

San Francisco Theological Seminary

THE EXTENSION CENTERS

Self Study

HISTORY/VISION/CONTEXT

For more than 25 years San Francisco Theological Seminary has played a significant role in the development of theological education by extension in response to needs in the churches. The Doctor of the Science of Theology was introduced in 1961, the Doctor of Ministry in 1970, and the Master of Arts in Values in 1974. Parallel to these programs the Seminary has in recent years increased its efforts to provide non-degree programs for various constituencies throughout the western states.

Following the building of the Lloyd Center on the San Anselmo campus in 1971, the Trustees established the Program in Church and Community Education, which included continuing education and conferences for clergy and laity. In 1974 a parttime director was appointed, and by 1981 this became a fulltime position. Meanwhile, in response to a resolution of the Alumni Association, the Trustees approved the creation of the Southern California Extension Center in 1978, and in 1982 additional extension centers were opened for Alaska Northwest, Oregon, and Arizona. Each center organized a local Operating Committee as an advisory body responsible to the Faculty. Only Northern and Southern California have had fulltime directors.

Through the counsel and supervision of the Seminary's Director of Program Development each extension center has defined its goals and objectives, tested various program options, and developed a vision for theological education in its particular regional context. These goals and objectives are all concerned with the theological formation of the church for its mission, which includes many ministries, many different tasks, a diversity of gifts and skills.

During the last five years each center's vision has been shaped by the leadership of its director and operating committee, by lessons derived from its programs, and by needs and challenges emerging out of its context. Located at the San Anselmo campus, the Northern California Extension Program (NCEP) has at its disposal the resources and reputation of a major theological institution, which gives it the opportunity and the burden of providing educational resources for all the churches' needs. The Southern California Extension Center (SCEC) is located in one of the most important population centers in the world, where the church is called to become truly multi-cultural and where discipleship requires global responsibility. The Alaska Northwest Extension Center (ANEC) and the Oregon Extension Center (OEC) serve regions where there are few urban centers and vast, sparsely populated areas, where the economy is not vigorous and unemployment is high, and where there are no major theological institutions. The Arizona Extension Center (AEC) faces sunbelt population growth and vigorous new church development as well as the largest concentration of Native American reservations.

These five extension centers provide an extraordinary avenue of service for the Seminary into the life and mission of the church throughout the western states. They bring to the Seminary a wealth of partnerships, experience, and insight that can help it to become "The Presbyterian Seminary of the West."

#### GOALS/PROGRAMS/CONSTITUENCIES

Any attempt to summarize the programs of the extension centers should consider the major goals toward which they are directed, the constituencies for whom and with whom they are planned, and the educational models which they utilize. A basic assumption is that the resources of theological and related disciplines should be made much more widely available throughout the church in order to renew and equip clergy, other staff persons, and laity for mission. While all the centers have an ecumenical outreach, they also focus on Presbyterian-Reformed foundations and serve primarily Presbyterian constituencies, especially in regions where the Presbyterian identity and ethos need strengthening. Some programs are specifically tailored for clergy, church educators, church secretaries, or church musicians; others focus on issues and concerns that cut across functional divisions. Some are planned with and for specific racial-ethnic constituencies; others are intended to provide inter-cultural learning opportunities and global perspectives. Following is a partial summary of programs gathered according to goal areas, though most educational events do not fit easily within any one goal category.

#### *Strengthening Vital Congregational Life*

Several center events have dealt with evangelism, church growth, and youth ministry. Others have focused on the theology and practice of worship, including in some cases the arts and music. All centers have offered seminars or conferences and workshops in Christian education. Oregon, Northern California, Alaska Northwest, and Arizona have held prayer retreats of two to five days. There have been conferences on family life, the life cycle, divorce, and aging. Arizona has sponsored an on-going study, Aging Creatively Today, in cooperating with local churches, other institutions, and the senior citizens community, and in conjunction with Cook School it has invited Professor Howard Rice to spend two extended periods there as theologian-in-residence at the service of the churches.

#### *Enhancing Competencies in Ministry*

A number of ad hoc events have been offered on such wide-ranging subjects as preaching the lectionary, computers in the church, child care, and lay pastoral care. Clergy have responded in greater numbers to events led by nationally recognized specialists in the practice of ministry, e.g. conflict management, pastor burnout, the healthy pastorate, and preaching. Northern California, Alaska Northwest, and Southern California have offered the extended series of seminars leading to the certification of Associate Christian Educators, a demanding program that takes at least 18 months to complete. Northern California offers occasional workshops, monthly seminars, and an annual week of studies for church musicians. Southern California cooperates with Synod in offering a nationally advertised worship event on Reformed preaching, liturgy, and music for a week in the summer. Northern California has an annual,

ecumenical event for church secretaries and a monthly seminar for church educators plus an annual continuing education event for presbytery staff throughout the western states.

### *Pursuing Justice and Peace*

While the concern for justice is expressed in the goals of the centers, several centers have offered few events in this area, though the concern naturally arises in Bible study, preaching, and other areas. Alaska Northwest co-sponsored an event on hunger; Arizona co-sponsored an international symposium on Sanctuary; and Southern California has held a series of seminars on Justice for Women: Challenge to the Church. Southern California built extensive programming around theologian-in-residence Richard Shaull, who in two and a half months taught three intensive courses and gave 60 presentations in seven presbyteries with a focus on Central America and "The Gospel and the Poor." This center has also, in conjunction with Synod, offered two conferences, two travel seminars, and two retreats on the crisis in Central America, two conferences on peace in the Middle East, and a conference on human rights in South Africa. Northern California held a conference on church-state conflict.

### *Building a Multi-Cultural Church*

With the dramatic growth of diverse racial-ethnic populations and a growing number of predominantly non-Anglo congregations in the Presbyterian Church, especially in California, the centers have sought to work with their constituencies to provide educational programs that are culturally specific and also some that are specifically multi-cultural. Northern California offers an annual, week-long seminar for Korean pastors in the western states, has held a five-day seminar for Taiwanese pastors, collaborates with the Sierra Mission Area in the training of Indo-Chinese lay leaders, and is in dialogue with Black pastors about possible programs. Southern California cooperates with Synod's Black Advisory Committee in planning annual evangelism conferences and theological seminars, with the Hispanic Commission in offering occasional theological forums for pastors and lay leaders, and with Hanmi Presbytery in holding (three times so far) a series of three ten-week seminars on Presbyterian history, theology, and polity for Korean pastors. In addition this center has cooperated with the Taiwanese churches in hosting a month-long educational experience for pastors from Taiwan and with the Asian Presbyterian Council in offering a seminar series on Asian American Realities and Ministries. Arizona has held events with Native Americans.

### ANALYSIS/PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS

The experiences of the five extension centers over the past five years offer many avenues for reflection on needs of the church, opportunities for ministry, and challenges to theological education. Following are several of these avenues, which call for reflection and evaluation as the centers look to the future.

1. Reports from the centers indicate that the Seminary has greatly expanded its outreach in continuing education -- geographically, numerically, in terms of laity and church staff as well as clergy, and in terms of racial-ethnic

participation. In the chart below, the first number in each box indicates the total number of participants for the academic year; the second number indicates the total number of Continuing Education Unit-equivalencies, i.e. one CEU for 10 hours of instruction.

	1982-3	1983-4	1984-5	1985-6	1986-7*
AEC	400/240.0	2053/1136.3	813/593.4	563/551.4	102/205.2
ANEC	185/104.4	298/311.	307/170.9	216/200.1	405/389.5
NCEP	1153/1312	939/1242	1114/1279	1145/1794	642/1154
OEC	213/131.6	274/204.8	249/240.4	111/172.5	52/64.3
SCEC	133/174.2	481/659.8	499/592.7	651/850.5	1443/1037.6
Totals	2084/1962.2	4045/3553.9	2982/2876.4	2686/3568.5	2644/2850.6

\*Incomplete

This is the first time that the Seminary has gathered this much basic information, and it should raise for Faculty and Trustees a whole range of questions about the role, nature, and priorities of theological education.

2. The reports indicate that there continue to be many, diverse, ad hoc events, but there is also a trend toward more substantive events and greater coordination in collaboration with specific constituencies. While evaluation is often done at the end of specific events, more thought should be given to long-range evaluation in relation to major goals for the life and mission of the church, which in turn would lead to more intentional planning in conjunction with pastors, governing bodies, and other partners. JanTerm '87 in Southern California brought together 17 educational events relating to racial-ethnic realities, critical global issues, and foundational theological studies sponsored by 17 bodies.

3. The extension center directors and members of the operating committees represent many interests and skills and sit on many committees, which in turn reach out into all aspects of the church and the wider community. The Seminary needs to affirm this strong and substantive extension of its ministry and also to learn from these colleagues as partners in theological education. Insofar as theology and ministry belong, as the Reformers asserted, to the people of God, the Seminary's extended family can be considered essential to the mission of the Seminary.

4. As the population continues to shift, the Seminary and its extension centers must take even more seriously the challenge of contextualization of the Gospel, ministry, the church, and theological education among Asian, Black, Hispanic, and Native American peoples. At stake is not only the church's capacity to respond to these constituencies but also the church's willingness to be transformed.

5. Equally important is the struggle for justice and peace on a global scale. Because Presbyterians are the most privileged people in the most powerful nation, we must expect tension and controversy. What the church needs is not more activism nor pacifism but more solid biblical, theological, spiritual foundations, which the Reformed tradition can provide. What we need to recognize is not only that our government is allied with oppressive regimes but also that

"without the preaching of justice there is no Gospel of Jesus Christ," (L. Boff).

6. With the rise of new electronic technology for information storage, communication, and educational purposes, the centers need to consider possible applications of these resources in their promotional work and programs for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

7. Following many changes in the Seminary's administration over the past five years, the center directors and committees need clearer channels of communication, planning, and administration. As opportunities in the regions multiply, they need clearer guidance regarding priorities and limitations in dialogue with the Faculty and Administration.

8. As the extension centers pursue their separate agendas and partnerships, they need also to engage each other in theological and missiological discussion and long-range planning in light of the church's mission and context in the western states. As we move into the '90s, the extension centers need to be in dialogue with the Faculty and Trustees about the future shape of theological education.

9. With the escalating cost of residential schools, the growing trend toward commuter and extension education, and the urgency of training racial-ethnic leaders, the centers are being pressed to offer academic credit at the M.Div. and M.A. levels. In particular Southern California has developed a proposal to introduce certain M.Div. components that build on past experience and relate to the urban, multi-cultural, ecclesial realities of the region. Furthermore, as church educators complete the current program for certification as Associates in Christian Education, some wish to advance to the level of Christian Educator, which requires academic courses at the graduate level.

10. As the financial situation of the Seminary has become more critical, the extension center directors and operating committees have been asked to explore the possibility of finding local sources for designated funding. There is enthusiasm but lack of experience and some anxiety about this new dimension of responsibility, especially for directors whose contracts are parttime.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS/PRIORITIES/FUTURE DIRECTIONS

At the conclusion of this first extended review of the work of the extension centers, the directors have formulated several concrete proposals that arise from this experience. We believe that these steps will strengthen considerably the Seminary's ministry in the regions without putting additional strains on its financial resources.

1. The Administration and center directors should develop guidelines for a common system of evaluating, recording, and reporting all events.

2. The Faculty and center directors should plan to meet for at least two hours at least once a year to review educational experiences, reflect theologically on the nature and role of theological education, and consider priorities and prospects for future programs.

3. The center directors should explore with their committees, colleagues in ministry, and faculty possible designs for non-degree, structured, long-term plans for continuing education that might include individual reading and research, peer interaction, applied projects, and assigned supervision.

4. The C.E. Certification program needs further definition of syllabi, standards, and educational methods, and further study could lead to adaptation of this program or separate programs for youth ministers, church musicians, church administrators, and others.

5. The Seminary may wish to explore with the C.E. Certification Board, the Presbyterian School of Christian Education, and other seminaries the possibility of offering an M.A. in Christian Education utilizing shared resources and field based as well as residential components.

6. Extension centers and faculty should examine the priority needs of racial-ethnic congregations, which might include a non-degree program for Indo-Chinese lay preachers in the Sierra Mission Area and Southern California, a non-degree certificate in theological studies for immigrant pastors who have completed their basic theological studies in other countries, and/or a B.A./M.R.E. option in ministerial studies in conjunction with local colleges for mature persons who should not be required to take the traditional route to ordained ministry.

#### EPILOGUE

On March 16, 1987, before this self-study was ready to be presented, the President, Vice President, and Dean met with the center directors to advise them that the centers would be closed as now constituted and that the Seminary's new continuing education program would be based on campus with some regional activity through volunteers. This decision preempts the above recommendations, but the center directors felt that they should submit the report intact with only an additional epilogue.

The recent action certainly underlines the need for an endowed or designated funding base. It is altogether clear that extension or continuing education is conceived by the institution itself to be peripheral and expendable. Though it represents less than 5% of the total budget, it is the easiest to cut.

Nevertheless we affirm the importance of widespread, local, grassroots connections with the church -- in terms of the Presbyterian Church, ecumenical relations, and racial-ethnic communities. Because seminaries are elitist institutions and because SFTS is located in one of the most privileged counties in the country, it will have to struggle to overcome this elitism and seek excellence not only in terms of academic standards but also in terms of service to and with the people.

Among the various educational needs that have been identified are the needs of church educators, church musicians, and church secretaries as well as lay leaders among racial-ethnic communities and the aging. Relatively few from these groups will ever be able to go to a seminary; certainly few will go to San Anselmo. What they need is not "continuing education" but foundational theological formation, because they play as important roles as pastors in leading their congregations.

The original vision of the extension centers should not be forgotten, though current realities have led to their demise. At stake is not only contact with people of all kinds at the base of church and society but the potential for converting the Seminary itself along with the church and the society. The drift of U.S. culture toward elitism and professionalism is very strong, and the spiritual-theological drift of our church toward privatism is likewise very strong today. But some have looked to SFTS to go against the stream, even perhaps against the "bottom line."

In *Pedagogies for the Non-Poor* Paulo Freire reflects on the challenge of education for transformation. "This task involves options, alternatives. They are political options and not pedagogical options. It involves dreams, and they are political dreams, not pedagogical dreams. And the options have to do either with the preservation of what is or the transformation of what is. And the so-called non-poor don't necessarily have the dream of changing, of being transformed. These people do not necessarily want to change, but there are some who do....Education involves power; that's one basic thing. And there is the question of ideology, the ideology of power which seeks to reproduce and emphasize the interests of the dominant class, as well as the ideology understood as a possible confrontation with the dominant interests."

