

The Harvest Conference School of Ministry 2024 Annual Conference Report

Why The School of Ministry?

First and foremost, we highly encourage Ministerial Candidates that have the time, money, and opportunity to go to a reputable Theological Seminary, please go, there is no replacement for what you will gain there. There are also other means of taking courses, such as available online courses. So, why the School of Ministry? Most of our Ministerial Candidates are not in a position to be able to go away for three years to attend a Theological Seminary. Online education has its place, but it is impersonal and in order for it to be beneficial, the student must have a certain level of self-discipline and a select learning style. The School of Ministry courses are intensive, taught by not just people academically qualified to be instructors, but have also been active in Ministry. In the School of Ministry relationships are built between Ministerial Candidate peers and with the instructors. Relationships are invaluable, for as these relationships are forged familiarity occurs, but more importantly Ministry Resources are shared and potential Mentor relationships form with instructors, this happens at the School of Ministry. Ministry preparation apart from laity involvement is insufficient. We encourage all of our Churches to make their members aware that their laity are welcome and encouraged to attend any course that we offer. There is no downside to having laity participation, it provides greater perspective to the Ministerial Candidate and the Layperson, and there is no negative to having a more informed and connected congregation. Also, we never know when a calling to Ministry will be awakened or someone that has been silently denying a calling will surrender to the call, and what better place could that happen? This is why the School of Ministry.

The Last Year

Following behind two amazing people like Wayne & Becky Sawyer is both a blessing and an inspirational challenge. Pam and I have yet to meet anyone who knows them that does not love, admire, and respect them. They poured their heart into building the solid foundation of the School of Ministry. It is definitely a blessing and an inspiration to build upon such a firm foundation. The enemy definitely worked against us getting off to a good start, over 11 months I had two different health issues and had two surgeries within four months. Nevertheless, God blessed, and the year unfolded nicely. In the 2023 / 2024 term, we taught 11 courses and had 38 participants. Without a doubt, we saw God move in and through these sessions.

Moving Forward

From the time that someone becomes a Local Ministerial Candidate (LMC) it should take approximately three to four years to become a Consecrated Deacon (CD) or approximately four to five years to become Ordained as an Elder. In the Ordination Track, one should expect to spend approximately three years as a Conference Ministerial Candidate (CMC). We acknowledge that it is possible to check off the technical requirements boxes quicker than these approximate times, but experience and growth would be missing. In the School of Ministry, we do not view the process as mere boxes to be checked off a list. It is from this view of the process toward becoming a Consecrated Deacon or to Ordination that we have standardized our course offerings. We have standardized the course offerings so that every course that we teach will be taught twice in a three-and-a-half-year cycle. With a minimal amount of planning and a little discipline, our Ministerial Candidates can fully plan their coursework path as soon as they become an LMC. Because we have people already in the process, having already taken a number of courses, there may be the need to add an additional course to a session to accommodate their needs, but these are transition pains that we are prepared to remedy.

You can help us as we move forward. Routinely remind your congregations that laity are welcome and encouraged to take any course that we offer. Tell them about the Harvest Conference Website and the School of Ministry page connected to it. Contact us as soon as you have someone expressing interest in becoming an LMC, we can inform them about the process and guide them through it.

God Bless

Dean of the School of Ministry – Larry D Bailey Jr.