WHAT IS CPE?

The Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc.

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) was conceived by Richard C. Cabot as a method of learning pastoral practice in a clinical setting under supervision. The concept was enlarged by Anton T. Boisen to include a case study method of theological inquiry—a study of “living human documents.” William S. Keller began supervising theological students in case study methods, believing pastoral practice was complete only as it addressed contributing social conditions. As CPE developed, other leaders opened the doors for the integration of pastoral practice with knowledge from medicine, psychology, and other behavioral sciences.

It was not until after some forty years of experience by several organized but uncoordinated groups that the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) was formed in 1967. The merger consisted of The Institute of Pastoral Care Inc., The Council for Clinical Training Inc., The Lutheran Council of Pastoral Care, and The Southern Baptist Council of Clinical Training.

ACPE, Inc., has thus become the standard-setting, accrediting, certifying, resource agency in the field of Clinical Pastoral Education. It accredits institutions, agencies, and parishes as clinical pastoral education learning centers to offer programs of CPE and certifies supervisors to conduct these programs.

The ACPE-accredited centers and clusters offer Clinical Pastoral Education (1) as a part of theological education, (2) as continuing education for the ministry, (3) as training for institutional chaplaincy, (4) as training for pastoral counseling, (5) as training for certification as a supervisor of clinical pastoral education, and (6) as training for other specialized ministries. Theological schools often give academic credit for Clinical Pastoral Education.

Additional Information For Prospective Students

CPE is experience-based theological education. The heart of the clinical pastoral education process is your ministry with people and learning from that ministry through reflection, discussion, and evaluation with other students and your supervisor. In your CPE experience, you will utilize verbatims, case studies, and other ministry descriptions to present your ministry for supervision. The focus in some seminars will be on what is happening to you, the caregiver, as much as on what is happening to the people receiving your ministry. There will be discussions which will assist you in understanding theological issues arising from experience. There will be opportunities to learn from the behavioral sciences while also reflecting theologically. You will be challenged to think about groups and social structures as well as individuals in defining your ministry. You will be part of a dynamic learning group with other students and your supervisor, which will provide opportunities for mutual supervision, care giving, challenge and support.
Where will you be ministering?

At St. Luke’s Hospital, you will be ministering in the Hospital and at Surrey Place (our skilled nursing facility). Also, there are times when students are placed at Brooking Park—a residential care and skilled nursing facility sponsored by the Episcopal-Presbyterian Foundation.

The CPE Learning Environment

If you have never participated in a dynamic, self-directed, interpersonal, process, educational experience, you may be concerned about what it will be like. A basic task will be for the other students, your supervisor and you to share with each other in such ways that all are cared for, supported, challenged, and respected. Since an individual best knows his or her own limits, everyone will need to respect others’ boundaries and work to negotiate appropriate learning relationships. Developing a learning environment that is supportive, stimulating, and safe will make the risks of interpersonal learning and growth worth taking.

Beginning the Application Process

Applications for Clinical Pastoral Education may be obtained from any of the centers listed in the ACPE Directory (available from ACPE, Inc., 1549 Clairmont Road, Suite 103, Decatur, GA 30033, or by calling 404-320-1472), from many seminaries, from the national ACPE office in Decatur, or from the website www.acpe.edu. The application form requests information about your name, address, education, and references. You will also be asked to describe yourself, your history, your religious development, a helping incident, etc. Your completed application will probably be several pages in length. If you have completed previous units of CPE, your and your supervisor’s evaluations for each unit of CPE taken will need to be included with your application. Once we have received and reviewed your materials, we may ask for a face-to-face interview.

For the year’s program we consider applicants in a descending manner. For example, an applicant who has completed a Master of Divinity degree, is ordained, has parish experience, or has had a previous unit of CPE would be considered before persons who have less of these “credentials.” Obviously, there are always exceptions to these requirements. For example, we have a history of training women who are Roman Catholic and belong to religious orders. Also, these prerequisites do not apply to our Extended or Summer units. Persons interested in Supervisory CPE need to inquire first as to when we will have a position available and then begin the application process.

When you are accepted for any of our programs, we do require a $100 deposit with the check made out to St. Luke’s Hospital as a good-faith gesture of your intention to participate in CPE with us. This non-refundable deposit will reserve a position for you. Once you are enrolled your deposit will be applied to your first unit’s tuition payment.

St. Luke’s CPE Learning Center is accredited for CPE (Level I/Level II) and Supervisory CPE by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, One West Court Square, Suite 325, Decatur, GA 30030; www.acpe.edu