

CHAFER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
White Paper

INEXPENSIVE GRADUATE-LEVEL SEMINARY EDUCATION
RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE

THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION OF BIBLE-BASED MINISTRIES

- A spiritually declining and increasingly hostile culture ...
- Theological chaos spreading into once solid Bible-centered schools and seminaries ...
- Bible-believing pastors' concerns about finding qualified men to mentor as their successors as well as equipping people in their flock for various biblically centered ministries ...
- Student concerns about financing a long-distance move and expensive tuition for two to four years for a seminary degree ...

We at Chafer Theological Seminary (CTS) are well aware of these challenging frustrations that both pastors and students face today. Many Bible-believing churches have long been in the habit of “contracting out” to various seminaries the training of future pastors and staff. The results of depending upon this strategy have been mixed at best. The process of looking for good men to fill pulpits in local churches is typically very long and drawn out, and often disappointing with sometimes disastrous outcomes. One Bible church had to spend over two years interviewing nearly two-dozen seminary graduates before they could find one who would teach from the text more than once a week and present a clear gospel of grace!

Matters aren't that much better for the students. Those who are married with families have to figure out how to leave their job and move their family away from their home church base of support to a distant campus for three, four, or more years of education. All students seeking a master's degree in theology (ThM), married or not, must plan on typical seminary tuition fees today of \$45,000 to \$60,000. Then, if they take out student loans, they face the problem of trying to pay them off with the often meager salaries characteristic especially of their first years in ministry and sometimes well beyond those years.

Our focus at CTS historically has been to develop the next generation of leaders who know how to fix their eyes on God through His historically reliable Word and know how to teach others to do the same, just as our Lord did by enduring the cross, and considering His circumstances as nothing in comparison to the joy set before Him (Heb 12:1–2). To ensure that our focus meets these contemporary challenges head on, we have decided to adopt a new model of seminary support to the local church.

THE NEW CTS MODEL

We are now focused on developing future pastors and leaders in partnership with local churches rather than sending the students to an institution far away. Two primary reasons motivate this new model: 1) doctrinal fidelity; and 2) efficiency. The first reason, *doctrinal fidelity*, is to insure that the faculty teaches doctrine that is consistent with the seminary's doctrinal statement and the views held by participating churches. A recent example of the academic pressure on seminaries to conform to the world: the American Association for the Advancement of Science, because it is troubled by the persistent evangelical opposition to molecules-to-man evolution and man-caused global warming, applied for and received funding to create science-for-seminary courses.¹ Such situations aren't often publicized to the institution's conservative donor base and thus escape the notice of local church leadership.

The second reason, *efficiency*, is because by using on-line technology, we can provide quality training significantly below the \$45,000 to \$60,000 tuition fees for a traditional four-year ThM program and eliminate house & moving costs. The training will be under the management of the student's local church leadership. With this training-in-place the student can rely upon the pastor's support and can immediately apply CTS training in practical ministry in a familiar environment. Under this model the seminary-trained pastor and other church members who have completed courses equivalent to those of CTS can establish their own CTS-affiliated "learning center" inside their church!

In a very innovate way we'll be working alongside pastoral staffs as their church's graduate-level seminary training service. We think we have a safer and far less expensive solution that respects the biblical chain-of-command. Here are some ways it can work. For students who don't live near a church with a CTS Learning Center, CTS faculty will teach the courses on-line via various tools—email, teleconferences, DVDs with mp3 audio files and other supplementary files (e.g., Power Point files, pdf files of notes). Some will also include video files of lectures. When a student applies for a course, he or she will provide their pastor with a CTS-issued form explaining the relationship between the seminary, the student, and the pastor or his designate. Then with the pastor's completed form, the student will pay tuition and any associated course fees to the seminary. Throughout the course the pastor or his designate will have full access to all seminary-supplied materials for his perusal and inspection. He will be encouraged to help the student understand and apply the course work to his church's ministries. The pastor or his designate will receive course-end grade and comments from the CTS faculty member.

¹ See their program at www.scienceforseminaries.org. Of course. It is not about science in general—evangelical scientists, medical personnel and engineers have used scientific principles daily for many years. Instead, the program is to intently focus upon two controversial minor areas that necessarily require widespread public support for their funding.

In some courses it is anticipated that there will be a one-week get-together at the professor's own church location so that students can benefit from personal interaction and exposure to different styles of ministry.

As CTS-trained students successfully complete seminary courses, they can apply for adjunct CTS instructor status to administer such courses in their local church. Pastoral staff who have completed seminary-level courses equivalent to the CTS courses can also apply for adjunct CTS instructor or professor status. As a local church acquires such qualified personnel, it can establish a CTS Learning Center for these courses so, if desired, it can gradually build a virtual seminary within the church!

For students living in and around Albuquerque, some courses will be available at designated locations through CTS faculty residing in Albuquerque. For students living at some distance from a Bible-believing church, the seminary will attempt to work out a relationship with a pastor participating in the CTS program.

SUMMING UP THE NEW CTS SEMINARY MODEL:

Supporters of the seminary should understand the following:

- Graduate-level seminary training by CTS, as in the past, will be done by graduate-degreed faculty who in nearly all the courses have actual pastoral experience. The training will continue to focus on the necessary tools for personally mining the depths of God's inerrant, all-sufficient Word and for setting those truths against the world's unbelief.
- All student training will be local via on-line capabilities and under the watchful eye of the student's pastor or that of someone he designates. For some courses there may be an opportunity to interact for a few days on location with a ministry in the professor's own local church. For students living in or near Albuquerque some courses will be held at various church locations with resident local CTS faculty. Course completion records will be sent to the pastor or his designate.
- Because the students remain in their churches during the training, both they and their congregations benefit in a new way. The students benefit because they can integrate their studies with a realistic and familiar ministerial environment. And their families can continue unbroken fellowship with their close friends within the congregations. The congregations will quickly benefit from the advanced on-site training that their member receives. The local churches directly benefit by growing their own people in place.
- We want to assure our faithful supporters and donors that our new direction will neither compromise nor water-down our original and primary objective to train men in the fundamentals of Greek, Hebrew, and grace-oriented Biblical and Systematic Theology. CTS's five distinctive remain firmly in place.