

**Divorced Applicant Admission Policy
Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary
St. Catharines, Ontario**

Purpose

“The saying is sure, if anyone aspires to the office of bishop he desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach” (I Tim. 3:1-2). Those words of Paul to a brother pastor set before us the high requirements of the office of the public ministry. In public, in private, and in personal life, the one who aspires to the office of pastor is called to a most high standard. It is therefore necessary for the seminaries of Lutheran Church–Canada conscientiously to address the issue of divorce among those aspiring to the office of the pastoral ministry, in order to ensure that its seminarians are above reproach and suitable for the highest office in the church.

Policy

Scriptural and Spiritual Factors

What God says about all marriages and His will for marriage is stated in simple straightforward language. His expectation is high (Matt. 19:5-6). The relationship of marriage is to be regarded as holy and should be given the highest priority in one’s personal and professional life. Special expectations are placed on the man who desires to be called to be a pastor in the Church of God. Therefore, with respect to an applicant who has been divorced (assuming evidence of repentance, the acceptance of forgiveness and a willingness to co-operate), criteria to be considered by the seminary’s Admission Committee include:

1. the Scriptural grounds for divorce (Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; I Cor. 7:10-15; Heb. 13:4);
2. the broader scope of Scriptural qualifications for holding the pastoral office especially as these impact on the Church and community (I Tim. 3:1-7; 4:11-16; II Tim. 4:2-5; Titus 1:6-9).

Personal Factors

Since the seminary has the responsibility to admit to the seminary only such candidates for the pastoral ministry programme as are suitable for seminary training, and ultimately for a call into the pastoral ministry, it is necessary to consider the following personal factors of the divorced applicant:

1. the causes for the dissolution of the marriage;
2. the degree to which the applicant has acted or is acting responsibly toward his former wife and family, specifically, whether adequate emotional and economic support is being given to his former wife and the children of the marriage.
3. whether there is evidence of growth and maturing, both on a personal and spiritual level;
4. the results of any pastoral or professional counselling;
5. the amount of time that has elapsed since the divorce was finalized, ordinarily not less than three years prior to application;
6. whether the applicant and/or former wife were Christians at the time of the marital difficulties and divorce;
7. the possibility or probability of offence being given such that the Gospel and the ministry would be discredited by admission of the applicant to the seminary.

Procedures

In order for a divorced applicant to be considered for admission to the pastoral ministry programme it will be necessary for him to:

1. satisfy the Admissions Committee that he understands and agrees with the Divorced Applicant Admission Policy;
2. submit a comprehensive and detailed account of the circumstances of his divorce, including the following information:
 - A. the date on which separation leading to the divorce occurred,
 - B. the party who filed for divorce,
 - C. the personal reason(s) for the divorce,
 - D. the number of years of marriage before the divorce,

- E. the date the divorce was legally finalized,
 - F. the legal justification for the divorce,
 - G. the settlement terms of the divorce decree,
 - H. the details concerning any children of the previous marriage (ages, custody, child support, visiting rights, etc.),
 - I. if the applicant has remarried, details concerning his remarriage:
 - (1) to whom?
 - (2) when?
 - (3) are there children from this marriage?
 - J. the name of the pastor and/or congregation by whom the divorce was adjudicated;
3. submit a statement of his understanding of divorce as it relates to the pastoral office;
 4. seek and supply a letter of endorsement from his current pastor and from former pastors who know him well;
 5. if the applicant is or will be a synodical college graduate, seek and supply an evaluation and recommendation from the president of the synodical college involved;
 6. request that the conclusions drawn from any pastoral or professional counselling be forwarded by the counsellor(s) to the Admissions Committee.

If the applicant's present wife has been divorced, she will be asked to submit in writing to the Admissions Committee a statement expressing her understanding of the Scriptural teaching regarding divorce.

In addition to the requirements listed above, it may be deemed necessary for the applicant to appear for a personal interview. This is left to the discretion of the Admissions Committee.

All facts, correspondence, and discussion will remain strictly confidential and will be used for admission purposes only. Fulfilment of the requirements listed above does not guarantee admission to the seminary.

Adopted by the Faculty
Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary
2 November 1988