

Training In Ministry (TRIM)

A Program of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership

A PROSPECTUS

I. Why TRIM?

Ministry training in the Church of the Brethren has assumed a variety of forms across the years. In the days of the so-called free ministry (still the practice in a small number of congregations), the mode of training was basically that of apprenticeship. Those called to ministry took their place in an existing body of ministers in a congregation and learned to minister as they served alongside and under the tutelage of the elders. A more common mode of training in our own day, and a route of training recommended by Annual Conference, is attending four years of college and three years of seminary. Underlying this significant change in the mode of training is the shift from an unsalaried free ministry to a professional ministry.

A professional ministry with graduate level training remains central to the church's vision of ministry for the future. At the same time, we are increasingly aware of the need for other styles of ministry and ways of training for ministry. On the one hand, a growing number of congregations are finding it difficult, if not impossible, to provide compensation for a full-time professional. On the other hand, a growing number of persons who have ministry gifts to contribute to congregations such as these find it difficult, if not impossible, to become full-time students for seven years in order to pursue a graduate degree. Given this situation, how ought we respond?

One option is a program of training which (1) offers the same scope of training as the current model, but which (2) offers it in a more abbreviated and more flexible version, so that (3) the training can be completed closer to home and in as few as 3 to 4 years. Such an option exists in the program known as TRIM (short for TRaining In Ministry), a program authorized by Annual Conference. Like the recommended professional training route of college and seminary, TRIM consists of a combination of general education, theological studies, and practical training in ministry. It is a more *compact* program, however, and allows students to design their own package of standard courses and other learning experiences.

II. Who Are the Sponsors?

Four different agencies of the Church of the Brethren have joined together to co-sponsor TRIM. These partners in training include Bethany Theological Seminary, the Church of the Brethren General Board, the 23 districts of the Church of the Brethren, and the six Brethren colleges. Representatives from these agencies meet as a denominational Ministry Advisory Council to set policy for several special training programs, including TRIM. Direct funding for TRIM comes from the General Board and Bethany Theological Seminary, but all of the sponsoring agencies contribute services of one sort or another.

The Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, a partnership between Bethany and the General Board, serves as the administrative locus for a variety of ministry training programs, including TRIM. Both salaried and volunteer personnel make up the training staff for TRIM. A staff team implements the programs of the Brethren Academy. The Coordinator of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, oversees all work of the Academy which, in addition to TRIM, includes such programs as Education for a Shared Ministry (EFSM), Advanced Foundations of Church Leadership, Academy Certified Training Systems, church planting, and cross cultural ministry training. An Associate Coordinator of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership administrates the TRIM program and works with continuing education for pastors. An Administrative Secretary in the Academy Office provides office support and coordinates much of the administrative work involved in these various programs. The office of the Brethren Academy is located on the campus of Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Indiana. In addition, a network of district appointed TRIM coordinators over see the program in each district, providing guidance and support to students enrolled in many parts of the country. As in any ministry training program, District Executives, District :Ministry Commissions and local congregations also play a vital role in the lives of participants.

III. What Are the Goals?

TRIM is designed to address the needs of congregations for whom a full-time ministry with graduate level training is not feasible. Within that overarching goal, TRIM hopes to:

- (1) Contribute to the overall quality of ministerial education of persons not going to Seminary.
- (2) Assist district ministry commissions in responding to candidates for ministry who need a challenging but flexible model for training.
- (3) Integrate district-based ministry training efforts into a holistic, denominational program.
- (4) Provide a context for Brethren formation of ministers who come into the Church of the Brethren from other backgrounds.

- (5) Graduate up to twelve persons a year who will serve the church as pastoral leaders.

IV. Who Can Participate?

TRIM is open to persons serving in or preparing for pastoral ministry who:

- (1) Are committed to Jesus Christ and to faithful membership in the body of Christ.
- (2) Sense a call to set-apart ministry and are willing to test that call in training in ministry.
- (3) Exhibit gifts for ministry which a congregation and/or district have discerned and affirmed.
- (4) Are eager to grow and to pursue a disciplined course of study to facilitate that growth.
- (5) Need to fulfill the basic educational requirements for ordination or to upgrade previous training.
- (6) Seek the counsel and have the support of their district ministry commission.
- (7) Envision a ministry for which the type of training provided in TRIM is both appropriate and sufficient.
- (8) Exhibit loyalty to the Church of the Brethren and a desire to work collegially within the Brethren family.
- (9) Have a high school diploma or equivalent GED certification and the ability to do college-level work.

V. How Does One Enter?

Entry into TRIM is *through the district*. The steps by which this happens proceed as follows:

- (1) The Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership invites districts to propose new trainees for the upcoming orientation classes.
- (2) District executives, acting on behalf of ministry commissions, submit profiles on proposed trainees to the Brethren Academy office by the designated date.
- (3) The Associate Coordinator of the Brethren Academy reviews profiles of proposed trainees and provides applications to potential students.

- (4) District executives contact those approved for application and work with them in completing applications. Applications and entry fees are then forwarded to the Academy office.
- (5) The Brethren Academy reviews applications and admits qualified persons into TRIM, informing the student, the District Office, and the District TRIM Coordinator.
- (6) District coordinators consult with entering students to initially assess their training needs, to assist trainees where needed in applying to a college or to Bethany, and to lay the groundwork for a comprehensive training design.
- (7) All entering trainees take part in four days of orientation held at Bethany Theological Seminary.
- (8) Trainees and district coordinators, in consultation with denominational staff, will work together in completing a training design for each participant. This design, which is finally approved by the Academy staff, serves as a learning contract for the program of study. It can be adapted as that program takes shape, upon the recommendation of the district coordinator.

VI. What Does One Learn?

Participants in TRIM work in three basic subject areas. One of these is *general education*. Here the basic objective is to become more familiar with the broad areas of knowledge important for understanding ourselves and the world of which we are a part. Specific units of recommended study in this area include language and communication skills, computer skills, literature, the arts (including music), philosophy, religion, history, economics, psychology, sociology, and natural science.

The second subject area consists of *biblical and theological* studies. Here the basic objective is to become more familiar with the biblical foundations of the Christian faith and with the church's reflection on and response to the biblical message throughout its history. Specific units of recommended study in this area include Old Testament survey, New Testament survey, biblical interpretation, basic Christian beliefs, Christian ethics, spiritual formation, church history, and Brethren heritage and polity.

The third subject area is that of *ministry and ministry skills*. Here the basic objective is to become familiar with the nature and scope of the church's ministry, to be able to articulate how one's calling relates to that ministry, and to exhibit increased competency in the various skills for ministry. Specific units of recommended study in this area include the congregation as a context for ministry, the small membership congregation, preaching and worship, church administration, pastoral leadership, pastoral care and counseling, teaching and nurturing, evangelism and church growth, church music, cross cultural ministry, urban

ministry, youth work, communicating in the church, group dynamics study, sociological issues affecting ministry: economics, gender, race, age, etc.

For each of these subject areas, the program defines minimum levels of competency which candidates for graduation will be expected to demonstrate.

In addition to these three basic subject areas, each student is required to complete some **elective courses**. This requirement allows the student to focus in particular areas of preparation for ministry according to their needs and anticipated area of ministry.

VII. How and Where Does Training Occur?

As noted above, TRIM features a flexible design of training. For every trainee, however, there will be common elements of training. And these common elements include both *curricular units of study and auxiliary training experiences*.

The expectations and criteria for curricular study can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Every student will complete **30 curricular units** in the subject areas indicated above. A curricular unit is defined as a **3-hour semester course or a 4-hour quarter course**, at the college or seminary level or a package of learning experiences broadly equivalent to a 3-hour semester course (75-90 hours). In the TRIM program, these curricular units are known as CEQ's (Course Equivalent Units).
- (2) Of these 30 curricular units, at least 20 will be acquired through courses offered by an **accredited** college or seminary. In the TRIM program, accredited is defined as "accredited by the U.S. Department of Education." Up to 10 units may be acquired through course-equivalent experiences either sponsored or approved by the district, and under the supervision of the district coordinator. Examples of course-equivalent units include:
 - (a) a video instruction course and related projects;
 - (b) independent study, based on research and/or practice;
 - (c) a correspondence course and related assignments;
 - (d) a combination of workshops and other short-term events, with accompanying reports and reflection on experiences; and
 - (e) participation in a district-sponsored ministry training course.
- (3) To ensure adequate coverage of the three subject areas indicated above, the 30 curricular units in TRIM will include at least:
 - (a) 12 units in general education.
 - (b) 8 units in biblical and theological studies.
 - (c) 5 units in ministry and ministry skills.
 - (d) 5 elective units.

- (4) Where possible, college courses will be taken at one of the six colleges related to the Church of the Brethren, whether through residential study, commuting to classes, or extension work. Consult with individual Brethren colleges to discuss the tuition rate for TRIM students.
- (5) Every student in TRIM will participate in at least:
 - (a) one learning experience offered by a Brethren college,
 - (b) one regular Bethany class or another class taught by Bethany faculty,
 - (c) one Annual Conference and one District Conference, and
 - (d) one ecumenical and/or intercultural training experience.
- (6) Credit may be granted for units of study completed prior to participation in TRIM if **the trainee can provide acceptable certification for this work**. In such cases, the number of required curricular units is correspondingly reduced. Regardless of previous training, however, a student must complete at least five curricular units, and the auxiliary training experiences, in addition to Orientation in order to graduate from TRIM.

The expectations and criteria for auxiliary experiences can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Trainees will participate regularly in a ministry formation group providing opportunities for shared reflection on, evaluation of, and support in their faith journey, issues arising out of study, ministry experience, and other issues important to growth as persons and as leaders. Ministry formation groups may be constituted in one of several ways:
 - (a) District wide group of trainees, supervised by the district coordinator.
 - (b) A group of ministerial students on a college campus, supervised by the academic advisor.
 - (c) A local group of ministerial peers, where arrangements can be made for adequate supervision.
- (2) **Supervised Ministry Training:** Trainees will engage in a significant ministry experience under the supervision of the district coordinator or another qualified supervisor designated by the district. A minimum of 400 hours of work is required to complete this experience. Trainees will complete a contract that outlines the objectives and specific assignments related to this ministry experience. In some cases, this ministry experience may be correlated with units of independent study in ministry skills. This ministry experience may take shape in one of three ways:
 - (a) Pastoral ministry in a congregation one is serving on a regular basis throughout the program.

- (b) A summer pastorate or pastoral apprenticeship, along with occasional ministry assignments during the year preceding or following that summer.
- (c) A chaplain summer internship at a Brethren retirement Home, through the Association of Brethren Caregivers or other accredited CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) program.

Students will normally complete the TRIM program in 2-5 years. In special cases permission to extend a program of study an additional year will be granted by the Academy staff upon request of the student and recommendation by the District TRIM Coordinator. Such requests and recommendations will provide an adequate rationale for the extension.

In any given academic year, a student must complete a minimum of two curricular units (or one unit plus supervised ministry experience) to remain in good standing. If a student fails to fulfill this minimal objective, it will be necessary for the student to withdraw from the program. Any exceptions to this policy must be approved by the Academy staff.

VIII. What Does It Cost?

Like all educational ventures, TRIM calls for a substantial investment of resources. A significant part of these resources come from the agencies co-sponsoring TRIM, which contribute several hundred thousand dollars per year in direct funding and contributed services. The direct payment(s) a student makes to the Academy include a \$250.00 enrollment fee and a yearly \$100.00 participation fee (invoiced each January).

In addition, students themselves pay for courses and other units of study, and here costs will vary greatly. Among the factors affecting costs is whether the trainee is a full-time or part-time student. For full-time students, the cost per year will usually be higher than for part-time study spread out over a greater number of years. At the same time, full-time students are usually eligible for a greater amount of financial aid than part-time students, so that the total net cost could end up being less. Other factors affecting the cost of training include:

- (1) Whether training is acquired by residential study, commuting to classes, or by extension work.
- (2) Widely varying rates for tuition at different schools.
- (3) The amount of financial aid accessible to a student, which may include aid from the school one is attending, the district, one's congregation, and the program itself.

All participants in TRIM may receive financial aid from the program in the form of covenantal grants. While these grants do not have to be repaid, recipients commit themselves to future support of the sponsoring agencies through the ministries in which they engage and through their total stewardship of life and resources. TRIM graduates

who have received financial aid are encouraged to replenish scholarship monies, in order that future TRIM students may also obtain financial assistance. The amount of the grant for which a student is eligible is contingent on the curricular load the student is carrying. The maximum annual grant is \$1,000.00. Some additional scholarship funds are available through Bethany Seminary. All of the above scholarship funds awarded are to be used for tuition, fees and/or books only.

District coordinators work with each entering trainee to determine costs and funding alternatives to cover those costs.

IX. What Do Graduates Receive?

All graduates will receive denominational certification indicating completion of an approved program of ministry training. For those seeking ordination, this certification would normally fulfill the basic educational requirements for ordained ministers, which District Ministry Commissions review and approve.

Most graduates will also receive some kind of certification at the college level. This will vary from person to person, depending on the amount of college work completed, but most often will consist of a two-year associate degree or its equivalent. In some instances, students may be able to receive a degree or other certification from Bethany Seminary.

Whatever certification is granted, graduates will be recognized at an appropriate district event, usually District Conference, and at the annual Bethany luncheon at Annual Conference.

X. How Will We Know If It Works?

Evaluation of TRIM will consist primarily of internal evaluation, though provision is made for use of an outside consultant as well. Among the means by which evaluation will take place are the following:

- (1) Semi-annual meetings of the Ministry Advisory Council.
- (2) An annual report by the Academy staff presented both to the Council and to the boards of the sponsoring agencies.
- (3) Annual reports submitted to the Academy staff by the District Coordinators.
- (4) Annual reviews of the work of the staff of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, at which time position descriptions and standards of performance will be updated.
- (5) Annual review of the progress of trainees in each district by the district ministry commission.

- (6) Reports by the Ministry Advisory Council to Annual Conference, in which TRIM will be featured as a part of the larger program of the Council.
- (7) Evaluation forms completed by graduates and district coordinators at the time of graduation.

Through these various processes of reporting, discussion, and reflection, data will be gathered which allows for ongoing in-process refinement of the program.