historical Anabaptism and Pietism. Within that framework, we will also engage in ongoing discussion and reflection regarding major theological movements from the heritage of the Christian Church.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. Challenge students to think theologically about their life and the world around them.
2. Develop an understanding of Believers’ Church tradition, theology, and vision.
3. Enable students to articulate a statement of faith that expresses personal beliefs about the Christian message.
4. Understand basic theological principles of the Christian Church

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#### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

1. **The Bible**
2. **Who Needs Theology? An Invitation to the Study of God**, by Stanley J. Genz and Roger E. Olson, 1996, Inter-Varsity Press, ISBN: 0830818782  
[Several copies new and used available at Amazon.com]
3. **The Believers’ Church**, by Donald F. Durnbaugh, 1968, Herald Press,  
ISBN: 0-8361-1271-7  
[Several copies available new and used available at Amazon.com]

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#### **READING ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Read: **Who Needs Theology? An Invitation to the Study of God**, by Stanley J. Genz and Roger E. Olson,
2. Read: **The Believers’ Church**, by Donald F. Durnbaugh.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGY – SYLLABUS (continued)**

### **WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**

#### **1 – Due January 16, 2014**

Based on the reading so far, and the discussion we had in our first class, write a 1-3 page essay (double-spaced, Times New Roman font, size 12) which outlines and describes your theology, i.e. What do you believe about God, Jesus Christ, the Church, sin, salvation, your purpose in life, etc.? Try to be specific.

#### **2 – Due January 30, 2014**

Choose a New Testament passage; identify the theological issue (or issues) present in that text; and write a 1-3 page essay (double-spaced, Times New Roman font, size 12) discussing the issues you identified.

#### **3 – Due February 27, 2014**

Choose a specific aspect of Brethren Theology (e.g. believers' baptism, pacifism, the simple life, etc.) and write a 3-5 page essay (double-spaced, Times New Roman font, size 12) discussing theologically the issue you identified, i.e. analyze it, defend it, criticize it, relate it to other specific theological issues we've discussed.

### **This course complies with the Brethren Academy and SVMC Policy on Citation Style and Plagiarism found on pages 4-5 of the Student Handbook:**

"Integrity is central to life in community. In the Christian academic community, integrity means giving proper credit to people for the ideas and information we receive from them. It also means that the work we submit and represent as our own is really work we ourselves have done.

The Church of the Brethren 2008 Annual Conference Ethics in Ministry Paper (2008) Part III Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders states: 'I will give credit for all sources quoted or extensively paraphrased in sermons and prepared papers. I will honor all copyrights' (p. 8, Letter M).

"Plagiarism is using the work of other people without giving them credit, whether in written assignments, oral reports and sermons. The consequences for plagiarism will vary according to the extent of the offense. These may range from rewriting the assignment, non-crediting the assignment, or non-crediting the course."

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### **GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

- attendance at all classes
  - engaged participation in all class activities
  - complete reading assignments as scheduled
  - complete the three writing assignments to be submitted as scheduled
  - \*(TRIM students will negotiate additional assignments with instructor to meet requirements)
-

## INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGY – SYLLABUS (continued)

### 1. OUR FIRST CLASS: (January 9, 2014)

#### WHAT IN GOD'S NAME ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

In our first class we'll begin to set the groundwork for studying theology, making sure we understand what theology is, and how it influences our lives and ministry as Christians.

a. writing assignment – none for our first class

b. reading assignment #1 - by the first class, purchase and begin reading.

Who Needs Theology? An Invitation to the Study of God, by Stanley J. Genz and Roger E. Olson.

c. reflection assignment #1– Be prepared to share your theology at our first class; i.e. How did you come to know God? Who is God? What is faith? Where does Jesus Christ fit into the picture? What is theology? What is it to you? How important is it that you are able to articulate all this?

### 2. OUR SECOND CLASS - (January 16, 2014)

#### EARLY CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY BASED ON VARIOUS BIBLE PASSAGES

In our second class, we'll look at various biblical texts which reveal what the early church believed. We'll be looking at various passages in the Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John, and some of Paul's writings to begin sketching the critical components of early Christian theology.

a. writing assignment #1 – to be handed in at class January 16, 2014

Based on the reading so far, and the discussion we had in our first class, write a 1-3 page essay (double-spaced, Times New Roman font, size 12) which outlines and describes your theology, i.e., What do you believe about God, Jesus Christ, the Church, sin, salvation, your purpose in life, etc.? Try to be specific.

*NOTE! I realize what I'm asking is far beyond the scope of a three-page essay, but there is value in the deliberate effort of trying to define in writing the theological specifics of what you believe. I'm looking for a broad overview of your theology, rather than an in-depth discussion of the details.*

b. reading assignment #2 - finish reading Who Needs Theology? An Invitation to the Study of God, by Stanley J. Genz and Roger E. Olson, and begin reading The Believers' Church, by Donald F. Durnbaugh. *NOTE! Don't be turned off by the scholarly nature of this book. It still ranks as the leading description of much our theological roots as Brethren.*

## INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGY – SYLLABUS (continued)

### 3. OUR THIRD CLASS – (January 30, 2014)

#### **TWO CLASSICAL THEOLOGICAL ISSUES: TRINITY & INCARNATION**

In our third class, we're going to wrestle as the church did with articulating what we believe about the divine nature of God as expressed by the term "trinity." Once our brains are fried on this one, we'll take up the equally engaging issue of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and why the specifics of what is said about this was so important to the church.

a. **reading assignment #3** – finish reading The Believers' Church, by Donald F. Durnbaugh.

b. **writing assignment #2 – to be handed in at class January 30, 2014**

Choose a New Testament passage; identify the theological issue (or issues) present in that text; and write a 1-3 page essay (double-spaced, Times New Roman font, size 12) discussing the issues you identified.

**NOTE: This assignment sounds much more difficult than it really is. Obviously, the New Testament is loaded with theological concepts like judgment, grace, salvation, ecclesiology (the church), eschatology (end times), just to name a few. Pick one and write about what the biblical text says, as well as its implications for you, your life, the church, etc.**

### 4. OUR FOURTH CLASS – (February 13, 2014)

#### **NEW THEOLOGIES: LUTHER & CALVIN**

It just wouldn't be a theology class if we didn't highlight the changes in theology brought about by these two titans of the Reformation, Luther and Calvin. We'll discuss the 3 "solas" – *sola fide* meaning "faith alone," *sola gratia* meaning "grace alone," and *sola scriptura* meaning "scripture alone."

a. **reading assignment #3** – none

b. **NO SPECIFIC WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE THIS CLASS**

### 5. OUR FIFTH (LAST) CLASS – (February 27, 2014)

#### **WHAT WE THINK AS BRETHREN: THE THEOLOGY OF ANABAPTISM, PIETISM & THE RADICAL REFORMATION**

We'll do our best in this last class to discuss in 3 hours what scholars have written volumes about! Our goal in this last session is to identify the theological trademarks which identify us as Brethren-part of the Believers' Church and products of the Pietist and Anabaptist movements.

a. **reading assignment** – none for this class

b. **writing assignment #3 – to be handed in at class February 27, 2014**

Choose a specific aspect of Brethren Theology (e.g. believers' baptism, pacifism, the simple life, etc.) and write a 3-5 page essay (double-spaced, Times New Roman font, size 12) discussing theologically the issue you identified, i.e. analyze it, defend it, criticize it, relate it to other specific theological issues we've discussed.

## STUDENT EVALUATION

The Executive Director will read all instructor and class evaluations at the end of each course. Where there are problems in the class, instructors will report these to the Executive Director upon which remedial action will be taken.

Instructors will evaluate students' performance in their class. Instructors will clearly define expectations and projects as the course begins. Each course should include the basic objectives included in this Learning Plan. These basic objectives help to meet the Readiness for Ministry criteria. Students will keep the instructor apprised of the theme of their project/paper/plan that will be a major determinant in measuring performance.

ACTS classes are graded as credit or no credit.

The instructor will use the following questions as a guide for evaluation of student participation and projects:

Evaluate how the student participated in class:

- *How was the student's class attendance?*

Because each class represents 20-33% of total contact time, students are expected to attend all classes. The instructor may excuse one absence for unavoidable circumstances. Credit can be given to a student with two absences only on appeal to the Executive Director.

When a student does miss a class, he or she should turn in some form of written work that helps them to digest the material. This could be written reflection on or summary of the readings, answering specific questions posed by the instructors, or another assignment of the instructor's choosing. Instructors are not required to give feedback or closely evaluate work turned in for missed class time.

- *Did the student participate thoughtfully and constructively in class discussions?*
- *Did the student complete assignments on time and in a quality manner?*

Evaluate the completed projects:

- *Were the projects completed on time?*
- *Does the student provide quality work with requirements met?*
- *Does the student demonstrate an understanding of the material and its application in ministry?*
- *In your opinion, has the student demonstrated progress on the Readiness for Ministry criteria listed for your course?*
- *How does the student demonstrate a quality understanding of the writing process? (e.g. spelling, grammar, punctuation, footnoting, bibliography.)*

***A rubric to guide the instructors in grading is included in Appendix 2.***

**Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center  
Academy Certified Training System (ACTS)  
Evaluation of student in course**

**Student**\_\_\_\_\_

**Course Title**\_\_\_\_\_

**Instructor**\_\_\_\_\_ **Month(s) & Year of Course** \_\_\_\_\_

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

**STUDENT EVALUATION:**

*Suggested word length 100-120; please name the strengths the student exhibit through the coursework and areas for growth that you observe.*

**Credit**\_\_\_\_\_

**No credit**\_\_\_\_\_

**TRIM credit**\_\_\_\_\_

*August 12, 2010*

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Instructor's Signature**

***SAMPLE***

## Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center Academy Certified Training System (ACTS) Evaluation of student in course

**Student:** XXX

**Course Title:** Church of the Brethren History

**Instructor** XXX **Month(s) & Year of Course** April-May XXX

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

- To study the origin and development of the Brethren from 1708 to the present.
- To review the Anabaptist and Pietist influences on the early Brethren.
- To be able to describe the basic beliefs, values and ministries which have characterized the faith and life of the Church of the Brethren.
- To understand the value and meaning of the ordinances of the Church of the Brethren.
- To reflect on our Brethren heritage and how that impacts the role and contribution of the church today.

### STUDENT EVALUATION:

I appreciated the work you did for the Church of the Brethren History class. You were involved in the class in a positive way and your homework was completed on time. It appeared you put yourself into the work and because of that gained a deeper understanding of Church of the Brethren history and heritage. Your written homework assignment was interesting and well done. The material presented in the oral report was fine, but could have been a bit more organized in your sharing. Your final paper, "The Role of Women in the Church of the Brethren," was interesting and informative. It was well written and documented in a helpful way. It also highlighted the strong influence women had over the years in the Church of the Brethren. I appreciated your positive attitude and willingness to be involved in the class in a significant way.

Thanks again for your participation in the class.

Keep up the good work!

**Credit:   X**

No credit

## TRIM credit

XXX  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Instructor's Signature

# SUSQUEHANNA VALLEY MINISTRY CENTER

## Evaluation of Student in Brethren Bible Institute Course

Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center recognizes some courses through Brethren Bible Institute as fulfilling ACTS requirements. According to SVMC Governing Board action on April 18, 2007, SVMC will allow up to six courses from BBI to qualify as ACTS courses. All courses and instructors must fall within ACTS Guidelines.

Students requesting ACTS credit through BBI will meet the requirement of 15 contact hours by a combination of class time and additional hours with the instructor. Some of the additional hours will occur within the week of BBI meetings. If necessary, the instructor and student will meet outside of BBI. In addition, the student must successfully complete assigned reading and projects.

Student:

BBI Course:

Date Taken:

Objectives of Course:

Evaluation of Student's Work: *(please use additional space, as needed)*

Credit \_\_\_\_\_ No Credit \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

BBI Principal signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

June 24, 2010



**Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center  
Academy Certified Training Level Course (ACTS)**

**STUDENT EVALUATION FORM**

**Thank you for taking a few moments to complete this form.  
This will greatly assist SVMC as we plan for future ACTS courses!**

Name of course:

Instructor:

*Was the location suitable for the course?*

*Did you receive pre-course information in order to be prepared?*

*What is your evaluation of the instructor? (Teaching ability, connection w/ students, etc.)*

*What is your evaluation of the material? (content, difficulty, important to your goals)*

*Did the experience meet your expectations?*

*What is your opinion as to whether the amount of contact time in this course was sufficient to meet the learning objectives?*

*What future course suggestions do you have?*

*What other comments do you have?*

**Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center**  
**Academy Certified Training Level Course (ACTS)**  
**INSTRUCTOR EVALUATION OF COURSE**

**COURSE TITLE:**

Instructor evaluation of courses provides valuable input for the Academy's ongoing process of self-evaluation. It lets us know how well we are fulfilling our educational objectives, the degree to which we are helping students meet the criteria for Readiness for Ministry, and monitors our support of instructors. Your feedback will help us as we plan for this course in the future. Please take a few minutes to complete the form.

*Were the facilities, time, and location of the class satisfactory? If not, please state why.*

*Rate the helpfulness of the course objectives in preparing students for ministry. Are the objectives helping the students meet the Readiness for Ministry Criteria?*

*In reflection of your course, name what worked and what you would do differently if you taught it again.*

*Did Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center provide the necessary resources and support? If not, what do you suggest could be provided?*

*August 12, 2014*

## Appendix 1

### Comparison of Courses and Readiness for Ministry Competencies

Readiness for Ministry Criteria →  Course Listings ↓	Familiarity with biblical sources	Ability to reflect theo- logically	Aware of context of Christian traditions	Aware of heritage of believers' church	Articulate faith in informed way	Understand the congregation	Articulate vision of ministry in context	Reflect on spiritual development Self and others	Skills in relations, conflict, communi- cation	Effective leadership skills in ministry	Integrate Bible / theology understand ministry
Into to Old Testament	✓	✓			✓			✓			✓
Intro to New Testament	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓
Interpreting the Bible	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓
History of the Church			✓	✓	✓						✓
Intro to Theology		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Church of the Brethren History				✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Introduction to Pastoral Care					✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Teaching and Learning in the Church	✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Preaching	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Worship	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Church Leadership and Administration	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Church Vitality and Evangelism	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Communication Skills		✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓

## Appendix 2: ACTS Grading Rubric

	Above Average (6 pts)	Average (4 pts)	Needs Improvement (2 pts.)	Unsatisfactory/ Failed to Complete (0 pts.)
Class Attendance				
Class Participation				
Timely Project Completion				
Quality of Projects				
Understanding of Class Application to Ministry				
Progress in Readiness for Ministry Criteria				
Understanding of the Writing Process				

Exemplary Course Credit: 29 - 42 points

Satisfactory Course Credit: 19 - 28 points

Course Credit with Reservations: 11 - 18 points

No Course Credit: 0 - 10 points

## Appendix 3

### Brethren Academy and SVMC Policy on Citation Style and Plagiarism

Integrity is central to life in community. In the Christian academic community, integrity means giving proper credit to people for the ideas and information we receive from them. It also means that the work we submit and represent as our own is really work we ourselves have done. The Church of the Brethren 2008 Annual Conference Ethics in Ministry Paper (2008) Part III Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders states:

“I will give credit for all sources quoted or extensively paraphrased in sermons and prepared papers. I will honor all copyrights” (p. 8, *Letter M*).

Plagiarism is using the work of other people without giving them credit, whether in written assignments, oral reports and sermons. A glaring example of plagiarism would be submitting an entire essay or preaching a sermon written by someone else and claiming it was your own. It is also plagiarism to use, without giving credit, someone else’s ideas or phrases. This definition applies to words and images, to manuscripts, and to ideas gleaned from spoken communication.

The consequences for plagiarism will vary according to the extent of the offense. These may range from rewriting the assignment, non-crediting the assignment, or non-crediting the course. The instructor will report any instance of plagiarism to the student and to those supervising the instructional programs. Students who wish to challenge the charge of plagiarism could contact their district executive and/or the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.

### Guidelines for Writing Research Papers

*The following guidelines were written by Marilyn Lerch in consultation with Dr. Daniel Ulrich, a Bethany Theological Seminary professor, and Craig Gandy, a Brethren Academy instructor. They are excerpted from the Training in Ministry (TRIM) Notebook, but apply equally well to ACTS students and papers.*

For many entering students, it has been quite a while since they have written a research paper. The guidelines here will provide some structure around that experience. Please know that instructors of particular courses may have their own expectations, so see the following as general suggestions.

Normally a research paper should be typed in a 12 point font, double-spaced, and with standard (1 inch) margins. All quotations are to be footnoted, and quotes longer than a couple of lines need to be placed in a block quote, which should be indented and single-spaced. Since this is an academic paper, the instructor would like to see a bibliography at the end of the paper. Each footnote and entry of the bibliography should include the author’s name, title of the reference (italicized), publisher, and year. Footnotes should also include a page number. If an

online website is referenced, it is necessary cite the specific web address and the date the information was downloaded.

*Footnote Citation Example:*

Carl Desportes Bowman, *Portrait of a People: The COB at 300*, Brethren Press, 2008, p.83.

Ministerial ethics require crediting all sources. Plagiarism is looked upon with great concern in a ministry training program. Should there be evidence found of plagiarism, the Executive Director will need to have a conversation with the student's district regarding this matter.

**Focusing your proposed topic:**

Many topics initially proposed by students require some focusing. Here are some suggestions for focusing a topic. After a broad topic has been selected, do some introductory reading. For example, if the course textbooks address the topic, look at their ideas, arguments, and bibliographies. In addition, check some reference works such as Bible dictionaries and commentaries. Get a feel for the issues that scholars are debating in relation to the topic, and note suggestions for further reading. Then choose a more specific issue or question that the introductory exploration leads to and could be studied in depth. Remember that depth is usually more valuable than breadth in a research project. Above all, a research paper should clearly indicate what you have learned as a result of your research.

Academic research papers should have an *introduction*, a *body*, and a *conclusion*.

The *introduction* should include one sentence that states clearly what the focus of the paper will be. This is called a thesis statement.

Get right to the point in the *introduction*. No need to beat around the bush. One useful technique (although not the only technique) is to make the first sentence a statement of the thesis.

*Thesis Statement Example:* In John 13:13-15, Jesus commands his disciples to wash one another's feet. In this paper, I will demonstrate the effect of gender with regard to one's perspective on foot washing, gathering information from historical, biblical and theological sources. (This is not the only way a thesis statement can be structured, but this example provides some guidance.)

The *body* of the paper makes the case that the student has come to through research and thought; that is, the body presents the reasons for thinking the thesis is true, and/or examine the evidence of the problem or question that has been explored. It is also in the body of the paper where there is a clear demonstration that the research that has been done backs up the position taken with quoted material. Be sure to show that you have *learned* something!

In the *conclusion*, draw together the various strands of the position taken, showing how they connect to the thesis and how they lead to the particular Biblical/theological viewpoint which has been assumed as a result of this study.

Even after a proposal is approved, one can adjust a topic in light of further research. Just keep the instructor informed of any major changes. Don't hesitate to consult with an instructor if you have questions. Such questions will be received with much more grace if they come in a timely manner rather than at 5:30 the day before the research paper is due. ☺

*With appreciation to Brethren Academy for permission to reprint these guidelines.*

Additional resources for writing, further examples and appropriate ways to cite, include:

- **Core, Deborah. *The Seminary Student Writes*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000.**  
This very easy to read book outlines practical guidance for beginning students. Choosing and researching a topic; outlining, writing and editing a paper; and proper formats for citation are addressed.
- **Vyhmeister, Nancy Jean. *Quality Research Papers: for Students of Religion and Theology*. Third Edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.**  
This book explores in more depth research (definition, planning, thinking), finding sources, choosing a topic, bibliographies, papers (organizing, writing, formatting), and research (biblical exegesis, descriptive, program development, case study).
- **Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research, Theses, and Dissertations, Eighth Edition: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.**  
This is the definitive resource for advanced research papers and projects. A *Turabian Style: Quick Reference Guide for Students* is available online as a downloadable pdf at the Bethany Theological Seminary website.

This policy statement was adapted from the Policy on Citation Style and Plagiarism for Earlham School of religion and Bethany Theological Seminary and is a joint policy between The Brethren Academy and SVMC.

*Affirmed by the Ministry Advisory Council, May 11, 2010; resources for writing updated March 26, 2015.*