March 31, 2020

Dear Perkins Summer 2020 Course of Study School Students and Prospective Students,

I pray that each of you is well and safe.

I want to inform you about plans for summer Course of Study School. Following a video conference that included every director of Regional Course of Study schools and the staff of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), I can share with you the following decisions that were made yesterday.

The GBHEM staff recommended that COS schools not hold classes on their campuses in June and July. Indeed, every school had already made the decision by yesterday not to have classes on their campuses in June and July.

To ensure the safety and health of our students, faculty, and staff, Perkins COSS will provide its summer courses completely online this year.

GBHEM has granted schools permission to reformat their courses so they are fully online this summer, with some caveats. One condition is that this is a one-time only occurrence of fully online courses provided by COS schools. Once the outbreak of COVID-19 has passed and public gatherings are safe, we will return to our normal manner of delivering COSS.

GBHEM staff is committed to ensuring that online courses are delivered at the highest level of quality possible. The staff determined that the following courses are not permitted to be taught online due to the unique nature of the subject matter: Worship and Sacraments, Preaching, Pastoral Care, and Ethics. Therefore, we are unable to offer these four courses this summer. We will offer these four courses in a hybrid/weekend format during the fall 2020 and spring 2021 semesters.

Because the staff of GBHEM has provided online courses for the last eight years, they are aware of the amount of time required to complete an online course. GBHEM has mandated that students may take only one online course per session this summer.

If you have registered for two courses in any summer session, please revise your registration online so that it indicates you have registered for only one course each session. You may contact Melissa Hernandez Probus, Perkins COSS assistant director, if you need assistance with this.

This decision begs the question about completion of the curriculum. Students have the entire year (June 2020-May 2021) to fulfill their annual COS requirements. Perkins COSS will offer courses this fall and next spring to help full-time local pastors fulfill their requirement of completing four courses annually.

GBHEM has sent a communication to all conference Boards of Ordained Ministry recommending that they be flexible and lenient this year on the requirement for full-time local...
pastors to complete four courses. Each conference BOM has the authority to decide on this matter, so please check with your BOM about this.

Moving to a fully online summer COSS brings with it many questions. For that reason, I am including a FAQ (frequently asked questions) document along with this letter.

Because we are living in a period of much uncertainty and fluidity, there may be other changes that we cannot anticipate at this time. Please know that all the Perkins COSS staff is working hard to provide Course of Study in the best and safest manner possible. Adjustment and flexibility are required in this challenging time.

I pray for your health, wellbeing, and strength as each of you provide the leadership your congregation needs to fulfill the mission of the church.

Peace,

Rev. Paul Barton, Ph.D.
Director, The Hispanic/Latin® Ministries Program;
Director, Perkins Regional Course of Study School