

NEW TRAINING AVAILABLE FOR EDUCATORS IN THE PC(USA)

By Cheryl Carson

Are you serving as an educator in your church, council or agency—either as a volunteer or as paid staff? Do you feel like you would like to have a stronger biblical and theological foundation and greater skills in educational ministry leadership? Then the Educator Certification Committee (ECC) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has created a training process for you (and maybe others serving alongside you in educational ministry, as well) that can lead to endorsement as a Christian Education Associate (CEA).

With the beginning of 2021, new requirements were introduced for the CEA because of the changing needs of churches as they see memberships and budgets decline. It is no longer the possibility for many churches to support a full-time professional educator on staff.

Jenna Campbell, Chair of the ECC's Courses and Exams Sub-Committee, says the modifications have made training more accessible to meet the diverse needs of today's educators. Campbell adds that the purpose of the CEA endorsement option is "to introduce the educator to basic knowledge and skills in Christian education, and to encourage the educator to consider further coursework—potentially even seeking to pursue the Certified Christian Education level of certification."

The CEA endorsement is a five-step process. The first step is application. The CEA option is open to anyone in the PC(USA) regardless of educational background. There are no employment or volunteer hour requirements but you do have to be actively participating in the educational ministry of your church. There is not a lot of expense

involved as most of the study can be accomplished through self-study with easily accessed resources such as books and on-line articles and videos.

Once entered into the process, you will need to complete initial assessments in six content areas: Biblical Interpretation; Reformed Theology; Religious Education Theory and Practice; Human Growth and Faith Development; Worship and Sacraments; and Presbyterian Polity, Program, and Mission. You can choose to approach your study one content area at a time or you can take the assessments all at one time.

These assessments simply give you an idea of how much foundational knowledge you already have upon which to build upon. They set the stage for the next step—the development of a plan of study in coordination with an educator certification advisor appointed by your presbytery (an advisor will be made available to you when you apply).

As you set up the plan of study for each content area, the educator certification advisor will help direct you toward books and resources in the areas identified by your initial assessment where you need additional knowledge and skills. Then you will work at your pace to complete the elements of the plan. As you finish this plan of study, your advisor will help to determine your readiness to take the final assessments.

The final assessments are a combination of case studies, lesson plans, and reflections on theological themes. They are open book and you can use the help of your pastor, your advisor, and others to offer guidance and review of your responses. The submitted assessments will be read by members of the ECC. If approved, you can move to the next content area until all are successfully completed. If not approved, you

can retake any content area assessments needed. When all are done, the ECC will endorse you as a CEA and your accomplishment will be celebrated.

You can review the complete process for the CEA at:

<https://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/christianeducators/certification-educators/>

If you have a bachelor's or master's degree and have served at least one year in educational ministry (paid or volunteer), you may want to also review the requirements and process to become a Certified Christian Educator. That information is also available at the link above. If you have additional questions, please email Martha Miller at martha.miller@pcusa.org.

Cheryl Carson is the Associate Executive Presbyter for Central Florida Presbytery. She is a Certified Christian Educator in the PC(USA) and serves as the APCE representative on the denomination's Educator Certification Committee. Cheryl has a Doctor of Educational Ministries degree from Columbia Theological Seminary. She also has her Master of Christian Education from Union-PSCE (now Union Presbyterian Seminary) in Richmond.

Cheryl and her husband, Bill, live in Merritt Island, FL with their dog and three cats. They have three grown children, eight grandchildren, one great grandson, and another great grandbaby on the way.