

Vision as the Framework for Innovation

Bethel Seminary's vision statement reflects the core values that have always impelled our work. The vision statement reads:

The passion of Bethel Seminary is to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ among all people in culturally sensitive ways. As a Spirit-empowered, biblically grounded community of learning, Bethel strives to develop and equip whole and holy persons to serve and lead so that churches and ministry agencies can become all they are called to be and do all they are called to do in the world for the glory of God.

The first sentence of this vision ties Bethel Seminary's purpose to the mission that Jesus entrusted to His church in the Great Commission. Therefore we can say, "What matters to local churches and ministry agencies matters to Bethel Seminary."

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To gain clarity about what really matters, we have listened carefully to a spectrum of leaders from churches and ministry agencies. Feedback from major studies and focus groups (including alumni feedback) has been taken seriously. The combined populations represented in these groups include the insights of several thousand pastors and lay persons.

What are these godly Christian leaders saying about the nature of seminary education? Quite honestly, some of what we heard was hard to receive. But broad converging lines of analysis and evaluation about seminary education emerged from across North America and around the world. As we listened, we heard a massive and growing consensus that said:

Effective ministry demands solid biblical grounding; the highest qualities of character and integrity; and significant leadership skill.

When we assessed Bethel Seminary in light of these findings, we discovered that Bethel, like most seminaries, effectively educated to meet the first of these goals (biblical grounding), but too often fell short in the others (character formation and leadership skills). We set out to change how we did seminary in order to address what was missing in seminary education.

What has happened during this process of self-examination and change has refocused the energies of Bethel's faculty and administration. We have renewed our purpose to educate students in a holistic way for transformative leadership in God's church.

This means that the educational ethos—the corporate culture or spiritual climate of Bethel Seminary—is evolving on each campus. From top to bottom, Bethel is becoming an intentionally missional group of people who team together, straining every muscle and expending every energy to accomplish the vision to serve within churches and ministry agencies. Bethel is becoming, at all locations, a place where people increasingly understand the truth of the gospel, grasp the contexts of diverse cultures, grow toward personal holiness and wholeness, and gain the skill and passion to lead people to transforming encounters with the Lord whom that gospel declares.

The specific ways in which this mission and vision are expressed on each campus are spelled out in the sections of this catalog that are devoted to each campus. The faculty and administration

on all campuses are deeply committed to the mission Christ entrusted to His church as expressed in the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Due to size and cultural contexts, the specific emphases are nuanced somewhat differently on each campus. However, these differences occur in the context of ongoing, frequent communication among the faculties and administrations of all campuses.

That communication has been greatly enhanced through a compressed video linkage connecting San Diego, St. Paul, and Seminary of the East. Faculty and administration have frequent real-time dialogue about crucial matters such as interviewing and selecting candidates for faculty on all campuses, curriculum design and change, and crucial issues in student formation. A shared faculty retreat each fall greatly contributes to the closeness that the faculty feels though separated by thousands of miles. Finally, the distinctives of the faculty and administration on each campus serve as a catalyst to deepen our understanding and commitment to the mission and vision to which we feel called.

The History of the Seminary

Dr. John Alexis Edgren founded Bethel Theological Seminary in 1871 to respond to the need for an educated ministry among the Baptist churches being organized by Swedish immigrants. Except for a few years (1884-1888) when the seminary was first located for a year in St. Paul, Minnesota, and then in Stromsburg, Nebraska, all of its first half-century was spent as the Swedish Department of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago and its predecessor, the Baptist Union Theological Seminary.



In 1914, the churches of the [Baptist General Conference](#) assumed full support of the seminary, moving it again to St. Paul. There it was joined on one campus with Bethel Academy, a high school that opened its doors in Minneapolis in 1905. The new name of the combined schools was Bethel Academy and Seminary of the Swedish Baptist General Conference. During the next half-century, as the immigrant churches became completely Americanized, the educational standards of the seminary were progressively raised. A high school diploma as the entrance requirement to the seminary soon gave way to a junior college education, and finally to the baccalaureate degree that is the current academic prerequisite. The seminary now offers theological education in accordance with the standards laid down by the Association of Theological Schools.

The seminary's history reveals several distinctives that contribute to the Bethel spirit. Swedish pietism left its mark on the school. The current vision seeks to keep the curriculum Bible-centered, to emphasize the building of the spiritual life, and to embody a spirit of tolerance in areas of evangelical disagreement. At the core of the program is an unwavering loyalty to the Orthodox-Reformed formulations of the Christian faith.

A fire for evangelism and missions arose in the heart of the founder, Dr. Edgren, and has kindled in the lives of teachers and students throughout subsequent decades. Bethel's graduates have played a significant role in the advance of the Baptist General Conference.

God blessed the seminary with teachers of scholarly attainment, some of whom achieved fame in wide circles of influence. Men of former years, like Dr. Edgren, a philologist and biblical scholar, and Dr. Carl G. Lagergren, a theologian, laid a solid foundation on which well-trained scholars of the present continue to build.

Doctrinal Position

The Baptist General Conference is a small denomination compared to the major religious bodies. Consequently, the seminary has been able to maintain a close relationship with the churches throughout the years. A portion of the seminary student's education is underwritten by financial support from the Conference. The school is dependent upon the constituency for support in prayers and money. In turn, the seminary is committed to the ministries of the denomination.

The seminary is still mindful of its original purpose, as outlined by the founder: "The instruction will be so conducted that above all the spiritual life may gain strength, and secondly that knowledge may be gained and understanding developed." Dr. Edgren amplified this principle by stating its intended result in the life of the graduate to: "Go forth in the Master's service with an increased faith and a deeper insight in the Christian life, and thus be the better prepared by example and teaching to lead others."

Since the inception of Bethel Seminary, theological studies at the school have been set within the framework of historical evangelical theology, such as the reliability of Scriptures as the authority for Christian living and church order; the depravity of humanity, necessitating the divine redemption through personal regeneration; the virgin-born Christ as the incarnate Redeemer; the vicariously atoning death of Jesus Christ; the historicity of the resurrection; and the certainty of the return of Christ.

Theological education at Bethel has never been static. Today, as in the past, the theological position of the seminary combines the continuing foundational truths of evangelicalism with the best insights of contemporary thought. While Bethel, true to its heritage, preserves its own distinctive theology, there is healthy interaction of faculty and students with the larger ecumenical world of theological discussion.

While employed at Bethel, resident and adjunct faculty are encouraged to share their personal convictions when teaching essentials of the Christian faith, and are expected to affirm and agree with our Affirmation of Faith as described below.

The Word of God. We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

The Trinity. We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons, that these are equal in every divine perfection, and they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption.

God the Father. We believe in God, the Father, an infinite, personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power and love. We believe that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all that come to him through Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ. We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles and teachings. We believe in His substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for His people, and personal visible return to earth.

The Holy Spirit. We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify, and empower all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Christ, and that He is an abiding helper, teacher and guide.

Regeneration. We believe that all men are sinners by nature and by choice and are, therefore, under condemnation. We believe that those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior are regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

The Church. We believe in the universal church, a living spiritual body of which Christ is the head and all regenerated persons are members. We believe in the local church, consisting of a company of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible confession of faith, and associated for worship, work and fellowship. We believe that God has laid upon the members of the local church the primary task of giving the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world.

Christian Conduct. We believe that a Christian should live for the glory of God and the well-being of his fellowman; that his conduct should be blameless before the world; that he should be a faithful steward of his possessions; and that he should seek to realize for himself and others the full stature of maturity in Christ.

The Ordinances. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has committed two ordinances to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water into the name of the triune God. We believe that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ for commemoration of His death. We believe that these two ordinances should be observed and administered until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Religious Liberty. We believe that every human being has direct relations with God, and is responsible to God alone in all matters of faith; that each church is independent and must be free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority; that therefore Church and State must be kept separate as having different functions, each fulfilling its duties free from dictation or patronage of the other.

Church Cooperation. We believe that local churches can best promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with one another in a denominational organization. Such an organization, whether regional or district conference, exists and functions by the will of the churches. Cooperation in a conference is voluntary and may be terminated at any time. Churches may likewise cooperate with interdenominational fellowships on an independent voluntary basis.

The Last Things. We believe in the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth and the establishment of His kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal felicity of the righteous, and the endless suffering of the wicked.

Adopted by the Baptist General Conference in 1951 and reaffirmed in 1987 as part of a major revision of Constitution and Bylaws.

Program History

The Doctor of Ministry degree is approximately four decades old. The University of Chicago and the School of Theology at Claremont introduced a professional doctorate in ministry in the early 1960s. Those schools believed the professional B.D. degree (now the M.Div. degree) did not adequately represent the extent or quality of the post-graduate work which was being done in preparation for ministry. A few other institutions followed the lead of Claremont and Chicago by adding a fourth year to the B.D. program and by re-titling the degree a Doctor of Ministry. Other institutions began discussing the possibility of having a D.Min. degree as a second degree following the B.D. or the M.Div.

The accrediting agency for seminaries, the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, conducted regional consultations concerning the D.Min. in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, resulting in the adoption of new degree titles and standards. The D.Min. is the second or terminal professional degree; a truly professional D.Min. degree will be based upon the candidate's practice of ministry. Thus, the "in-ministry" model has come to dominate D.Min. theological education. The D.Min. has been a rapidly growing degree program. In 1970, only three schools offered the degree. Today there are approximately 75 seminaries that offer the D.Min. with over 1500 persons entering the programs each year.

In the summer of 1972, the Association of Theological Schools met in St. Paul on the campus of Macalaster College. At that time, the degree standards for the D.Min. and other degrees were adopted. This gave impetus to further thought in the Consortium regarding a joint D.Min. program, with the result that a task force was appointed in the spring of 1973, charged with the responsibility of designing a degree program and recommending it to the Consortium. The task force met weekly throughout 1973, and in the fall of that year proposed an in-ministry D.Min. program to the Consortium. The Consortium and the individual schools, with the exception of Bethel Seminary, approved the degree program and recommended its implementation in the summer of 1974.

Leaders of the Baptist General Conference and members of the Board of Regents of Bethel College and Seminary decided to maintain a distinctive program at Bethel Seminary for the Doctor of Ministry degree. In March of 1974 the program leading to the Doctor of Ministry degree was approved. In November of 1975, Bethel Seminary was visited by an accrediting team from the Association of Theological Schools and was granted preliminary accreditation for the D.Min. program. Final review and approval of that accreditation took place during the 1980-81 school year. Originally, an enrollment limit of 40-50 students was placed on the Doctor of Ministry program at Bethel. In the spring of 1983, the Board of Regents approved a five-year expansion program for the degree, opening up possibilities for increased specialization and for the extension work at Bethel's San Diego campus and other settings.

In 1988, a revised program was introduced, a program offering three major tracks: Generalist in Parish Ministry, Specialist in Theological Reflection, and Specialist in Church Leadership with an emphasis in either Evangelism/Church Growth or Discipleship/Adult Education. Students in the program worked with a mentor in a colleague group of up to 12 people. This program was approved by the Board of Regents, with the first colleague groups beginning the summer of 1989. In 1990 a fourth track was approved by the Board of Regents, and the Specialist in Military Chaplaincy began its first colleague group that summer. In the fall of 1992, the name of the Generalist in Parish Ministry track was changed to Specialist in Parish Ministry.

In 1995, the degree program was reduced to two primary tracks: Church Leadership and Marriage and Family Studies. In the Church Leadership track, six concentrations were established including organizational systems, evangelism/discipleship, faith communication, town and country studies, pastoral care and spiritual formation. All persons would take three required courses in common and focus on one concentration for their degree. Opportunity would also be available for persons to complete the program without choosing a concentration. Collegiality would be created within concentrations. Continual evaluation would be conducted to establish other concentrations as needed. Students in the Church Leadership track could take course work on either the St. Paul or San Diego campus. In 1997, the Military Chaplaincy concentration was added to the Church Leadership track.

In the Marriage and Family Studies track, students would complete 10 required courses, an integrative seminar, and an integrative paper. Students would take courses on the St. Paul campus in July and January and complete the program in three years. An opportunity to apply to a licensure option upon completing the program would be offered. In 1997, the Marriage and Family Studies track was revised to reflect the structure of the Church Leadership track. Students would come to the St. Paul campus once a year in July. Students would complete six required courses, the Research Design and Evaluation course, and a thesis project report. The revised program would be completed in four years. The opportunity to apply to a licensure option upon completing the program remained.

In 1999, the program was realigned into two tracks: Church Leadership and Congregation & Family Care. Concentrations were divided between the two tracks. Program structure between the two tracks would be similar.

In 2005, the program was again retooled to add two new delivery systems in a cohort model: Emerging Leaders and Leading from the Inside Out. The Emerging Leaders has cohorts offered primarily in St. Paul. Leading from the Inside Out has cohorts in San Diego and Seminary of the East. The cohort delivery system is continuously expanding to offer more options in relevant areas of study in multiple locations.

Presently, the Doctor of Ministry Program has two primary delivery systems: the Self-Directed Program and the Cohort-Based Program (formerly Emerging Leaders). The Self-Directed Program has two tracks: Church Leadership and Congregation & Family Care. Each of these tracks has three concentration options. The Church Leadership track has concentrations available in Organizational Systems, Evangelism & Discipleship, and Faith Communication. The Congregation & Family Care track has concentrations available in Spiritual Formation, Pastoral Care, and Marriage & Family Studies.

The Cohort-Based Program offers tracks in innovative ministry fields. Current cohort tracks include Servant Leadership for Team and Organizational Effectiveness, Global and Contextual Leadership, Organic Leadership Development, Leading from the Inside Out, and Community Leadership and Ministry Development.

Unique Features

Several features make this program unique including collegial support, current technology, academic excellence, and ministry application.

- ***Collegial Support***

Bethel's program emphasizes the relational dimension of learning through colleague groups, cohorts, and thesis advisor relationships. Clusters of students with like concentrations and ministry interests interact with and support one another through the duration of the program.

- ***Current Technology***
Students are required to use a computer to participate in the D.Min. program because of enhanced capability for research and communication between program personnel, instructors, thesis advisors, and students.
- ***Academic Excellence***
Each student will receive instruction from Bethel faculty members and highly skilled ministry practitioners who have earned doctoral degrees. Students will be stimulated to consider new ideas and ways of approaching ministry as a result of interacting with our excellent faculty and thesis advisors.
- ***Ministry Application***
Employing an approach that integrates reflection and practice, Bethel's program places learning and growth in the context of ministry. Participants consistently draw upon their studies as they design and implement their ministry projects. The program structure requires students to remain in active ministry while they pursue their education.

Organizational Personnel

Program Director

The director is responsible for the administration and supervision of the Doctor of Ministry program in its entirety. The director recruits, interviews, selects and contracts all instructors and thesis advisors for the program. Although the instructor develops syllabi, the director defines topics, course descriptions, structure and schedules.

Phone: 651.635.8706
Fax: 651.638.6002

Program Coordinator

The program coordinator is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the program. The program coordinator is also the program advisor for all students to help students with course scheduling as well as with other program details.

Phone: 651.638.6894
Fax: 651.638.6002
E-mail: dmin@bethel.edu

Faculty Coordinator

The faculty coordinator is responsible for maintaining personnel files for faculty and issuing contracts, and assists the program coordinator with items related to finances, evaluations, reporting, and accreditation standards.

Phone: 651.638.6168
Fax: 651.638.6002

Institutional Support

Business Office

The accounts receivable office manages all of the student accounts at Bethel University. For any questions regarding tuition and billings, contact this office. This office also handles military tuition assistance and veterans assistance.

Phone: 651.635.6208

Fax: 651.635.8855

Financial Aid Office

To apply for limited available scholarships contact the Financial Aid office for an application. There are also limited private or alternative loans available to students who qualify.

Phone: 651.638.6241

Fax: 651.635.1491

Library Resources

To speak to a Resource Librarian about research or resources available to you as a Doctor of Ministry student, contact the Bethel Seminary St. Paul or San Diego Libraries. There are also sample D.Min. projects available on the third floor of the St. Paul library for on-campus use.

St. Paul Phone: 651.638.6184

San Diego Phone: 619.582.8188 or 800.238.4352

Registrar's Office

To request a transcript (official or unofficial), or to check on your registration status you can contact the Registrar's Office.

Phone: 651.638.6882

Fax: 651.635.8581

Technology Assistance

For assistance with any form of technology or the Moodle online delivery system, contact ITS (Institutional Technology Support).

Phone: 651.638.6500 (option 2 for students)

Bethel University toll-free number

Use this number toll-free to reach any of the departments or offices at Bethel University.

Phone: 800.255.8706