

Northeast Ohio School of Ministry

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

The Northeast Ohio School of Ministry (NEOSOM) is an educational program offered by the Eastern Ohio Association (EOA) and the Western Reserve Association (WRA) of the United Church of Christ as a means of helping lay leaders to expand their knowledge and skills. The program provides courses in a variety of areas which may lead to certification through completion of the program requirements.

The program also serves as a resource to the Discernment of Call Working Group of the Committee on Ministry for authorization of ministers, and is a ministry team of the two associations – EOA and WRA. Those pursuing authorized ministry do so through the Committee on Ministry in their association, utilizing the resources of the Northeast Ohio School of Ministry as directed by their Committee on Ministry. Certification by the Northeast Ohio School of Ministry is not an authorized form of ministry recognized by either association.

Who Can Enroll in the Program?

Anyone is welcome to take courses for personal enrichment, whether or not they are working toward certification. While realistically the program exists for the two associations, any person in any geographical area is welcome to take courses. The courses are designed to strengthen discipleship, broaden one's understanding of commitment, and/or enrich one's personal faith journey.

Only those interested in the certification track need to complete the application process. All others can just sign up for classes. For the certification track, any course taken outside this program needs to be approved by the Steering Committee of the Northeast Ohio School of Ministry.

Goal of the Program

The goal of the program is to strengthen the ministry of the Church of Jesus Christ by equipping those who serve in his name.

All who have been called to serve the church have great responsibility, those who serve as authorized ministers, as well as those who serve as lay ministers. This program offers education and enrichment, both spiritual and practical, for all who serve the church of Jesus Christ.

How might you use NEOSOM offerings?

The following suggestions are areas of service within the United Church of Christ where a person may be called according to his or her level of training and the needs of the church or association:

- Licensed ministry
- Preaching
- Liturgist in worship
- Leadership of committees and boards
- Workshop leader
- Director of Christian Education
- Training of church school teachers
- Teacher of children, youth, and adults
- Leading Bible studies
- Assisting with confirmation class leadership
- Advisor for youth groups
- Working in special after school programs
- Assisting with new member classes
- Doing training for caring ministry programs
- And many other ways depending on the needs of the local or wider church.

Personnel and Governance Policies for the Northeast Ohio School of Ministry

The **Steering Committee** is the governing body of the Northeast Ohio School of Ministry. Its responsibilities include: approving all courses, course proposals and faculty; interviewing and approving applicants for certification; approving re-certification; maintaining the curriculum cycle; and setting all policies and determining procedures for implementation and approval. It shall provide support for staff members responsible for the Northeast Ohio School of Ministry and adjudicate any matters of concern or conflict in the program, and perform other duties as needed by the program.

The Steering Committee shall consist of: The Dean (ex officio); two students currently enrolled in the Certification Track of the program – one from each association; two graduates of the program – one from each association; and one to three members-at-large.

The **Dean** of the Northeast Ohio School of Ministry is a member of the Associations Staff and serves as liaison to the Discernment of Call Working Groups of the Committees on Ministry from both associations. The Dean shall be responsible for ensuring the overall academic integrity of the Northeast Ohio School of Ministry. Such responsibilities shall include, but are not limited to: recruiting faculty; setting-up class schedules; maintaining communication with faculty; overseeing informational materials; observing classes; dealing with issues between faculty and students with the input of the Steering Committee. The Dean also collaborates with the Discernment of Call Working Group of each association in the formulation of plans of study for candidates for authorized ministry who have been referred to the program by their respective Working Group. The Dean shall be hired by the Associations and shall present a monthly report to the Associations.

The Office Manager of the Associations serves as **Support Staff** for the program, functioning as **Registrar and Administrator** of the Northeast Ohio School of Ministry. The Registrar shall oversee the registration

process; see to the disbursement of scholarships in conjunction with the Steering Committee; receive and record student grades; oversee payment of faculty; maintain faculty, student and class records; maintain the program's databases; and track the finances of the Northeast Ohio School of Ministry. The Registrar shall report to the Steering Committee on an as-needed basis.

Application process:

Those who wish to be received into the Certification Program of the Northeast Ohio School of Ministry will need to meet the following requirements:

- a. Be an active participant of a United Church of Christ or Disciples of Christ congregation;
- b. Make formal application of admission to the Steering Committee. The application form is located on the website of the Northeast Ohio School of Ministry Program, <http://www.eoawraucc.org/our-associations-at-work/lay-education-programs/>
- c. Two letters of recommendation are to accompany the application form. One of the letters is to be written by the minister of the local church where the applicant is an active participant.
- d. An interview will be scheduled with the Steering Committee prior to acceptance into the Certification Program.

Course requirements for Certification:

All participants are required to complete 14 courses in the "Certification Program." The courses are as follows:

1. Journey through Self Discovery (to be taken as soon as possible upon starting the Certification program)
2. Introduction to Biblical Studies
3. Old Testament I
4. Old Testament II
5. New Testament I
6. New Testament II
7. Introduction to Theology
8. Spiritual Disciplines
9. Leadership
10. Polity
11. Church History – Pre-Reformation
12. Church History – Post-Reformation
13. Worship Course
14. Personal Ethics

The Steering Committee, in conjunction with the instructor, reserve the right to cancel a course should there be insufficient enrollment.

Upon completion of these courses, a participant will be eligible for certification. A written summary and reflection of one's growth experience and an interview with the Steering Committee is required for the granting of this status.

Once certification is granted, it must be renewed annually by completing the online form (<http://www.eoawraucc.org/our-associations-at-work/partners-in-ministry/pim-application-for-re-certification/>). Taking one full course per year in the Northeast Ohio School of Ministry, or, with prior approval from the Steering Committee, its equivalent in another program, meets the requirement for renewal.

Course requirements for Accreditation

Some people will feel a calling to do further study, which, in some cases, may lead to accreditation. Accreditation is the portion of the Northeast Ohio School of Ministry that is more skill oriented and related to the particular sense of call that an individual has discerned. Field-based education and experience are a regular part of the accreditation process. For those who feel this calling, a discernment interview will be scheduled with the Steering Committee after a candidate has been granted the status of certification.

To meet the requirements of accreditation, an individual must complete the following:

1. Homiletics
2. Rites and Sacraments
3. Hymnody
4. Professional/Ministerial Ethics
5. Caring Ministry 1
6. Caring Ministry 2
7. Education in the Church
8. Stewardship
9. Evangelism
10. Church Administration
11. Workshop: "Called by God to what?"
12. Internship

In addition to these required courses for Certification and Accreditation, the program also offers elective courses in a number of areas, e.g., Teaching Ministry, Congregational Singing, Ignatian Spirituality.

Recognition

A local church can enhance its total program by using the abilities of persons who have completed the requirements for certification or accreditation. A service of recognition is recommended by expressing support to the Certified or Accredited lay person, acknowledging their efforts and their achievement. (A sample liturgy is available from the Associations)

Pending approval by both associations: The Western Reserve Association and Eastern Ohio Association will give recognition to all Certified and Accredited persons at the Annual Meeting and grant them privilege of voice and vote.

Convocation

Convocation is an annual gathering of the Northeast Ohio School of Ministry. Those attending are encouraged to bring guests. It gives everyone in the program an opportunity for enrichment, fellowship, worship, and the time to conduct the business of the program. It is also the time to recognize the newly certified and accredited students. Everyone in the program, certified or uncertified, is encouraged to attend the Annual convocation. No business or motion may be brought to the floor without prior approval from the Steering Committee. Request should be submitted in writing 30 days to the Steering Committee prior to the date of the meeting.

The Steering committee will appoint a sub-committee to plan the convocation and arrange for a speaker.

All participants working toward certification or accreditation or who have been accepted into the program may vote at the annual convocation.

Scholarship Assistance

Local churches are encouraged to help pay for the costs involved for their members who are a part of this program. A scholarship fund has been established to help defray the costs of the program. Please contact the chair of the Steering Committee if you would like to request funds. (Contributions to this fund are always welcome!). Applications for scholarship are made to the Chair of the Steering Committee, and scholarship decisions are made by the scholarship sub-committee (consisting of the Dean, the Chair, and a member of the Steering Committee).