



Update on Cultivating the Gift of Preaching Initiative

4/24/2024

In January we welcomed Matt Aragon Bruce to the Cultivating the Gift of Preaching Initiative (CGPI) by having a team meeting in Lansing to map out a timeline for the CGPI. The paid staff team includes:

- CGPI Director: Matthew Aragon Bruce
- Synod Executive: Chip Hardwick
- CGPI Administrator Heather Johnston

The staff wanted to give an update to assembly on our progress so far with CGPI. We are holding our first conference at Alma college from June 6-10, 2024. The conference will serve as the kickoff to the program for our first round of participants. It will include preaching workshops lead by Alma staff, Johnson C. Smith faculty, and our own CGPI staff. The conference will also have daily plenary lectures, worship services and cohort meetings. The conference is coming together, and we are beyond confident that this will be a well-organized, useful, and fruitful conference for all participants.

Our deadline for applications to the CGPI was April 19, 2024. We received 21 applications and more still continue to come in. We invited just over 60 people to apply hoping to reach our maximum range of 35 participants. At this very moment the CGPI staff is working hard to acquire more applications so we can meet our target. We have sent emails and are making phone calls to learn why recommended participants did not apply with the purpose of not only enticing potential applicants, but also to learn if our program should make changes or develop new strategies as this year is the pilot of the program.

Once we have all of our applications we will read and consider them as a staff and make admissions decisions. Once we have confirmation from the selected applicants to participate, we will group them into cohorts and each cohort will have a mentor. We have the three confirmed mentors from the synod, and two from Johnson C. Smith Seminary, and may need to reach out to find more depending on how many additional applications we receive.

We have strived to have a diverse pool of applicants, mentors, lecturers, worship leaders and workshop leaders. We have a wide range of the aforementioned people in terms of age, racial ethnic background, and gender. We are very proud of the work we have done so far and deeply look forward to providing the assembly with updates at the Fall and 2025 assemblies.