

## **Constitutional Courses**

*Mandated by the Book of Order*

### **BIBLE**

#### **INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT:**

An introductory survey course on the Old Testament is normally intended to give students an idea of the flow of the history, geography, people, and theological development of the Old Testament. Time needs to be spent developing a sense of the historical background, and major themes of the Old Testament as well as a general overview of the contents of the books of the Old Testament. Most courses include a discussion of the theological importance of the Old Testament to the New as the Scriptures of the first centuries Jews and Christians. It should cover a basic understanding of the Old Testament's literary genre: history, poetry, prophetic literature, apocalyptic, etc., as well as basic hermeneutical/exegetical skills for interpretation (context, genre, historical setting of the book/passage, how the text has been interpreted in and used by the church). As time is available in this or additional Old Testament courses, attention can be given to study of particular books in more depth or developing exegetical and hermeneutical skills.

#### ***Evaluation***

Accountability for an Introductory Old Testament Course usually includes one or more of the following:

1. Development of a time line of the history/ flow of the Old Testament;
2. Review of the sections of the Old Testament (Pentateuch, History, Wisdom Literature, Prophets, etc.) and their flow/contents;
3. An open book exam-using exegetical skills or content based
4. Requiring the students to pass a Biblical Content Exam

#### **INTRODUCTION TO NEW TESTAMENT:**

An introductory survey course on the New Testament is normally expected to give students an overview of the development, time-line, geography, people and themes of the New Testament. Time needs to be spent developing a sense of the historical background of the New Testament and the order of its writing, the development of the literary genre there (Gospel, history, letters, apocalyptic literature), and the roles these played in the early church. In covering a general overview of the books of the New Testament, most survey courses also deal with exegetical and hermeneutical skills and a discussion of the critical and theological importance of the New Testament. As time is available in this or additional New Testament courses, more attention can be given to the study of a particular book or books and developing exegetical and hermeneutical skills, the development of the canon, or other related subjects.

## **Evaluation**

Accountability for an Introductory New Testament course usually includes one or more of the following:

1. Development of a time line of the history/ flow of the New Testament;
2. Review of the sections of the New Testament and their development (Gospel, Epistles, History, Apocalyptic, etc.) and their flow, contents, and major themes;
3. An open book exam-using exegetical skills or content based;
4. Requiring the students to pass a Biblical Content Exam.

## **ADDITIONAL BIBLE ELECTIVE COURSES:**

### **STUDY OF A SPECIFIC BOOK OR TEXT:**

Many CLP training programs will add additional Bible courses, as time permits, or as a continuing education course option, using an individual book of the Old or New Testament, or focusing on one of the types of literature in one of the Testaments (history, Pauline letters, psalms and songs, parables, etc.), or focusing on lectionary texts for a specific church season. Such courses allow CLP candidates and CLPs to focus more on exegetical and interpretive skills in relating Biblical literature and passages to teaching and preaching. *The follow-up or evaluation for these elective courses may be an exegesis paper, a sermon, a teaching outline, etc.*

### **INTERPRETING THE BIBLE:**

Another course some CLP training programs offer as an elective or continuing education is one in interpreting the Bible. This course can focus on what the church has said about the use of Scripture in worship and study, methods of exegesis, different models of interpretation, etc. It can give participants a chance to explore how teachers and preachers move from Scripture to lesson and sermon. *As it provides a chance for interpretive work with selected passages of Scripture, the follow-up or evaluation for this type of course is usually a paper, a sermon, or lesson plan using a new model of interpretation for the student.*

### **SPECIFIC BIBLE STUDY COURSES:**

Some CLP courses have found value in using one of the longer Bible Study courses such as Kerygma, Disciple or similar year-long series in order to allow participants the opportunity to do in depth Bible Study. In presbyteries with urban centers it may be possible to participate in such a course. Many of these courses are taught by a pastor or trained teacher. *With the workbooks, journals, etc. usually required by these courses, accountability for the course work could be checked by the participant's pastor or mentor, CLP committee, or the director of the CLP program.* Such a course would be an advantageous introduction for those CLP participants who have never had the opportunity to study the Bible, book by book.

Reformed Theology and Sacraments

A variety of courses are offered under this heading. No training program tries to cover all of theology-or even all of reformed theology in one course. What follows is a description of the basic courses that are used to cover these two requirements lumped together in the Book of Order-theological/historical courses, then courses dealing with the sacraments.

## THEOLOGY/CHURCH HISTORY

### **A SURVEY OF CHURCH HISTORY:**

This is usually an introductory course that covers major periods of church history and traces the formation and growth of the church. Such a course often briefly covers the social/political setting as well as religious developments. A common breakdown of these broad periods is:

1. Early Church-from about 30 AD through the Council of Nicea
2. Council of Nicea through the beginning of the Reformation
3. The Reformation, including the development of Lutheranism, Reformed Protestantism, the Anabaptists
4. The church in England-Episcopal and Protestant
5. A brief history of the church in the United States

*(Programs that have the luxury of time for more classes often combine theology and history, and break down some of the following broad periods into individual classes.)*

### ***Evaluation***

The evaluation for historical survey classes is often a paper or a test. Papers often allow the participant to choose a subject or a period to cover. Another option: have participants develop a course in church history for a confirmation class or other class.

### **PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED HISTORY:**

More narrowly defined courses on Presbyterian and Reformed history usually focus on the Protestant Reformation, Westminster, the Presbyterian Church in America. Both the historical development of the church and basic theological developments are often developed in the course-the tenets of reformed thought, the theology of Westminster, the theological reasons behind the schisms and splits in the Presbyterian Church in this country (Old School/New School; the Cumberland split, northern and southern churches, etc.) and the unions/reunions that have brought some of those branches back together.

### ***Evaluation***

The evaluation for this course is often, and most easily, a paper covering an issue, event, or theological idea or a time line showing the development of various protestant churches (or Presbyterian Churches and their roots). Less frequently an exam seems to be used to evaluate this course content.

## **CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS OF THE CHURCH - AN HISTORICAL SURVEY:**

This course becomes a broad survey of church history using the creeds and confessions of our church as the basis for understanding some of the major issues that have helped shape the church from the beginning. Looking at the issues and debates that lay behind the counsels, creeds and confessions of the church, helps put some of the debates of our day in perspective. By looking at what the church has called heresy through the years and seeing how those variant beliefs and opinions were dealt with through the belief statements of church counsels and various creedal statements, participants can gain insight on how the issues of a period of church history begin to shape the church and its theology, worship and activities.

### ***Evaluation***

The most common evaluation is to have each participant choose one of the creeds or confession and list some of the issues that led to its development as well as issues that creed or confession addresses today.

## **INTRODUCTION CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY:**

The focus of this course is the essential theological heritage of Reformed Christians. The course seeks to help participants understand what theology is; how we should go about "thinking", "speaking", and "acting" theologically; what are the sources of our authority and the specific doctrinal content of our faith. The emphasis will be on gaining a basic comprehension of the Christian theological tradition, as represented by a wide variety of major Christian figures. Many programs use Shirley Guthrie's *Christian Doctrine (revised)* for this course.

### ***Evaluation***

The evaluation or review for this course varies: Options include a paper covering a basic theological concept new to the participant; listing some of the basic theological concepts and giving a brief description of what these concepts mean; having an examination of people and ideas, and/or using some of the study guides in Guthrie's book.

## **REFORMED THEOLOGY:**

This course is usually an introduction to Reformed theology with emphasis on teachings of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox, the Westminster Assembly and other reformers and reformed movements. It typically covers the tenets of the Reformed Faith as well as those beliefs that define the Reformed Faith compared to other systems of belief.

The **evaluation** for this course is often asking the participants to list some of the basic theological concepts of Reformed Theology and giving a brief description of what these concepts mean. This is sometimes expanded by asking the participant to take one particular tenet or idea and reflecting on the role of that idea today in the life of the church (or the participant).

## SACRAMENTS

### **WORSHIP - THE SACRAMENTS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER AND BAPTISM:**

This course explores the sacraments of our church through historical, theological and liturgical considerations. It looks at what Reformed Theology and *The Directory for Worship* say about these sacraments. Other resources often include the *Book of Common Prayer* and/or *Supplemental Liturgical Resources*.

#### ***Evaluation***

Evaluation of this course tends to be creative: One idea is having the participants plan a worship service including baptism or the Lord's Supper using the *Book of Common Prayer* or *Supplemental Liturgical Resources*, and giving reasons for the ordering and elements of the service. This is a course that can use a practical review with the participants getting some "hands on experience" presiding at the Lord's Table or at a baptism--having available communion elements and/or a baptismal font available (using a doll) and looking at different ways these sacraments are practiced in the church today. The reasons for what is done and said at the table or baptismal font can be part of the discussion/evaluation. Case studies using pastoral situations could be used for the participants to respond in a paper or discussion group: "Would you baptize...?" "Would you serve communion...?" A written report or test could also be used for evaluating objective information from this course.

### **WORSHIP AND THE SACRAMENTS - AN INTRODUCTION:**

This course covers the theological concepts and foundation of the sacraments and why we celebrate the two we name as sacraments. In looking at the historical background from Reformed church history and confessional documents, participants can gain an understanding of the meaning behind the various ways the sacraments may be celebrated (e.g.: intinction, the common cup, etc., for the Lord's Supper, immersion, "sprinkling", etc., for baptism. Some time may be spent in looking at sacraments recognized by other denominations and why the Reformed church does not recognize more than two sacraments. The course will consider the theology and rationale behind each of the components of worship service as well as Baptism and the Lord's Supper in the context of the church year.

#### ***Evaluation***

Accountability/evaluation for this course is often similar to that mentioned above: Writing a paper about one of the sacraments, developing a worship service around baptism or communion, dealing with a case study, etc.

### **PRESBYTERIAN POLITY:**

This course uses the Book of Order and actual case studies to delve into the connection between the spiritual character of the Church and its human organization and system of agreed-upon rules of government. It will cover the content of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the make-up of the Book of Order (The Form of Government, The Directory of Worship, The Book of Discipline), the

structure and function of the governing bodies, the other governing bodies with which our General Assembly has relationships.

### ***Evaluation***

Evaluation for this course is often done by using case studies outlining specific situations that relate to the application of church polity. Case studies may be brought by participants, shared by the leader, or drawn from officer training and other resources.

## **PREACHING**

### **REFORMED WORSHIP - LITURGY AND PLANNING:**

The church, when it is most truly the church of Jesus Christ, is grounded, centered in, and empowered by liturgical experience. This course will look at the essential elements of *The Directory for Worship*. Using *The Book of Common Prayer*, it will look at the elements of worship and cover the skills needed in planning and leading worship, speaking, reading Scripture, choosing hymns, etc. It will also introduce some of the resources available in planning worship services.

### ***Evaluation***

Evaluation/accountability for this course usually includes planning (and leading, when possible) a specific worship service.

### **WORSHIP - SERMON PREPARATION:**

This course will focus on the many aspects of sermon preparation, resources for sermons, kinds of sermons and styles of preaching, the cycle of the Christian year, the lectionary (using it and diverging from it).

### ***Evaluation***

Evaluation usually involves writing and presenting a sermon before the class or a smaller group of class members.

### **PREACHING FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT/NEW TESTAMENT:**

Specific preaching courses that focus on the Old or New Testament give the participants an opportunity to consider the practical skills needed to develop a sermon from a text. Focus is usually on the lectionary texts from the Testament being considered.

### ***Evaluation***

Review/accountability usually comes in the form of a sermon in written and oral form (in person or by cassette).

### **TEACHING AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:**

This course considers various aspects of Christian Education materials: the strengths and weaknesses of curricula available, types of classes, adapting curricula to a group, and small groups (formation and dynamics), It will also help participants become

familiar with their Presbytery (and/or Synod) Resource Center, local religious bookstores and supply houses, presbytery events centered on education and training.

***Evaluation***

Evaluation for this course can vary: Some presbyteries/programs ask for a review of the Presbyterian resources currently available, assessing their strengths and weaknesses for the church where the participant worships or serves. Some presbyteries have asked participants to develop a Confirmation Commissioning class, discussing what resources they would use (and why) as well as considering the length of the course and leaders.