

NEWS RELEASE

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Bangor Theological Seminary to change direction

Bangor, ME, February 10 – The Board of Trustees of Bangor Theological Seminary unanimously voted to suspend the Masters of Divinity and Masters of Arts degree programs at the end of the 2012-13 academic year in order to explore a range of options for the Seminary consistent with its historic mission of service to the Church, according to an announcement from H. Lowell Brown, Chair of the Board.

“As stewards of the Seminary, we have seen dramatic changes taking place in theological education over the past decade. During that time, seminaries across the country have experienced a steady decline in enrollment for masters of divinity and masters of arts programs,” notes Brown. “Bangor Theological Seminary has also experienced similar decline as church membership has fallen and fewer people seek a seminary education for pastoral service. As a consequence, after thoughtful and prayerful consideration over the past year, our Board concluded that the time has come to make significant changes in the way the Seminary will fulfill its historic mission to serve the needs of the Church, now and in the future.”

According to the Reverend Dr. Robert Grove-Markwood, Seminary President, the Board chose to make the decision now in order to allow the students, prospective students, the faculty, and staff time to make plans consistent with their needs. The Academic Dean, Dr. Steven Lewis, will work with students to explore options for completing their studies.

“Bangor Theological Seminary has a long history of adapting to changing times,” notes Grove-Markwood. “Throughout its almost two hundred years of service, the Seminary has modified its programming while remaining faithful to its mission of providing learned leadership for ministry in churches and in the world. In the face of declining enrollment, the Board concluded that our endowment cannot sustain our present operational budget. It can, however, support a new direction for the Seminary, with God’s help. The Board has chosen to act decisively, while we have the resources to build a new future.

“We are confident that the Seminary will continue to play an important role in the religious and spiritual life of the churches and the communities they serve. We are excited about what we trust God is now calling us to do. We intend to continue to prepare and support leaders for ministry in the Church and in the world.”

The Board is formulating plans to reconfigure the Seminary consistent with its historic mission of service to the Church. The group plans to announce the new direction this spring.

“As we are poised to enter our third century of service, the needs of the Church have changed,” adds Grove-Markwood. “Alternative paths to ordination have emerged. Fewer individuals are pursuing full-time graduate theological education for traditional pastoral ministry. Our Board chose to be proactive in shaping the future of the Seminary based on the evolving needs of faith communities in the twenty-first century, so that Bangor Theological Seminary may continue its legacy of service for generations to come.”

Bangor Theological Seminary has served as a center of theological education since 1814 and a source of preparation and support for church leaders, particularly for the ministry of rural congregations in northern New England. For more information, visit bts.edu.