

St. Herman Orthodox Theological Seminary

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Mission

St. Herman Orthodox Theological Seminary exists to proclaim the universal doctrine of the ancient, undivided Christian Church. A common image of the Church is that of a hospital. The Church therefore offers spiritual health to Her members, true wholeness to the human person. Orthodox Christianity recognizes that health is the proper relationship, the communion of man with God and with his fellow men according to Orthodox Christian tradition. If the Church can be described as a hospital, the seminary can be likened to a clinic, training men and women as technicians in the therapeutic science of theology. The Holy Church Fathers regarded theology as the science of sciences. If theology is the teaching of the Church about spiritual health, it is the discipline that cures the whole person, soul and body. This is not a philosophy, but a way of life, an applied theology.

St. Herman Seminary fulfills its most basic purpose, remaining true to its historic missionary heritage. In particular, the seminary seeks to continue the heroic educational and evangelistic work begun by SS. Herman, Innocent, Jacob, and the host of dedicated clergy and laity who struggled to increase the presence of Holy Orthodoxy in the Diocese of Sitka, Anchorage, and Alaska. These holy examples are heralded in hymnography as unmercenary physicians.

Objectives

The primary objective of the seminary remains the education and, as God wills, the ordination of spiritually mature Orthodox Christian men to the holy diaconate and priesthood. The seminary also provides the necessary theological, liturgical, and moral foundations nurturing various vocations. The Church in Alaska hopes to retain a full complement of indigenous clergy and laity to fulfill Her purpose. Therefore, the seminary curriculum was arranged to prepare readers and catechists, religious educators and counselors, as well as deacons and priests.

Objectives specific to St. Herman Seminary are outlined as follows:

- ◆ To prepare worthy candidates for the holy priesthood and diaconate within the Orthodox Christian Church.
- ◆ To train students to assume responsibilities of a church reader who can lead services in the absence of clergy.
- ◆ To prepare worthy candidates for positions of leadership and as religious educators in their worship communities.
- ◆ To prepare certified substance abuse counselors for service to their communities.

These objectives are met through a four-year diploma program in which a theological education is provided in residence. Additionally, after graduation, a fifth-year internship is required. The seminary internship pairs the graduate with an experienced diocesan pastor in a mentoring relationship. Gaining crucial experience, graduates will enhance the quality of spiritual, moral, educational, and social values in their communities.

Educational Philosophy

Preparation for service to the Church, as clergy or laity, requires students to live fundamentally as Orthodox Christians. The Church affirms mankind's creation by God, and therefore the height of humanity is achieved through communion with God. Knowledge of God is revealed in prayerful study of the Orthodox faith and a life of active virtue. Students

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must demonstrate godly attributes: humility, patience, devotion, piety, and charity. Seminary life provides ample opportunity to develop these virtues, so that the vision and values of Orthodox Christianity are not only the subject matter of course work, but increasingly a way of life. The seminary trains its students in this practical theology.

St. Herman Seminary is committed to an understanding of theological education, which includes all aspects of the person. The person, according to the Orthodox Christian faith, possesses infinite value, being created in the image and likeness of God. St. Irenaeus wrote, "The glory of God is a human being who is fully alive, and the life of such a person consists in beholding God." Worship therefore is at the very heart of an Orthodox Christian's being and life, especially those called to teach and preach. Active participation in daily worship is integral to the Orthodox Christian world-view. Students should not only understand but delight in the liturgical life of the Church. Students preparing for service to the Church are held to the same ecclesiastical regulations, moral standards, and models of behavior as those ordained in the Church.

As a missionary institution of the Diocese of Alaska, the seminary is intensely interested in and committed to enhancing and strengthening native Alaskan languages and cultures, particularly as these have merged with the expression and propagation of Holy Orthodoxy. The seminary fulfills the commission of the Church to be incarnational, bearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all people. The seminary faculty encourages research projects and programs in the field of Alaskan native culture embracing the Church.

The seminary is aware of, and committed to, the need to combat the various social problems that plague society, and Alaskan communities in particular. Valuing personhood, as a unity of soul and body, the Church is concerned with the health and eternal salvation of the whole person. Courses in counseling disciplines, together with discussions, lectures, and seminars relating to public health and social policy, constitute another element of the seminary curriculum.

Not only does the seminary provide an education in preparation for ministry, it also nurtures the students' entire families in residence. While students receive their education, their families must be supported. By fostering the families' wellness and wholeness, the seminary improves the quality of student life and of the students' future ministry. The seminary is aware of the place family holds. Familial themes pervade the letters of St. Paul; Christians are bound together as members of one Body. The seminary strives to fulfill this calling.

The Campus

Certainly the most obvious transformation at the seminary has been external. The Chapel of the Synaxis of the Saints of Alaska has been completed and consecrated. The seminary enjoys a worship space worthy of being called the center of campus life. All three main buildings of the campus have recently been re-sided. The refectory and kitchen have been refurbished with support from a trustee, Mrs. Elizabeth Slanta, and Ilaasi (Friends of St. Herman Seminary). Thanks to the generosity of another trustee, Mr. Ben Ardinger, married-student apartments have new furnishings. Office areas in the administration building along with classrooms have been renovated. There are four classrooms, appropriately named for the Holy Evangelists. Trustee Ms. Eleana Silk, along with Mark Barber and librarian Mark Harrison, have streamlined the library collection. Electronic cataloging for the entire collection is well under way.

One small house used for faculty has been renovated, and the Dunlop family is renting a home off campus. Additionally, at the 2004 commencement, the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America (FOCA) most generously donated a 2004 Chevrolet Blazer through its "Gifts of Love" drive.

Academics

- ◆ **Enrollment:** Twenty students are enrolled in St. Herman Seminary. Enrollment has increased by six students from last year. There are fourteen regular, full-time students and six part-time students. Mature and married men are clearly the majority of seminarians in America today. The seminary's married-student housing is at capacity, with three families living off campus.

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The 2005 graduation class stood at four students, all of whom have moved into their internship year with a diocesan parish community. Two of the graduates entered their internship as priests: one from St. Paul Island in the Aleutian chain; the other, the first native Alutiiq to be ordained.

The rector and faculty have approved five potential students for the Nativity 2005 freshman class. Among these is the seminary's first native student of Cheyenne heritage. The seminary is also pursuing as many as eight potential freshmen. If accepted, these students will increase the student body to the capacity of the seminary's housing.

- ♦ **Accreditation Process:** As the external, physical seminary has been renovated, so too has the internal, academic aspect improved. In July of this year, the seminary's state authorization will be an action item for the Alaska Commission on Post-Secondary Education. The seminary has been operating on an exempt status granted by the commission. In order to be moved from exemption to authorization by the state, the seminary needed to take steps toward candidacy with an appropriate accrediting association. The seminary, with a state advocate, has approached the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities to begin the accreditation process. With authorization secured this summer, the seminary will regain the privilege of granting a bachelor's degree in theology, a degree unique among Orthodox Christian seminaries in North America.
- ♦ **Substance Abuse Counseling Training:** The process of applying for accreditation has encouraged the seminary to reflect upon its curriculum and philosophy. Remaining true to its missionary heritage, the seminary has moved to emphasize the therapeutic nature of the Church, a natural aspect of Orthodoxy. The seminary is to be a community of Christian wellness. Acknowledging the value of the human person, soul and body, the Church's purpose is the health and eternal salvation of the whole person. A focus on the therapeutic nature of the Church both informs and complements the chemical dependency counseling (CDC) certification students receive upon graduation. This unique aspect of the students' experience again reinforces the practical nature of the education offered at St. Herman Seminary.

The Substance Abuse Treatment Training Program at the Kodiak Area Native Association (KANA) consists of nine to twelve months of education, clinical supervision, and practical experience in the assessment, treatment, and delivery of professional substance abuse services. The training follows the Alaska Commission for Chemical Dependency Professional Certification (ACCDPC) guidelines and leads to Counselor Technician certification or Counselor I certification. The training centers around the development of clinical skills as outlined in the "Competencies" section of the ACCDPC requirements.

The following competencies are expected to be demonstrated by all students in the training program: knowledge of chemical abuse, sociological-cultural issues, theories of counseling, medical aspects of addiction, community (Alaska) resources, ethics and the law, contemporary health issues, psychological aspects of addiction, family dynamics, and HIV/AIDS.

Students should be able to practice: intake and assessment, record keeping, pre-treatment (intervention), counseling, individual counseling, treatment planning, aftercare planning and counseling, follow-up, information and referral, case management, suicide risk assessment, treatment referral, group counseling, relapse prevention, and crisis intervention.

Along with the above information and competencies, special emphasis will be placed on core competencies for clergy and other pastoral ministers in addressing alcohol and drug dependence and their impact on family members (DHHS Publication No. 04-3900), for students who are in the ministry or still in seminary. Experience includes: family recovery camp (FRC), intensive outpatient (IOP), outpatient (OP), and continuing care (CC).

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By the Nativity semester 2005, St. Herman Seminary will have a full resident faculty. The faculty is small but well qualified and committed. Within the past year, Mrs. Bee Dunlop earned her Ph.D. from Boston College. In 2004, Paul Sidebottom joined the seminary community as associate dean of academics and instructor of Church history, doctrine, and spirituality. The same semester, the seminary tapped the local community's resources, welcoming Robert Weldy, Ph.D., as the facilitator of the seminary's substance abuse treatment program. Early in 2005, the Rev. John Dunlop returned to the seminary faculty after serving Holy Resurrection Cathedral for eleven years. As a seasoned pastor, Fr. John teaches liturgics and Old Testament Scripture. Additionally, Philip Majkrzak will join the faculty as instructor of liturgical music.

The seminary hopes to cultivate a resource of adjunct faculty for the continuing education program. Distinguished professionals, such as Dr. Herman Tristram Englehardt, offer evening seminars in their field of expertise. The seminary will specifically facilitate seminars in moral/ethical theology. In association with this area of study, the seminary hopes to enrich its community by nurturing a relationship with monastic spirituality. Monastics from various communities, from Guatemala to Mount Athos, will be invited to visit the seminary. The seminary community hosts many pilgrims. Of late, the seminary hosted His Eminence, Archbishop Evgeny of Vereia, rector of Moscow Theological Academy and Seminary. Through periodic interactions with such visitors, the community will gain a practical experience of Orthodox theology. Not only will visiting lecturers enhance the core curriculum, they will dispel a perception of the seminary's isolation.

Scholarships

St. Herman Seminary is the only Orthodox Christian seminary that provides full scholarships for each diocesan student, covering tuition, board, and textbooks. This year, a new system of work scholarships, similar to a work-study program, has been instituted. Each student is assigned a specific duty to the community. The students' weekly hours are recorded on monthly time sheets.

Students have also been ambitious in searching for support through native corporations and Church associations. Last year two St. Herman seminarians received Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America (FOCA) scholarships.

Community Life

The deans have focused on creating and maintaining a healthy environment conducive to Christian worship, study, and service. This academic year began with an intensive two-day orientation that included the entire seminary community. St. Herman Seminary is a community of about 60 persons. It was crucial to begin the term on an informative and inspiring note. A similar orientation introduced the new seminary student handbook in the spring.

The rhythm of a creative schedule maintains a healthy community. The seminary has attempted to serve the needs of the entire community, including wives and children. Because of the high married-student enrollment, the deans have recognized the benefits of encouraging family-oriented activities within the seminary community. The seminary has reached out to serve the various interests and needs of its residents, outside the academic schedule. The seminary children are invited to a movie night once a month. Cooking and knitting classes are held on Monday evenings. Households have also been taught prosthaphora baking. Seminarians' wives meet with the dean monthly for "Pre-Matushki" seminars. These meetings provide a forum to address specific issues related to the students' wives, and to their future service to the Church.

The seminary has encouraged several student-led extracurricular interest groups. Faculty sponsors oversee mission and evangelism, pro-life, and ecology groups. The groups encourage Christian service outside the campus community. Perhaps the most exciting news regarding the seminary's local involvement is the reconstitution of St. Herman's Hermits, the school's city-league basketball team. The Hermits won their division championship for the first time in eleven years. Also, a local Alcoholics Anonymous group meets on campus Tuesdays.

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The seminary continues several community activities. Community theme dinners are held once a month. During Bright Week this year, the seminary participated in Cinco De Mayo festivities. Several community outings are planned for the year including: a tour of the local Coast Guard base, ice skating, hiking, a tour of the local corrections department, and community work projects.

Donor Support Cultivation

- ◆ **Board of Trustees:** The chief governing body consists of thirteen members: Protopresbyter Robert Kondratik; the V. Rev. Chad Hatfield; Mr. Cliff Argue (Mercer Island, WA); the V. Rev. Eugene Vansuch; the V. Rev. Philip Alexei (Nunapitchuk, AK); Mrs. Irene Barinoff (Shoreline, WA); Mr. Ben Arding (Kodiak, AK); Mr. Dimitri Philemonof (Anchorage, AK); Arthur Simeon Heckman (Pilot Station, AK); Mrs. Elizabeth Slanta (Alexandria, VA); Mr. John Morris (Sugarland, TX); Mrs. Margaret Pysarchuk (Lorain, OH); and Ms. Eleana Silk (Crestwood, NY).
- ◆ **Annual Budget:** The seminary now operates on an estimated \$500,000 annual budget.
- ◆ **Adopt-a-Seminarian/Outreach Alaska (OA):** For the seminary, Outreach Alaska links sophomore through senior seminarians with sponsors. Qualifying seminarians receive monthly stipends from their sponsors. When these students graduate, Outreach Alaska (through the sponsors) presents them with a gift of financial support and/or vestments. Outreach Alaska also provides the seminary graduation exercises with commencement announcements. Sponsors not only contribute financially to seminarian families, but they share their lives and faith with these families. Further, Outreach Alaska is committed to supporting the seminary library. Library equipment and various seminary furnishings have been provided through OA. Mary Ann Khoury acts as the coordinator between the seminary community and sponsors.
- ◆ **Ilaasi (Friends of St. Herman Seminary):** Since the 1970s, Ilaasi has done fundraising for the seminary community. As director, Elizabeth Slanta has not only raised funds, but also awareness of the seminary's key mission within the Diocese of Sitka, Anchorage, and Alaska. Ilaasi has been particularly committed to improving the seminary's library and upgrading its computer lab with hardware.
- ◆ **Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC):** With its dean, the V. Rev. Chad Hatfield, as the OCMC board's vice-president, the seminary has strong relations with the OCMC. Half a dozen mission teams have volunteered their labor at the seminary over the past three years, helping to make the seminary's construction and renovation costs more affordable. Paul Sidebottom, associate dean of academics and instructor, is sponsored by the OCMC. Missionaries from the Lower 48 are anxious to serve on mission teams in Alaska during the summer. Their experience of service to the Church in the place where Holy Orthodoxy's first missionaries arrived in North America is a particular blessing. Interaction between seminary students and missionaries has resulted in lasting friendships.

Goals

- ◆ **Housing:** The board of trustees has been challenged to develop options for new housing space for married students and their families. Though the dean has been in negotiations with neighboring landowners, the board must formulate a solid, long-term plan for expansion. With Kodiak Island's high rents, and for the strength of the seminary community, housing must be expanded on seminary property. Also, with a full resident faculty, a plan for obtaining housing for administration and faculty members must be determined.
- ◆ **Faculty Enrichment:** The seminary strives to encourage faculty development. Last year Bee Dunlop earned her Ph.D. from Boston College. The seminary hopes to see further advanced study by its faculty. Moreover, the seminary has encouraged its faculty to travel and develop relationships not only with centers of Orthodox religious education, but also centers of Orthodox spirituality. Paul Sidebottom has made several pilgrimages to Thessalonica and Mount Athos, building relationships between a few monastic houses and the seminary communi-

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ty. In June 2005, Paul will visit several monasteries in Macedonia and meet the vice-dean of the Macedonian Orthodox seminary in Skopje.

- ♦ **Environment Conference:** As perhaps its largest public project, the seminary has proposed to host a conference on the environment in August 2007. Orthodox Christianity has a very developed theology of ecology, which the seminary wishes to showcase. The beautiful temperate rainforest of Kodiak Island seems an appropriate setting for such a conference.