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Department of Religious Education, College of the Pacific, 1920-1956

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Department of Religious Education
College of the Pacific
1920-1956

In order to evaluate the course offerings in the Department of Bible and religious education of the College of the Pacific a brief historical statement is called for, also a statement of the educational philosophy that has determined our activities and course offerings through the years.

History of Department

The department was established on the fall of 1920 just at the close of World War I. The decade from 1910 to 1920 has seen the installation of the so-called Gary Plan of Religious Education which made possible moral and religious instruction during the week-day out of which has grown the present released time religious instruction program enrolling approximately three million children. This movement inspired the educational forces of the churches no end. The previous decade produced the national religious education association who's motto was : "to inspire the educational forces of our country with the religious ideal; to inspire the religious forces of our country with the educational ideal."

The decade from 1920 to 1930 was the time of unbounded confidence on the educational procedure as applied to the work of the church. The Protestant church has been a preaching institution; henceforth teaching was to be emphasized. That was the decade of such men as George Herbert Betts and many others; men who saw visions and dreamed dreams.

Woodrow Wilson has been a great inspiration with his statement : " the Sunday school lesson of today is the code of morals of tomorrow," and by his recommending to new democracies arising from World War I that they follow the plan suggested by athen of parallel systems of secular and religious education founded on the American principle of separation of church and state. This plan envisaged two parallel systems of schools for all the children of the land, one under the auspices of the state, the other under the aegis of the church.

Then came October 1929. Churches had to retrench and "the last to be hired

were the first to be fired" hence many directors of religious education were walking the streets.

Our department has had members in every graduating class since 1922 with the single exception of 1934 which was at the depth of the depression.

Since the back set of the "thirties" the religious education movement had been struggling to attain the vigor and hope of the twenties, but the climate had never been quite the same. I stress this fact at the point for it, doubtless, accounts for the comparative lack of confidence and venturesomeness that characterizes the meager course offerings in religious education in most Methodist colleges and universities today. More on this point later.

The founding of our department grew out of a deep-seated belief that the Protestant church with its neglect of the educational emphases and primary dependence on the homiletical approach to its task was in modern parlance "missing the boat." An inelegant quatrain was much quoted in those days and went something like this:

O, the June bug is a funny bug
he hasn't any mind;
he stumbles through his life time
with his tail light on behind.

The quoters of the quatrain believed that the Sunday school, the tail light of the doggerel quoted above, was the church's greatest hope, that in the growing lives of boys and girls was the challenge to do something significant and permanent for persons themselves, for the growth and power of the church and for the democratic society of which we are a part.

In those days we were very conscious of what Germany had done and we were told that it started with the educator Von Humbolt at the beginning of the 19th century who had told the rulers of Germany, "whatever you want in the life of your nation put into your schools." Benjamin Kidd's "Science of Power" was published about that time and a much-quoted sentence from that book read: "give us the young and we will create a new mind and a new earth in a single generation."

Announcement of Purposes and Objectives

Our first catalogue announcement in 1921 reads as follows: "religious education represents the most challenging opportunity before the church today. The religious forces of the nation are summoned to the most colossal task that they have yet undertaken in providing adequate moral and religious instruction and training of the youth of the democracy. The denominational college must play an important part in providing the leadership for a comprehensive program of religious education.

"Directors of Religious Education for the local church and community, teachers for church schools and week-day schools, a great host of volunteer teachers and leaders must be trained by the colleges.

"The purpose of this department is to train specialists in the field of religious education, to acquaint college men and women with the far-reaching program of religious education and to develop in this community and country a unified and adequate system of moral and religious education for the great mass of children and youth."

Such were our high hopes as to our function and deep sentiments of our responsibility to the church and to society in 1920.

From the beginning we have been deeply conscious of the need of combining theory and practice in the training of our students. That is, we have been conscious of the need of taking the vision and techniques of the classroom out to the church school departments and of training our students "on the job." Because of this point of view definite projects in churches and community have always been an integral part of department planning and procedure.

In a formulation of the philosophy of religious education published years ago nine areas of learning were listed as a basis for the organization of our curricula as follows:

First: Our students should be helped to know themselves and their fellow humans which means a study in psychology and in biography.

Second: They should know the spiritual inheritance of the race as

recorded in the inspired literatures and institutional life that make up our heritage.

- Third:** The student should be made familiar with the story of the race; with sociological, political and religious life and organization.
- Fourth:** Religion in its psychological, sociological and philosophical implications should be thoroughly explored.
- Fifth:** The realm of the fine arts should be studied for content of teaching and enrichment of worship.
- Sixth:** The principles, methods and techniques of teaching should be mastered and the student subjected to actual teaching situations under the direction of competent and sympathetic supervision.
(Parenthetically it may be mentioned that the audio-visual procedure was introduced to the campus first in this department).
- Seventh:** The implications of the Christian ideal of human brotherhood in social, economic and political life should be made clear to those who would direct in Christian education.
- Eighth:** An orientation to the constructive use of leisure time and the development of wholesome recreation should be given. (Again parenthetically it may be mentioned that the folk dance technique which has now blossomed into the summer folk dance camp, only institution of its kind in America, was brought to the Pacific campus by the department under the leadership of Lawton Harris.)
- Ninth:** The making of religious truth vivid through dramatization, audio-visual and other sensual aids should be a part of the training of the religious educator.

Areas of Study for Major

In outlining the specific areas of knowledge, techniques and skills needed for the major in religious education the following breakdown was suggested:

Bible Study: General introduction and detailed study of the book and its teachings so far as time will permit.

Religion: Historical and comparative study together with inquiry into its psychology, sociology and philosophy.

Religious Education: A comprehensive study of the growth of personality, the curricula to suit this development, the place of home, church and community in the process.

Techniques: Here problems of teaching methods, supervision, group work procedures, worship planning, etc. are in order.

Skills: A list of eight specific skills beginning with counseling and ending with crafts outlines the kinds of procedures necessary to make religious education effective.

The foregoing analysis dealing with content and procedures are only suggestions of the constantly critical evaluations and reappraisals that have gone on in the department since its inception. When new additions have been made in the staff time out has been taken to review the program that has been going on and take inventory of content, methods and practices with a view to make such changes and improvements as would square with the critical thinking of the staff.

We have never thought of our department as having arrived or that any course or procedure was subject to the law of the Medes and Persians.

Training "On the Job"

As mentioned above, a continuing effort has been made to keep our students in touch with the life and problems of the local church or agency, thus training students "on the job" and constantly testing of the theory of the classroom with the

realities of the teaching situation in the Sunday School, Camp Fire Club, Y Group or other field work project.

Typical projects over the years have been the College Park School District Religious Education Experiment. This was conducted for two years in San Jose to the moving of the college to Stockton.

Since coming to Stockton the department has directed the teaching or club work of many students in many churches and centers and inaugurated such special projects as the Woodrow Wilson Character Education Development which led to the community release time schools and which, in turn, provided the foundation of the present church council of the city. Other projects of the department were the Clay Street Church Youth Center, The Amos Alonzo Stagg International Scout Troup No. 54 of South Stockton, The Chinese Christian Center, etc.

So significant did these early experiments in church and community contacts prove that our department was invited to provide a project following World War II in which the college would render a unique service to the churches and other character building agencies of the community. It was our previous experimenting with practical projects and the offer of \$30,000 subsidy by the educational board of the Methodist Church that led to the establishment of the project which we named Christian Community Administration. Nothing like this development had previously been attempted anywhere. Not only were \$30,000 invested in inaugurating the project but a gift of approximately \$100,000 additional money was given to provide the equipment in Sears Hall for the expanded program. The future of this project is guaranteed by the Arthur and Helen Alexander Foundation provided to the amount of \$125,000 in the will of Mr. Alexander of Bakersfield. Two thirds of the director's time has been allotted to the direction of off-campus training of our students and in additions the other members of the staff give considerable time to directing field work.

Projected Plans

When we first thought the possibility of the expansion at the time of the dedication of the chapel and religious education until in 1942 I said in a radio address:

"Plans for the future include the addition and enrichment of courses covering

the bible, the theory and practice of religious education, and the development of special lectures, seminars and extensions courses that will unite the college and local churches in a great forward movement in scientifically planned religious education for the production of better churchman and better citizens.....

"The department should assist definitely and specifically in the work of education on the local churches. The churches desperately need the vision and techniques involved in the modern religious educational point of view and the students in training need the practice of working at the concrete problems in real situations.....Our thought is to assign our students to specific projects and literally train them "on the job."

Let us remember these words were used in 1942.

Christian Community Administration

When the project, Christian Community Administration, was announced in 1945 Chancellor Tully C. Knoles, then president of the college, wrote: "War's end will not find the Methodist Church totally unprepared....this college had set up what it believes to be one of the most significant enterprises in the church for the training of religious educators, teachers and directors, social workers and leaders in community welfare to halt growing juvenile delinquency."

Robert E. Burns, then director of public relations said of the expanded program which was unique in the life of the Methodist Church: "California's first college continues to pioneer. Under a grant from the Board of Education of the Methodist Church, The Christian Community Administration project will explore a new way to provide a social leadership for American life.

" The training pattern is two-fold: A fully rounded college course in the liberal arts--and, continuous living laboratory experience in actual community projects."

Evaluating the plans we set forth at the time of the dedication of Morris Chapel and the R. E. unit Dr. Marcus Bach of the University of Iowa who gave three addresses on the theme: The fine arts in religion, said: "It would seem to me that you have one of the most ambitious programs ever formulated."

In two studies into graduate opinion made in 1950 and 1956 we note that our students are practically unanimous that our field work training had been an

invaluable aid as they have gone into religious education directorships, group work agencies, and the pastoral ministry, many remarking that they have not found offerings that equal ours even on the graduate level.

Naturally such progressive ventures have called for considerable experimenting and we have had to learn as we went along, there being no guides to serve us; for we have pioneered in new fields. Any criticisms that we are a bit unorthodox in our course offerings or that we are too liberal in our courses in techniques and skills does not greatly disturb us. Unless our critics can show an equal effort to meet the needs of the church and character building agencies in their educational tasks we shall pay attention to what may be said but will not be unduly excited about such commentary.

Group Work and Recreation Emphasis

Just as we have pioneered in the projection of our department out into the churches and the community so have we tried to evaluate and utilize the principles and practice of group work procedure and the evident values in wholesome recreation for the specific purpose of Christian character formation. To us it has seemed little less than tragic that the church has permitted so many organizations and clubs to capture the interest and enthusiasms of the youth of the community which if properly developed and sponsored by the churches would have long since ushered in a new day of loyalty and enthusiastic zeal for the work of the church.

Experiments first at the Clay Street Methodist Church and later at the Chinese Christian Center fully demonstrated to my personal satisfaction that through careful attention to the training of childhood and youth not only could youth be held to the church but a new church could be called into being by such a process. Especially at the Chinese Christian Center due primarily to the intelligent and dedicated leadership of Mr. and Mrs. Skipper Yee the possibilities of the club plan of organization and group work procedure showed to great advantage.

Fortunately in this development in the department we were able to have the guidance of the first graduate of the department, Prof. Lawton Harris. As group work specialist and recreational leader Mr. Harris has led the field in Northern California for many years. His contribution in this phase of the department's work has been invaluable.

Not only did Mr. Harris introduce the Folk Dance to the Pacific Campus, he also gave the first offerings in group work and counseling and in camping and camp craft.

In these developments that have taken place and the worth of which have been abundantly testified to by pastors of churches, leaders, in character building agencies as well as the trainees themselves it is obvious that with the practical nature of the training there would be need for considerable instruction in techniques and skills. Consequently we are giving some nineteen different courses providing techniques and skills in religious education. In striking contrast we find the offerings of other colleges and universities under auspices of the Methodist Church limited to two to four offerings in the same field.

Church College Must Lead, Not Follow

We have proceeded on the assumption that the church college has a responsibility to give leadership, to demonstrate possibilities in the field of religious education. We dislike to criticize but we are forced to the conclusion that in general the schools of the Methodist Church across the country are guilty of dragging their feet in this area which has to do with the development of the future church and with the kind training of youth that will make for a loyalty and devotion to the Christian Cause that will surpass anything we have known in the past.

Comparison with Other College Offerings

A typical institution for purposes of comparison is DePauw University located in St Green Castle in Indiana. This school is somewhat larger than Pacific. We find 23 courses in the content of bible and religion and religious Education, 2 in techniques and 0 in skills in the field. In contrast C.O.P. has 23 courses dealing with content, 14 with techniques and 5 with skills. By techniques we mean such courses as Principles and Practice of Group Work, Field Work, Conduct of Worship, etc.... Under skills we list Audio-Visual Methods, Counseling, Recreational Leadership, etc...

The only school at all comparable to the rich offerings of our department is a Negro college called Philander Smith, located at Little Rock, Arkansas. Here we

find 15 courses dealing with content, 4 with techniques, and 2 with skills.

When the department was organized I had the responsibility of teaching all the religious education courses and most of the Bible. The course offerings in religious education were as follows: *Principles and History of Religious Education, Methods of Religious Education, Church School, Curriculum in Religious Education, History of Religions.*

From those humble beginnings we now have three teachers giving full time to the department teaching, one giving half-time.

The expansion of the original courses looks something like this today: *Spiritual Growth of Children, Spiritual Growth of Adolescents, Field of Christian Service, Orientation in Christian Education, Group Work, Crafts in Religious Education, Recreation in the Church, Christ in the Fine Arts, Art of Worship, Community Singing, Use of Audio-Visual Methods, Elementary Methods in Christian Education, Youth Work in the Church, Adult Education in Church and Community, Lab School, Dramatization in Religious Education, and History of the Church and Theological Ideas.*

When President Burns assumed the presidency of the college he suggested the slogan: "The covered wagon, not the band wagon", meaning that he would seek to carry on the pioneering tradition of the college. That slogan fittingly describes the principles and performance of this Department of Bible and Religious Education.

The Department Product

To date the department has graduated 146 majors with the AB Degree. Fourteen have been granted the Master's Degree. Of these 37 have earned higher degrees in other graduate institutions, 14 are still in graduate schools in various parts of the country. Forty-nine (49) have gone into the Christian Ministry, 9 into missionary work, 8 are college teachers, 20 have become directors of Christian education in churches while 7 have gone into YMCA or YWCA careers.

It is a group of which we may be exceedingly proud including such educational leaders as Dr. Dwayne Orton formerly head of the educational work of Business Machines Corporation, now Editor of *Think Magazine*; such pastors as Dr.

Theodore Palmquist of the Foundry Methodist Church of Washington, D.C.

Justification of Methods and Skill Courses

Summing up the criticism of our offerings it seems to imply that majors in religious education, group work and recreation are out of place on the undergraduate level. Looking over the offerings of other colleges we would question whether they offer the kind and variety of courses that would qualify for an adequate major in the fields mentioned.

For our practice we have no apology but feel, in the light of our experience over the years, that we are abundantly justified in the type of undergraduate work we have sought to encourage.

Quite evidently we have a justification for our procedure, if such is asked for, in the common procedure of colleges and universities in the training of public school personnel. In such training, content, techniques and skills are all given on the undergraduate level and teachers are certificated upon earning the AB Degree with a major in education. In our pilot study teachers are being certificated with less than an AB Degree.

We do not hold that our majors are fully prepared for the work of education in the churches and character building agencies, and have always encouraged the Master's Degree as a minimum of preparation. Nevertheless creditable work has been done by such graduates as Frances Colville Wolfrom, Shirley Reece, Ruth Grodeon, Kenneth Wahrenbrook, Dick Van Skike, Elouise Haldeman to mention only a few of our graduates.

A New Project

And now to climax the work of the past 36 years and to raise, as it were, a fitting capstone to our educational edifice we are in the process, by the aid of our panel of Pacific Associates, of establishing a lectureship foundation in religious education, recreation and group work to do for religious education in Northern California what the lectureship foundation at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley does for the theological and homiletical stimulus of our pastoral ministry.

The project has the approval of the administration of the college, the

Department Pacific Associates and an over all planning committee composed as follows:

**Members of the Lectureship Program Committee
(November 29, 1956)**

Boswell, Robert	Methodist Board of Education
Colliver, George	R.E. Staff
Corson, James	Supt. Modesto City Schools
Fahrenheit, Gerald	Northern California Church Council
Frazee, Harold	Baptist Divinity School
Grammar, Katherine	Church Divinity School of the Pacific
Harris, Lawton	R.E. Staff
Lindhorst, Frank	R.E. Staff
Malloch, James	St. James Cathedral, Fresno
Melander, Carl	YMCA, Stockton
Rood, Wayne	Pacific School of Religion
Rudkin, Jesse	Public Relations, C.O.P.
Shannon, Kathleen	R.E. Staff
Stewart, Donald	San Francisco Theological Seminary
Walters, Sumner	Bishop of the San Joaquin
Votaw, Leroy	State Youth Authority

With the inauguration of this lectureship in the fall of 1957 or 1958 our department will have again pioneered in a field that is entirely new. We feel that the logic of our planning and performance over many years points unerringly to this move which will serve to dignify, dramatize and bring to glorious fulfillment the kind of educational procedure showed forth supremely by the great teacher of all the centuries who taking the child placed him in the midst and said: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

George H. Colliver