



CRANMER THEOLOGICAL HOUSE

UPDATE

*A Reformed Episcopal
School of Ministry*

www.cranmerhouse.org

September 2009

From the Dean's Desk

CTH Status Report



This fall, the students of Cranmer House are privileged to have Dr. Allen P. Ross teaching *Poetic Books: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon*. Dr. Ross, author of *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, is a world renowned conservative Hebrew scholar.

The course schedule is as follows: Sep 11-12, Oct 9-10, Nov 13-14.

Bishop Sutton will also be teaching Dogmatics 2: Doctrine of Man, Sin, and Salvation on Sep 18-19, Oct 2-3, and Nov 20-21.

Prayer Requests

Please consider scheduling one of our professors to visit your parish and present the needs of Cranmer House, as well as the opportunities for a Anglican education. Here are our current needs:

- A building in The Woodlands for the seminary
- New students, especially for the Deaconess Studies program
- Continued financial support, especially in light of the extended economic crisis.

Upcoming Ordinations

CTH students Lawrence Jones and Eric Harvey passed the deacon's exam and are scheduled for ordination on Oxford Martyr's Day during the DMA Synod.

The Very Rev Dr Curtis I. Crenshaw, Th.D. Ω

The Deaconess Studies Program and the Office of Deaconess

by Dss Teresa Johnson, M.A., M.A.R.

How did the Deaconess Studies program develop in the REC?

The Deaconess Studies program that will begin this fall at Cranmer House has been several years in the making. In 2002, the REC General Council approved a canon that allows for the setting apart of women of "devout character and aptitude" to serve as Deaconesses. The canon lists the requirement for a Deaconess to receive "adequate preparation for her work," but it was not until 2005, when the Bishops of the REC and APA approved the *Handbook for the Order of Deaconesses*, that any specific content was outlined.

The *Handbook* states that a Deaconess candidate must pass an examination covering the following areas: Holy Scripture, Church History, Missions, Doctrine, Moral Theology, and Deaconess Ministry.

Since then, the Deaconesses who have been Set Apart were trained in their parishes, usually through a program of reading and study directed by their Rectors. Our desire in developing this program was to offer standardized content in the required areas of study, to apply the same rigor in preparation for this office as is applied to the candidates for the diaconate, particularly since one of the duties of the Deaconess is to prepare candidates for Confirmation.



How does the CTH Deaconess Studies program prepare a woman for the office of Deaconess?

The content required in most of the areas listed in the *Handbook* was already covered by courses in the Cranmer House curriculum, so the first step in designing the program was to identify which courses would meet these requirements. When that was complete, two additional courses were designed to provide the rest of the content. The first one that will be offered is *Biblical Womanhood*, and the other is *The Office and Work of the Deaconess*, a name that is self-explanatory. The course entitled *Biblical Womanhood* was specifically requested by Bishop Sutton, due to the tremendous need for a corrective to the feminist teaching that has invaded the Church. Therefore, this course looks at womanhood in the context of the Creator, His creation, and the revelation of His will in Scripture. The course will explore such issues as what it means for a woman to bear the image of the Trinitarian God, what it means for men and women to share in the dominion mandate before and after the Fall, and what has been restored to both men and women through the work of Christ. Those who complete the course in *Biblical Womanhood* should be able to recognize the place of honor afforded women in Christ and thus develop a reasoned response to the worldview that is often called "Christian feminism."

Although the program of study was designed to prepare candidates for the Deaconess examination, the courses are not limited to Deaconess candidates. Women who are discerning a call to the office of Deaconess are encouraged to take the courses, as are women who are preparing for other areas of ministry, such as teaching Sunday School, coordinating a women's ministry, or rearing their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The best defense the Church has against the blight of heresy is an army of well-trained parents who are committed to maintaining a Biblical worldview in their homes.

What is the process for applying to the Deaconess Studies program?

The process for applying to the Deaconess Studies program begins with an application to Cranmer Theological House. To obtain the form, visit the

CTH website (www.cranmerhouse.org/application.html). The application does not require a commitment to the Deaconess Studies program, so those who are still discerning a call could take several courses that would apply toward the Master of Arts in Religion and then when candidacy is approved, notify the Dean that the courses are to be counted toward the Deaconess Studies program. Otherwise, the M.A.R. (Master of Arts in Religion) is open to all who complete the requirements. As is the case for Deacons, applicants should understand that the process for applying for candidacy as a Deaconess are completely separate from the seminary application process, and completion of the program does not guarantee acceptance as a Deaconess candidate. Information about the Deaconess candidacy process in the REC are available at www.recdss.org; all matters of Deaconess candidacy are managed through the diocese and not through the seminary.

How does a woman know she is called to the office of Deaconess?

Courses and candidacy aside, a more fundamental question of discerning a call to this office should be addressed. The first question that the Bishop asks a woman who is being set apart is, "Dearly beloved in the Lord, who are minded to take upon you this service in the Church of God, have you duly considered how weighty an undertaking this is, and are you prepared with a willing mind to take upon you this office?" While God makes His will known in a variety of ways, the discernment process of "due consideration" should begin with a self-examination that includes the following questions:

- What is my level of commitment to Christ, as expressed by my attendance at worship, my connection to the life of the Church, my prayer life, and my desire to study the Bible?
- How do I spend my time? Am I already involved in activities related to the ministry of a Deaconess, such as Altar Guild, works of mercy, teaching, and support of the work of the parish?
- Do I demonstrate Christian character, evidenced by a life that is increasing in the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness,

CRANMER HOUSE UPDATE: September 2009 ♦ A Reformed Episcopal School of Ministry

goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control?

- Am I willing to submit humbly to the order of the Church? One of the vows taken in the Setting Apart of Deaconesses is this: "Will you be obedient to those who are over you in the Lord, cheerfully and faithfully performing the service that shall be appointed to you as Deaconess in singleness of heart?"
- Do my fathers in Christ see a potential in me for this ministry?
- Do my peers express confidence in my ability to pursue this ministry?

A woman who is called to the office of Deaconess will say with the Psalmist, "One thing I have de-

sired of the LORD, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple" (Psalm 27:4). Yet her desire for the presence of the Lord is to be turned outward in service to the Church. Her awesome responsibility, as well as her great joy, is to support her spiritual fathers as they minister to the people of God. A Deaconess can be the official representative of the Church in situations that are made awkward by the presence of a man (such as the bedside of a new mother, counseling women on other matters), and her insight can often enable a priest to provide better care to the flock.

For more information about the seminary program, please email Dss Teresa at dsstrj@recdss.org. Ω

Updates on May Grads

Fr. Stephen Stults has also accepted a full-time teaching position in the 5th and 6th levels at the Med. Center Charter School. Fr. Stephen serves as Vicar of St. Barnabas REC in Bellville, TX.

On July 11, Fr. Christopher Woodall was ordained to the sacred order of priests at the Church of the Holy Communion, Dallas, TX.



On July 19, Bishop Grote ordained Jonathan Trebilco to the diaconate at St. Francis REC in The Woodlands, TX, the parish in which The Rev. Dcn. Trebilco now serves. The Rector of St. Francis is Dean Crenshaw.



For photos of the May 2009 graduation, visit www.cranmerhouse.org/graduation2009.htm