

Comments – CPE Mini Study

- * We are going to put forth a change to Presbytery policy to require CPE.
- * Des Moines CPM does not require CPE of all Candidates, but we do strongly encourage it. And, we are flexible on how a candidate gets that experience we are happy to have folk in great programs, even if they are not certified by the National Association. Finley Hospital in Dubuque has a great program but it's not certified. We are also willing to consider other settings besides hospitals. One recent candidate did hospice volunteer work which we welcomed. Hope this helps your survey! Peace, Dave Ewing
- * Because of the intensive level of personal examination required in CPE, our CPM feels that the experience provides candidates with important insights into themselves and their responses in crisis situations. At the same time, though, we are open to negotiating with our candidates (as noted in the response above) in cases where the necessary arrangements for taking CPE might pose a counterproductive level of hardship. Also, in cases where a candidate may have trouble affording CPE tuition, we try and underwrite at least a portion of it. Our Presbytery policy allows exceptions to taking CPE, and authorizes the CPM to work out these situations on an individual basis.
- * It remains common that many of our candidates express a preference for not having CPE a requirement. Almost all of those that complete CPE express appreciation for having the experience.
- * Thank you for requesting our feedback.
- * CPE is not a substitute for pastoral or career counseling. CPE is a good tool, but a bad master –it is not an indication of ministerial success, but does help candidates learn more about themselves, ministry and real life. In my experience candidates are used to life within the four walls of a meeting house, but unfamiliar with ministry elsewhere. CPE is a huge help. We are up front about the requirement so that inquirers and candidates are able to work with their theological institutions in order to find placement in a CPE program.
- * I cannot count the number of people I have known who have resisted the CPE requirement who later came back and thanked us for insisting on it. It is nearly always a positive experience, and often life-changing.
- * We would be strongly opposed to changes in the Book of Order requiring it of all candidates.

* Our only students who seem to have difficulty finding a setting for CPE are in Pittsburgh area.

* It's important to understand that CPE prepares candidates for chaplaincy, but is necessarily transferable to parish ministry ("apples and oranges").

* We find that few of our inquirers/candidates have had a sufficient amount of well-rounded, diverse pastoral experience. For this reason, we have emphasized in our first meeting that our responsibility as a CPM is to assure that they are prepared to serve the breadth and depth of our church when they complete seminary – and part of that is doing a CPE. We have just begun this practice out of concern that our students have a wider variety of practical experience that makes them ready to serve.

* We do occasionally have problems with placements of students going to a non-Presbyterian Seminary but we remain firm in our rule that you must fulfill the requirement and they eventually find a placement. It's tough on a student but the parish is tough on a pastor.

* In some cases it depends upon the particular person. Our committee acknowledges that once in awhile we have a candidate who really needs to take CPE for his or her own benefit, and in that case we would require it. Others have a natural pastoral sense about them of a kind which would be gained in CPE.

* Almost all of our students take CPE or a similar chaplaincy. We have never had a student tell us afterwards that it wasn't worth their time. There isn't a CPE program near Dubuque and that has been hard, but we have tried to work things out for those students.

* It is a lot of trouble, it takes a lot of time, and it often gets to be very expensive, yet every candidate has expressed satisfaction with the experience. I recommend it to other presbyteries.

* We are fortunate to have the University of Arkansas Medical School here in Little Rock with a full blown Chaplaincy/CPE program - even one teaching chaplain who is a Presbyterian Clergy.

* As far as finding the opportunities for CPE programs, I believe that is the student's responsibility, in conjunction with the appropriate office at their seminary. I don't think our CPM would assume this responsibility.

I've been on the CPM for 5 years now and we haven't had a single student do CPE.

Maybe this is something we need to discuss.

* At the Synod of South Atlantic consultation for COM and CPM, we learned that about half of the presbyteries require CPE and the other half strongly encourage it, which is where we are. We will be interested in the results of your survey.

* As a pastor who had much to learn and many heavy bags to let go of, I can firmly say that I would not have survived ministry if CPE had not been a part of my preparation process. I have been ordained now for 14 years.

* Monmouth Presbytery feels this is essential as part of pastoral formation. All of our pastors on the CPM went through CPE and found it to be highly of value to them in a continuing way in parish ministry. We feel this is a key formative process. It is required as part of our process with students along with field education in a congregational setting. We do not allow one to substitute for the other.

* The value of the experience depends in large part upon the insight and skills of the leader... and sometimes on the quality of the group. This can feel like a hit-or-miss moment for some students.

We're really struggling with the fact that UDTs students don't have access to an accredited CPE site in Dubuque. This means they have to travel to LaCrosse, WI, Rockford, IL, or Davenport, IA to get a program. If someone lives in Dubuque, that is a lot of travel time! And leaves the family without a car in some cases!

* Most of our students have felt glad they took it even if they weren't initially enthusiastic.

* As a hospital chaplain myself, I am keenly aware of how the quality of programs varies tremendously. Furthermore, many pastors who had to take CPE in earlier years DID experience an abusive process...one which has been dramatically revised in the past 15 years or so. But it is hard to get these folks on board with our requirement. They "bad mouth" this requirement to candidates from their churches, making for tension all around. Some have fought to get candidates a waiver. We have only done this in one instance, for a candidate who already had a Masters in Counseling.

I am glad you are studying this! I would be curious to get the results!

* Our CPE felt his was a necessary part of a students preparation for ministry, especially for those who are going to serve in a congregation where the pastor does it all.

* We are working with Healthcare Chaplains Ministry Association which offers what we believe to be a more truly holistic Christian ministry. www.hcmachaplains.org to contract hours of mentoring for our people.

I think many well-meaning Presbyterians assume that classic historic Care of Souls is being practiced in hospital settings, that have actually bought into relativistic 'nice-ness' and then call it "ministry."

* Good idea..supervisors make all the difference.

* Speaking for myself, and not for the committee, CPE is a valuable part of the education/training of those preparing for ministry in the PCUSA.

* One thing we're doing as a CPM is revisiting the habit we've fallen into of requiring CPE of almost everyone (although we do not have a policy, and don't require it of all people). Because there are limited slots in this area, and many students are not able to move to another state for the summer, we are thinking with more care and intention re: what we ask people to do. We will still require CPE if we really think they need it, but for example, we're also encouraging some people to be engaged in Austin Seminary's "Pastoral Care in a Hospital Setting." It's not a clinical unit(it meets in Jan.term), nor is it as intense, but it does cover issues related to pastoral formation, etc. in a practical ministry setting. For some people, this is just what they need. So, our guiding question has changed FROM "Does their psychological evaluation recommend CPE?" And then, if it does, automatically requiring it. TO "What type (s) of experience does this person need to insure that he/she is as fully formed and as equipped as he/she can be for ministry?" That is a very different guiding question. It seems to work, for the most part, but we're still living into it.

* I have been on CPM for 3 years, and we have not had anyone take CPE. There is only one CPE program in the Pittsburgh area which is why we strongly recommend and not require. Most of our students are either married or second career thus limiting their ability to travel to a CPM site.

* We have found that students who attend Dubuque Seminary have a difficult time finding a certified CPE program. There is no such program in Dubuque. Most of our students there end up doing CPE in either Madison, WI or Des Moines, IA, or else back here in Omaha.

* Most of those who are most resistant to doing CPE come back grateful for having had the experience.

* Spending exorbitant amounts of time trying to help C/I's find opportunities. Cost has also become prohibitive in some areas for the students.

* We are currently reviewing our policy about CPE and will be very interested in your findings.

* We have learned over the years –from the reports of the candidates themselves—that CPE was the best thing that ever happened to them. This comment is always after the experience—which many of them try to have us waive when they first find out we REQUIRE it.

* It is very important to find a CPE program with a good supervisor. The programs are only as good as the supervisors, and not all supervisors/programs are created equal. A bad supervisory experience can be worse than not having CPE at all.

* At times, the lack of a sufficient stipend can put undue strain on student, session, and presbytery finances.

* We encourage our inquirers to get their CPE early in the process; hopefully during or after the first year of seminary.

* We happen to have access for our folks at Westchester Medical Center's program, which is excellent.

* Baltimore Presbytery currently does not require CPE. However, we have been exploring it, and I was actually going to call you to find out how widespread the practice is. I would be very interested in seeing the results from your survey.

* We have reviewed our policy and concluded that we will continue to require CPE of all Candidates.