

May 15, 2007

**A REPORT TO RELIGIOUS JUDICATORIES AND SEMINARIES ON THE  
CURRENT STRIFE IN THE CLINICAL PASTORAL FIELD**

We write on behalf of the Executive Committee of the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy (CPSP) to inform you of the current struggle between CPSP and the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) and to request your assistance and consultation.

It has become clear in the past year that the ACPE has shifted its position vis-à-vis the CPSP from one of rigorous competition to one of a vicious campaign to discredit CPSP altogether.

Our first thought was to counter this new campaign with a laundry list of ACPE shortcomings and failures. We are quite capable of this. Such a response would escalate the conflict far beyond what is now taking place. The thought of two religious groups fighting each other for the right to do the same kind of work frankly is unacceptable. We imagine what would be gained, for example, were the Methodists to launch a campaign to discredit the Presbyterians, and the latter responding in kind. The end result would be a disgrace to both parties, no matter who got the upper hand.

CPSP certified chaplains, pastoral counselors, and pastoral supervisors currently serve hundreds of institutions, and serve them creditably. No evidence suggests that CPSP certified persons are in any way shorting the communities they serve. The ACPE is bent on discrediting these committed and dedicated persons, their ministry, and their clinical training programs. This campaign by ACPE is not acceptable behavior from a pastoral care organization.

The standards followed by both the ACPE and CPSP are substantively identical, but we are different in our governance and our organizational structure. Presbyterians and Methodists are also different. This is the meaning of diversity. We believe that diversity is a good thing. We oppose the attempt by the ACPE to establish itself as a monopoly in clinical pastoral training, or CPE, as it is commonly known. Monopolies are troublesome creations. Religious monopolies are the most insidious kind. We hope that you will agree with us that this ACPE attempt to assert itself as a monopoly in clinical pastoral training is not good for anyone.

The extent of human suffering, brokenness, and estrangement even in our own country - not to mention the rest of the world - far surpasses the resources of all our pastoral care and counseling groups combined. Money spent attacking another pastoral organization is a disgrace and a repudiation of our vocation.

There are no perfect communities; nor are there any perfect certifying and accrediting organizations. CPSP has not found a perfect way to function in upholding quality. Neither has ACPE. We propose that history decide which organization might turn out in the long run to be the most fruitful in promoting a competent ministry to suffering or broken persons.

We urge you to join us in a call for ACPE to stop altogether its public denigration of CPSP. We ask you to come to our aid in helping us draw the line against the current attempt of the ACPE to promote itself as the only legitimate clinical pastoral training organization in the country. We urge you to oppose a monopoly in the clinical training and certifying of clergy and lay people. We want to meet with you personally to answer any questions you might have or address any concerns which may require further clarity. To this end please call upon us at your convenience.

Finally, we are embarrassed and chagrined that we even need to write this letter. The limited resources that we control ought to be dedicated fully, not in self-promotion or self-defense, but in reaching out to those in need, and to help create a more just and humane community.

For the Executive Committee of CPSP,

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