



Institutional Membership: Mutuality at Its Best

When I joined the faculty of Ashland Theological Seminary in 2008, I was extremely pleased to discover that a number of my new colleagues were members of CBE and had avid interest in promoting its biblical, egalitarian vision. A number of us began to speculate about the possibility of a more unified and institutional witness to this common vision. Over a number of months that included fervent prayer on the part of many, and lively conversation in both formal and informal settings, the faculty arrived at a clear consensus. We embraced the idea of becoming an institutional member of CBE and took formal action to become the first seminary to do so, in 2009. This relationship has meant a lot to many people here at Ashland. Four aspects stand out in my mind.

Support. On a very basic level, we simply felt it was important to support CBE. The work in which CBE has been engaged now for many years continues to shape Jesus' followers around the world. We believe that this work is important, and it makes us happy to be able to support CBE with both our financial and personal resources. In these uncertain times, with economic pressures on individuals, churches, and institutions, we know that CBE needs our help. I was overwhelmed by the willingness of my colleagues to commit financial resources to this noble cause; even, if need be, to dig into their own pockets to do so.

Connection. One of the things I have appreciated most about CBE is the sense of connection with kindred spirits that it provides. Institutional membership, I believe, enhances this spirit of *koinonia*. Jesus calls us to justice as much as he calls us to salvation, and both require a vital connection with communities committed to Jesus' way. To connect with others in an effort to live in and for God's reign in the world builds community and binds us all the more closely to Christ.

Witness. Ashland Theological Seminary has had a longstanding commitment to women in ministry. Despite this

Ashland Seminary became the first seminary to join CBE, in 2009. Here faculty member Dr. Paul W. Chilcote describes what this partnership has meant to their institution.

historic commitment, however, all of us continue to encounter stereotypes and attitudes that mitigate the empowerment of all God's children. The simple fact that the seminary is an institutional member of CBE sends a signal to our students and the larger community about how we view women, in particular, in the life of our family. For a faculty person to be able to say, "This is where we stand together as a community," helps to establish a culture of equality and mutuality in our common life.

Partnership. Our membership in CBE as an institution has greatly enhanced our partnership. In order to celebrate our new relationship with CBE, we made the decision to focus our attention on the ministry of women throughout the year 2010. We devoted our Fall Lecture Series to the theme, "Breaking the Stained Glass Ceiling: Women in Ministry in the Church," inviting high profile church leaders and scholars to address this topic. CBE president, Dr. Mimi Haddad, preached in our chapel and provided a workshop for participants. The partnership with CBE enhanced this event beyond our wildest imaginations.

Support, connection, witness, and partnership are just four aspects of this relationship that we value and continue to nurture. We appreciate our partnership with CBE. A slight alteration of St. Paul's words of affection for the church at Philippi expresses our feeling quite well concerning CBE: "We thank our God every time we remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of our prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. We are confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:3-6). Perhaps our institutional membership gets us one step closer!

What if my institution, church, or organization joined CBE?

Discover the many benefits of organizational membership today!

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This emblem could be on your website! And, as a CBE member, we will place your logo on our site, for those looking for egalitarian organizations.

