

The Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary

2004-05 Annual Report

1. Nurturing ministers of tomorrow – 177 seminary students

Today's seminary students are tomorrow's church pastors and ministers. They will have to shoulder the heavy responsibilities of pastoring the church, missions and preaching. They deserve a joint effort from the seminary and churches investing resources in them and nurturing them with care and support.

This academic year we have admitted forty-seven students. Among these new students, five are enrolled in the Master of Theology program; twenty-one, in the Master of Divinity program; twelve, in the Bachelor of Arts in Pastoral Studies program; and five, in the Master of Pastoral Counseling program while four are presently non-classified. About half of these students come from Baptist churches. All of them have been vigorously screened. In fact, the interview board paid particular attention to their written testimonies, commitment and spiritual character. Everyone admitted was approved unanimously. Denying admission to a considerable number of applicants was a difficult decision, but the board members felt it necessary to do so according to God's leadership. The seminary now has a total enrolment of 177 students. Co-working with God, we are overjoyed to equip these students to become worthy Christian servants.



In recent years, the seminary has focused its academic affairs endeavor in the following areas:

• Strengthening students' spiritual and character formation –

Students' spiritual and character formation can be enhanced through the spiritual direction given by teachers and senior students, and through promoting students' individual self-understanding. At the beginning of each academic year, there is a special camp for spiritual formation. This camp offers students an opportunity to spend time in a quiet reflection consolidating their commitment to God before becoming immersed in their studies. Teachers also provide counseling to students in the monthly-held Spirituality Building Groups formed by students from all classes. Students are also encouraged to take the initiative to make appointment with teachers to talk about problems related to personal growth, challenges in their church practicum and their personal spiritual warfare. The Student Union has also implemented the Fellow-travellers Project through which senior students are paired up with new students in order to help newcomers adapt to seminary life. The Project also serves to deepen the relationship among students as they help one another.



The seminary also provides opportunities for students to gain a better understanding of themselves so as to help them overcome obstacles in their spiritual and character formation. Once the students are admitted, they need to take professional counseling and psychological tests. These tests help them understand more about their potential, aptitudes, and personal strengths and weaknesses. The seminary also invites specialists to deliver talks on social relationship and psychology to enhance students' self-understanding. Moreover, since the last academic year, the Chaplain has organized Spiritual Growth Groups to provide opportunities for students to deal with their problems in a positive way as they continue to mature.

• **Strengthening academic training for students –**

In September last year, the seminary invited Professor R. Alan Culpepper, a renowned New Testament scholar, to deliver the Belote Lectures. This lecture series provided students with the opportunity to have dialogue with him and heighten their appreciation of academic scholarship. We have also invited Professor J. Wentzel Vrede van Huyssteen, a world renowned theologian, to chair next year's Belote Lectures. Last year, Professor Huyssteen delivered the prestigious Gifford Lectures. We are confident he will provide much insight during the lectures at our seminary. Moreover, our teachers encourage students and accompany them to local theological meetings and to conferences where papers on theology were presented, such as the Fellowship for Theologians. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on improving students' ability to read and appreciate the classic works of renowned theologians. Besides providing students with feedback on their papers and assignments, our professors are eager to instruct students personally when needed.



• **Supporting professors engaging in academic studies –**

The seminary has continually emphasized the importance of professors engaging in academic studies. Support can take many forms: granting funds to our faculty to attend academic seminars and present papers in such meetings; providing our faculty members with student research assistants; making it possible for professors to take sabbatical leaves so as to engage in research studies. In addition to this support, the seminary provides a platform for professors to share their research studies, first in our academic forums held four times annually beginning last academic year. Then too, our faculty can publish articles in our biannual academic journal, the *Hill Road*. Furthermore, we will continue to publish books for our faculty, for example, the Church Ethics Series.

2. Graduates Entering their Ministries

In the academic year 2004-05, forty students graduated. Two are from the Master of Theology program; sixteen, from the Master of Divinity program; two, from the Master of Religious Education program; eight, from the Bachelors of Arts in Pastoral Studies program; six, from the Master in Pastoral Counseling program, and six, from the

Advanced Diploma in Cross-Cultural Studies program. They have all successfully completed a grueling process of academic training but have also experienced God's abundant grace. It is a joy to see the students complete their studies after being supported by the intercession and blessings of teachers, fellow students and the churches when they serve.



3. The Lay Theological Education Department

The Lay Theological Education Department is currently offering seventeen Certificates, Diploma, B.A. and Master's programs. Some of these programs emphasize theological training; others prepare students for future ministries. We are geared to meet many different needs of churches. This year we set up the Diploma Program in Christian Sports Ministry so that students who have completed the Certificate Program in the Christian Sports Ministry can further their study as they integrate biblical teaching with knowledge of a sports ministry. They can even become professional organizers of sports ministry.

Despite increasingly longer working hours in recent years, many believers with full-time jobs remain eager to receive training in theology in the evening. There is an average of 2,400 students enrolled each quarter in the Department's thirteen programs. The figures of program enrollment are encouraging since they indicate that there are many believers from many different churches with a deep longing for God and a heart of love for the church. In providing theological education for the lay Christians, the seminary and the churches work together as partners. To strengthen relationship with churches, we organize lay theological education programs and talks on special topics with churches from time to time. We hope that believers can have all-round training for ministry so that, together with pastors and ministers, they can shoulder the missions of the Church.



The Joint Programs Graduation Ceremony for 306 graduates was held on October 2, with 16 graduates from the Master of Christian Studies program (major in Christian Communications) and the Bachelor of Christian Studies program, and 290 graduates awarded diplomas or certificates. We trust that all of them will make excellent use of what they have learned to serve God and be strong witnesses for Him in both the church and their workplace.

4. The Distance Education Program

Through seven years' development, the Distance Education Program has had a total enrolment of over six hundred students. One hundred and sixty of these students have already graduated. There are now 397 students enrolled in our programs: 195 in the Certificate Program in New Testament Studies; 82, in the Certificate Program in Old Testament Studies; 75, in the Diploma Program in Christian Studies; 34, in the Diploma Program in Bible Studies; 8, in the Advanced Diploma Program in Christian Studies; 1, in the Advanced Diploma Program in Bible Studies; and 2 who are non-classified. Among our students, 335 are students in Hong Kong and 62 from overseas.

Last year, we introduced the New Testament online program. Ten courses are being offered in both traditional and simplified character versions. 22 students are enrolled in the courses so far. The "Spiritual Light Project," specially designed for visually-impaired believers, has started its second phase of the program in New Testament Studies. The Project has five students. At present, the "Onesimus Project," jointly run by the seminary and the Hong Kong Christian Kun Sun Association, has 29 students. Since last September, we have begun providing tuition fee subsidies to Christian prison inmates having financial difficulties in order that they have the opportunity to study.



The first graduation ceremony for Theological Education Program for Filipino Leaders (TEFL) set up and run by the seminary was held on June 26 with 23 graduates. Since its inauguration in early 2003, more than 150 students have enrolled and studied in this program. We hope they can contribute to new dynamics in church growth and evangelistic ministry in the Philippines when they return home.

5. The Applied Theological Education Center

The Applied Theological Education Center in Bute Street, Mongkok began its operation three years ago. Classrooms on 7/F are mainly used to conduct courses run by the Lay Theological Education Department and the Distance Education Program. The Pastoral Continuing Education Center is located on 8/F, while the Edna Wong Christian Worship and Arts Education Center is on 9/F.

The Pastoral Continuing Education Center offers short-term practical courses and research workshops to in-service pastors and ministers. These leaders are given the opportunity to be further equipped in a flexible way so that they can meet the challenges more effectively in contemporary ministry.



This year, in order to design courses more in line with ministers' needs, we have set up an Advisory Board. The Board provides the center with both advice related to ministerial needs and course-design enabling us to improve in our course contents. 43 courses and talks have been offered or organized this year. Participants numbered around 1,100. Workshops and courses on the Dynamic Preaching in the Pulpit Series, the Worship Renewal Series, the Pastoral Care Series, the Creative Learning Series, and the Pastoral Leadership Series were also held. Incidentally, the Pastoral Care Series was the one most well-received.

The Edna Wong Christian Workshop and Arts Education Center aims to instill in lay Christians a renewed understanding of worship based on the wisdom of the Bible, the teaching of theology and church history. Moreover, by receiving a diversified and integrative training in fine arts, students can broaden the vision and scope of their ministry. Their ability to apply fine arts to worship and other ministries of the Church is also enhanced. Courses offered in 2004-05 include the following: "Music and Worship," "Drama in Church," "Evangelism and Worship: A Preliminary Survey of Dance in the Church." All of these were comprehensive courses and workshops that emphasized on both theory and practice. We have also run day-time and evening courses on different subjects, including vocal music, electronic music, keyboard, dance, drama, movies, and local opera. The Certificate Program of Basic Choral Music Ministry can even be linked up with bachelor degree or diploma programs offered by the seminary's Lay Theological Education Department.

6. Library

August 2005 is a memorial month for the library. In this month, the total collection in the library, including audio-visual collection and books, periodicals and music scores kept at the Applied Theological Education Center, has exceeded 80,000. Such a large collection of the library is, of course, mainly the result of careful purchasing. But a fair amount of our collection has been donated from individual supporters of the seminary. Their generous donations have enabled the library to provide duplicate copies and even important books out of print for our readers with even increasing needs. Similar to last year, more than 22,000 books have been in circulation this year.

2005 is a year full of challenge for the library. With the commitment and support of donors, the extension work that had been planned for a long time has finally got underway in June. The extension project aims to provide support for the development of the post-graduate degrees and to provide more space for the increasing library collection, enabling further development of library services. The library staff has had to make adjustments to the changing working environment. Though the extension work has caused inconvenience to library users, we are confident that after its completion, the library can provide even better services to meet the needs of its users.



7. The Mission Dynamics and Resources Center

In late December last year, Rev. Lin Tak-kit, Honorary Director of the Mission Dynamics and Resources Center, led 15 students, alumni and staff members of the seminary on a short-term mission to the islands of Pulau Riau in Indonesia. During the eight-day trip, participants have experienced many different aspects of cross-cultural missions. They also shared their experience with the seminary community during the Chapel time.

The Chapels from March 23 to 25 were made a Mission Week. The theme was “Missions on the Silk Road.” The speaker was Dr. John Ong, President of Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary. We hope that through this gathering, teachers, students and ministers have come to a better understanding of missions on the Silk Road. The “Research Report on the Mainland Ministry of Small and Medium-sized Churches in Hong Kong” conducted by the seminary and the Missions Center of the Baptist Convention of Hong Kong has come to its final stage. The report is expected to be published in October or November.

Thanks to the Lord’s guidance, the eighth issue of our biannual newsletter, *The Missional Church* has been published. Since its first publication more than three years ago, we have received positive feedback from churches and individual brothers and sisters. The aim of this publication is to reflect and explore missions and to promote the establishment of missional churches. We hope that through the sharing of messages and news about missions, more churches can become mission-minded.



8. Publication

We publish our quarterly *HKBTS Newsletter* in both English and Chinese to share the latest developments of the seminary with local and overseas churches. Since 1998, we have also published *Hill Road* to share the latest scholarship in theological education with church pastors and ministers, and to build a bridge between the academic world and Chinese churches. *Hill Road* is published twice a year. Each issue has a theme. The needs of the Church are an important consideration in deciding upon the theme of each issue. For instance, in the December issue of last year and the June issue of this year, the themes have been “Ecclesiology” and “Spirituality and Pastoral Ministry” respectively. Our subscribers include local and overseas theological seminaries, individual seminary professors and students, churches, ministers and lay Christians.

With regard to publication of books, we released Dr. Samuel Y. C. Tang’s *On Church Pulpit -- Preaching: Its Theology, Literature, and Art* in March to celebrate his eightieth birthday. Our Dean, Dr. Joshua Cho’s *Narrative and Ethics: Interpreting Postliberal Narrative Theology* was also published in June. This is the first book of the Church Ethics Series. The publication of this series points to the importance of the Church’s involvement in Christian ethics. In the coming two years, we will publish three additional books in this series. They include: *Morality and Ethics* by Dr. Andres S. Tang, *Old Testament Ethics* by Dr. Wong Fook Kong and *New Testament Ethics* by Dr. Poling J. Sun.

