

HOW IMPORTANT IS ACCREDITATION?



This may seem to be a foolish question. Why would an unaccredited university point out what is perceived by many as a flaw? Shouldn't the lack of accreditation be downplayed as much as possible? GMU does not think so... Not only do we not hide the fact that we are unaccredited, there is actually a [page on our web site](#) explaining our position on this issue. It could be presumed that because a university is not accredited by a regional accreditation body, it is second-rate; however, this is not necessarily the case. To illustrate this point, a major state accredited institution in Thailand has agreed to offer a joint degree program with GMU even though we are not accredited. Mahidol University accepts students who have completed our Doctor of Theology degree into their PhD in Religious Studies.

Not Everyone Needs Accreditation

The value of accreditation depends on the goals of the applicant and what is important to them. For example:

- **Employment** - An employer may not accept a degree that is not accredited but if you are preparing for ministry within a small faith community, seeking spiritual growth, or wanting to learn more about a particular subject, such as world religions or contemporary Christianity, accreditation would not be needed.
- **Transferable Credits** - Credits from an unaccredited school are not typically transferable to an accredited school. However, if you only intend to earn the one degree or if you are planning to later earn a higher degree with GMU, accreditation is unnecessary.
- **Grants and Student Loans** - Although grants and student loans are unavailable to those individuals enrolled in an unaccredited school, this is not necessarily a disadvantage. Students today are reluctant to apply for loans because many graduates are unable to generate enough income to pay them off, especially in this economy. Instead of earning a degree and then facing the debt afterwards, we offer a user-friendly one-, two-, or three-year interest-free payment plan and allow you to 'pay as you go.'

Possible Advantages of an Unaccredited University

A few years ago Global Ministries University began the process to acquire accreditation but then decided against this endeavor for a number of reasons:

- **Testing Not Required** - Standard testing to measure what a student has learned from a course is required by an accredited university but the effectiveness of testing related to theological studies is questionable. While testing may be advantageous if one is earning a general degree in the area of math, science, English, etc., theology is a much different subject. Theological courses do not focus on facts and figures, making it difficult to measure what a student has learned with a test. Our programs do not require testing. Instead of memorizing data for an exam, our students are given required reading and essay-type assignments. With this learning method, students are empowered to express themselves and channel their learning experience in a direction that will nurture growth on their particular spiritual path.
- **Lower Tuition** - An accredited degree is bound to require higher tuition. Being unaccredited, we are able to offer quality programs at a much lower cost.
- **Custom-Designed Programs** - We do not require a fixed curriculum, that is, in consultation with their mentor, students have the opportunity to select courses and custom-design a degree program intended to meet their particular academic and/or ministerial goals.
- **Able to be Nondenominational and Interfaith** - In addition to the above advantages, there is another requirement of religious-based accrediting bodies, with which we could not comply. We would be required to adhere to a certain belief system and therefore be unable to claim a nondenominational and interfaith status.

So is accreditation important? Perhaps for some individuals but after careful discernment, GMU decided not to go through the process of changing their learning method and curriculum so that we could comply with an accrediting body. Instead, GMU integrated many of the standards that are required in order to be accredited into our procedure. In taking this approach, GMU was able to keep the above advantages in place and also become a more credible university.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



This past weekend I attended the Federation of Christian Ministries Assembly, which included the presentation of a D.Min. graduate of GMU, who resides in Sandy Hook, CT. In his talk, Rev. Dr. Leo McIlrath shared his part in the recent tragedy that took the lives of numerous children. He is a member of the local clergy serving as a chaplain in a nursing home and organized an interfaith service to support the grieving families and the larger community. This service included the presence of the President of the United States, Barack Obama.

I feel that Leo's own words about this event are a beautiful testimony to his own compassionate service to his local community. Following is an excerpt of his presentation at the Assembly:

"On 12/16 -at the Newtown Memorial Service, in the presence of the families of our loving children/teachers/admin's, w/ President Obama, Governor Malloy and our very own beloved selectwoman, Patricia Llodra, flanked by Congressman and State of CT Rep's and local officials, as well as many town folk, witnessed a rather new phenomenon - 2x2 and 3x3, our local clergy men and women ascended the stage and approached the lectern to offer prayers and reflections on behalf of the beautiful children and the dedicated teachers as well as the gallant "First Responders" to the 12/14 tragedy ...and for multiple services and agencies within the Newtown community. My particular prayer addressed the Caregivers, Counselors and the multiple Clergy of the area.

At that service, Pat Llodra uttered, what I have come to consider, a prophetic statement: "This was a defining moment for Newtown. But this event by a sick young man cannot define Newtown." How true were Pat's words!

Following a number of liturgical and worship services at many of the local faith communities, including vast numbers packing Saint Rose of Lima Church on several occasions - services unique to the respective traditions of individual families - we witnessed an expansive caregiver and counselors' network unfolding to reach out and meet the multiple and diverse needs of the community.

In no way would the terrible event of 12/14 define or limit Newtown's vision. Artists-Musicians-Singers-Business people-Fire & Safety & Health Personnel- Government workers and Teachers-Civic Volunteers and Support Staff-School Administrators...and multiple private individuals came forward to help define what Newtown really was all about."

As a GMU graduate, Leo represented all of us who wanted to express our solidarity with the surrounding community and families of those who lost children.

Gerald Grudzen, PhD, President
Global Ministries University

MEET OUR FACULTY

Sterling Harwood, J.D., Ph.D., received his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in philosophy from Cornell University and his J.D. in law from Cornell Law School. He is a professor, lecturer, author, radio host, and attorney. Dr. Harwood teaches Faith-Based Ethics & Medical Practice for Global Ministries University, is also a professor at Lincoln Law School, Senior Faculty Member at Evergreen Valley College, and has taught at a number of other universities over the years, including the prestigious Cornell Law School and Cornell University.

In addition to his teaching positions, he hosts a radio program called Spirit to Spirit and has authored numerous publications including his book *Judicial Activism: A Restrained Defense*. He is currently writing another book, *Conspiracy Confirmed: 50 Years of Tragedy & Trickery in President Kennedy's Assassination*, to be released before the 50th anniversary of the assassination, 11/22/2013.



Dr. Harwood resides in San Jose, CA with his wife, Tina, daughters, Heather and Holly and dogs Toby and Yoda. His personal interests include the Baltimore Orioles, the Washington Redskins and the Washington Wizards. He enjoys hiking, swimming, film noir and science fiction.

STUDENT IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Margaret Wharf holds an M.A. in Education and a B.A. Honours English and is currently a student of the Master of Theology in Sacred Arts degree program. She enrolled in this program for personal development, especially in the area of spirituality and the expression of creativity. She asserts that the coursework is challenging because of her many other commitments but the courses are so interesting and open up new areas of study and experience which she would never otherwise have considered.

To her, it is the journey that is most important, however, the satisfaction of gaining an M.Th. in Sacred Arts is also something she looks forward to accomplishing. She is particularly excited about choosing the subject of her thesis. She notes that she finds the Staff very understanding and supportive in this endeavor and adds "I am so pleased to have the opportunity to study fascinating topics such as Hildegard of Bingen .."

Margaret teaches/tutors English. She is a member of the Anglican Church and is involved in the Stephen Ministry, which equips and empowers lay caregivers to provide high-quality, confidential, Christ-centered care to people who are hurting. She is hoping to expand her lay ministry in the church in the future.

Margaret resides in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, with her husband, Jon. They have four children, Isobelle, Jessica, Christopher, and Rebecca, and two grandchildren, Dominic and Robin.

CLASSROOM SHOWCASE

Students of Global Ministries University produce outstanding coursework. This paper was submitted by Martha Sherman, a student in our Master of Theology degree program. The following paper is a homily Martha submitted in her homiletics course. She is the owner of a campground and provides a Sunday service for campers. This submission is a homily that she delivered to those campers in attendance at one of her services.



Witnesses to the Ends of the Earth

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8

I consider myself a piano flunky. I spent years taking lessons yet never mastered the instrument. Despite years of lessons between the ages of 7 and 17 and hours of practice, I never advanced very far. When asked to plunk out the melody for the choir, I would break out in a sweat and panic. I never invested the 10,000 hours of practice that I hear it takes to get to Carnegie Hall. Then again, Carnegie Hall was never my goal, never the destination of my journey.

Last week we heard Jesus extend His peace to us and promise us the Holy Spirit to remind us of all the lessons He taught us. This week it is our turn to carry Jesus' peace in our hearts and go out to witness to the life of Christ. Luke tells us that in Jesus all the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures are fulfilled. Luke also says that the forgiveness Jesus won is for all the nations. The ascension marks the end of Jesus' earthly teaching, but the Acts of the Apostles refines the story and transforms it into a new beginning.

Jesus tells the disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit and be baptized in the Spirit. To be baptized, to be immersed in life and energy of the Spirit, how might this change this ragtag group? The men and women closest to Jesus sometimes did not quite understand what Jesus meant. They struggled with whether the New Israel was political or not. They debated whether Jesus would return sooner or later. They struggled with taking Jesus' message to Gentiles as well as Jews. The followers of Jesus had 40 days (sufficient preparation according to scriptural symbolism) to interact with the risen Christ before He ascended into heaven.

At the Ascension the disciples were commissioned to go to the ends of the earth with the Good News. The Acts of the Apostles records the missionary journeys of Paul and the rapid growth of the early church. Paul and the disciples, women among them, take

the Good News farther than Jesus ever did in his three years of ministry. We are, according to the reading from Ephesians, the Body of Christ. The mantle of the early Christian community is ours. We are the voices today, commissioned to bear witness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We are called to make Christ present by the way we lead our lives.

Few Christians are called to travel abroad and preach the Good News in foreign lands and even fewer are called to be professional ministers, but all of us are called to preach the Good News by the way we lead our lives. As Christians we spend our lives on a journey of constant conversion, of movement toward the kingdom of Heaven. We are tasked with building the City of God, the New Israel.

So, if it takes 10,000 hours of practice to “master” an instrument, sport or discipline, it stands to reason that 10,000 hours of practicing Christianity should give a degree of mastery. If we dedicate ourselves every day, every waking hour, we put in 10,000 hours in less than two years. Even if we factor in some “time off” from practice, all of us have the potential of being virtuoso Christians. I pray that each of us might go forth and make the Kingdom more present.

Become a Friend of GMU on Facebook

Global Ministries University invites you to show your support for our unique and inclusive online learning institution that offers courses to equip people from a variety of faith traditions to minister with integrity, competence, and professionalism. [Become a Friend of GMU Now!](#)

Send feedback, comments, and/or questions to Jean Conley, editor and Vice-President for Operations and Development, gmu5053@aol.com.