

August 16, 2014

Dear Local Pastors

who currently attend or have attended the Appalachian Local Pastors School (ALPS) or the Memphis/Tennessee/Holston COS Extension School and Graduates of ALPS or MTH COS programs:

Greetings in the name of Christ our Lord:

I hope this letter finds you well and experiencing God's love each day as you fulfill his call to ministry. I am writing you with some important news.

Posted on the ALPS website (www.alpsumc.org) is the Public Announcement just released regarding the merger of the ALPS and MTH Course of Study Extension Schools into one Extension School. The School remains one of the Extension Schools of Emory University Regional Course of Study School under the direction of Rev. Dr. Anne Burkholder. The public announcement provides the merger details.

Anne and the Taskforce representing both Schools have worked tirelessly to ensure the stability and legacy of the two extension schools while providing the merged school with new opportunities. Both ALPS and Memphis/Tennessee Holston Schools have a twenty plus year history of service to local pastors. We are grateful to the Schools' founders, Annual Conferences, District Superintendents, past Board Chairs, Board members, Directors, Registrars, faculty, GBHEM, and all others who have supported the development and operations of these Course of Study programs. Also, we are grateful for their support for the new School.

In addition, we are especially grateful for the wonderful Local Pastors who have attended courses at these two schools and for their continuing support and attendance of courses at the new Extension School which will continue in our various sites in Kentucky and Tennessee. It is wonderful to be a part of your ministry journey.

Last week, it was my joy to talk with the founders/early leaders of the two Extension Schools, Rev. Dr. Ed LeMaster and Rev. Dr. Brady Whitehead. Both of these tireless leaders expressed their affirmation for the success of the merged Course of Study School.

It was also my pleasure to talk with Rev. Randy Coy and Rev. Dan Taylor who chaired the Board of Managers for the newly merged Extension Schools, and with Rev. Farley Stuart ALPS Treasurer. Rev. Randy Coy has requested to end his term as ALPS Board Chairperson due to pressing fund raising obligations with the Kentucky United Methodist Home. Rev. Dan Taylor has served on both the ALPS and the MTH Boards of Managers.

With Task Force approval, Dan has agreed to serve as Chairperson of the merged school until the new Board of Managers meets in September/October 2014 and votes on officers. Farley expressed his pleasure for Dan's leadership role and pledged his willingness to support Dan. Also, I appreciate the on going support of the Directors and Registrars and chairs of the local pastors' fellowship of the Kentucky, Red Bird, Holston, Tennessee, and Memphis Annual Conference and the COS Treasurers for each Extension School.

There are many things that remain the same as we continue to provide quality theological education to local pastors in 2015. Both schools have excellent faculty who will continue to teach as you will observe on the 2015 schedules on the COS websites. Local pastors will retain easy access to COS courses through the same various course site locations (London, Union, Madisonville, Hiwassee and Martin Methodist Colleges. We will maintain the same COS websites and offer the same full schedule of courses, and local pastors may register through the same mailing addresses. We will maintain the same registrars/registration process and financial systems through Red Bird Missionary Conference for local pastors taking ALPS courses and the Tennessee Conference for students taking MTH courses and for reimbursement/payments to faculty, etc.

For 2016, the plan is to post one merged schedule of courses showing all the courses at each of the various course locations that are offered through the new extension school. We hope to improve our course rotation system to better meet the needs of local pastors. Prior to merger we were investigating an on line registration and payment system and will continue to explore these possibilities. We do plan to centralize some functions such as the use of one registration form and process and to develop a common database with local pastor registration and transcript information. Hopefully, this will make us even more efficient.

Important goals are to retain the quality of courses and faculty , communication with local pastors, meet GBHEM policy standards, and continue important aspects of both ALPS and MTH programs which local pastors have said are enjoyable and promote their educational and spiritual growth.

We have already made the first step in quality programming and meeting GBHEM Standards. The new COS Revised Curriculum will be in place beginning with courses offered in Kentucky and Tennessee in 2015. Our Registrars are already working together on the processes to record grades for the new curriculum and to explore ways to merge our databases and streamline registration, conference billing, and so forth, in ways that support our program goals to serve local pastors.

Realistically, we know that geographic access to COS courses remains essential. Thus during 2015, I will be working with the new Board of Managers, faculty from ALPS and MTH schools, and others to develop a plan for our course schedule rotation in Kentucky and Tennessee. The goal is to assist local pastors in completing the COS courses more in sequence within the new, COS Revised Curriculum (100s first and 500s last with any necessary order within the other course levels) and to help them complete all 20 courses in a timely manner.

Taking courses in order may be easier for new local pastors, who are just starting the Course of Study. We will still offer the courses that local pastors already in process of completing the COS program need, including for those pastors who are taking courses somewhat out of the recommended order. Taking some courses out of order is not completely avoidable for some local pastors. This is because some years they may not attend a course due to health, congregational, or other needs. Due to being bi-vocational, they most often access COS courses offered near their homes. Another factor affecting their sequence of course taking is they can only take the courses that are offered in a particular year. Also, we acknowledge that life happens for both local pastors as well as the faculty, and we consider their needs when we plan which courses to offer each year. However, our hope is that with the revised curriculum local pastors can progress through courses following the course sequence.

The 2015 Course Schedules for ALPS and MTH courses are posted on these websites (ALPS) www.alpsmc.org (MTH) www.cookevilledistrict.net or www.martinmethodist.edu (click church leadership and course of study. Local pastors may take courses from the ALPS or MTH course schedules . Below the course schedules that are posted on the website(s) is some important information related to registration and other items.

In addition, below the 2015 Course Schedules that are posted on the websites is the GBHEM grid for the Five Year Course of Study for the Revised Curriculum. Below the page with the grid is a COS Program Completion Checklist to assist local pastors with planning what courses to take in 2015 and beyond. This should help local pastors to avoid taking a course twice when they match up their courses taken in the current curriculum with the courses that they still need to take within the new Revised COS Curriculum. The GBHEM Course Exchange List on the website will also be helpful to local pastors. Please remember if you have already taken COS 113, you do not need to take COS 124.

It has been a wonderful opportunity to work with local pastors taking courses in the ALPS and the Memphis/Tennessee/Holston COS programs and with faculty from both schools. I am looking forward to continuing to serve local pastors with the faculty through providing COS courses and special opportunities

offered by the newly established Extension School. It is wonderful to know that although we will experience some changes for both programs that our future is blessed each day as we continue to answer God's call to serve and prepare local pastors who continue to meet the needs of His Church.

If you are a local pastor who has attended ALPS or MTH COS programs (some local pastors attend courses in both schools), please email me if you have any questions about the merger (bnye1@earthlink.net). If you are a graduate of ALPS or MTH COS programs and may be interested in **Alumni events**, please send me your email address and a paragraph about what kind of events that are of interest to you. Also, you can contact me for information about the Advanced COS program.

I look forward to seeing you in COS courses soon.

Grace and Peace,

Barbara

Dr. Barbara A. Nye, Director
ALPS & MTH Extension School