

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE TWIN CITIES

CL481: The Spiritual Life of the Congregation
Spring 2008

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(under re-construction)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The spiritual life of the congregation is understood as the ways by which a community (and its members) becomes more acutely aware of God's presence (Holy Spirit), desires it as a way of life, and intentionally develops patterns that encourage faithful living together and in the world as the people of Jesus Christ. The course will explore spirituality grounded in the Holy Spirit, current understandings of church, how the spiritual life can permeate the life of the church, and what it means to live the spiritual life beyond the church.

TEXTBOOKS

- Diana Butler Bass. *Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church is Transforming the Faith*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2006.
- Elizabeth Caldwell. *Leaving Home with Faith: Nurturing the Spiritual Life of Our Youth*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2002.
- Craig Dykstra. *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices* Second Edition, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005.
- Ben Johnson & Andrew Dreitcer. *Beyond the Ordinary: Spirituality for Church Leaders*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001.
- Eric Law. *The Wolf Shall Dwell With the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community*. St Louis: Chalice Press, 1993.
- Howard Rice. *The Pastor as Spiritual Guide*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1998.
- Daniel Wolpert. *Creating a Life with God: The Call of Ancient Prayer Practices*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2003.
- Karen Marie Yust. *Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004
- Yaconelli, Mark. *Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.

COURSE SCHEDULE and ASSIGNMENTS

- The course will meet on campus three times: Thursday evenings, 6:00 p.m. - 9:15 p.m., February 7, February 14, and May 15; attendance for all on-campus classes is required. The course requires on-line work during each week of the term. Most weeks, this will include readings, posting responses to questions regarding the readings, and responding to classmates' postings. Reading and posting groups will include four or five students. Specific schedules for these assignments will be listed in the course assignments. Materials will be posted on the Moodle site for this course.
- Students will be assigned to Spiritual Companion groups of three or four. These groups will meet on-line once a week for at least 30 minutes; the regular meeting time of these groups will be established by the group members. Using *Creating a Life with God: The Call of Ancient Prayer Practices* as the resource, each student

will engage in a different spiritual practice three times each week, and will share their responses to these practices with their spiritual companions. This is also a time to share one's spiritual journey with others in a confidential setting.

- A mid-term paper on one's understanding of the theology of spirituality and ecclesiology will be posted by March 7, drawing on course work and discussions through February 28th. This paper is expected to be 5-6 pages and guidelines will be presented in class February 14th.
- A final paper/project will be posted before class May 15th, and will be presented in class. The paper will be a re-write/expansion of the mid-term paper, and will describe a three-hour event to nurture one aspect of the spiritual life of a congregation. Guidelines will be presented in class February 14th.

SCHEDULE

Each week includes an assignment on Moodle; this is a summary of topics, text readings and assignment due dates

1. **February 7 (class meeting) Theology of Spirituality**
Topics include a spiritual framework and the congregation as spiritual community. Also, this class will introduce the course syllabus and resources, as well as provide opportunities for community building.
2. **February 14 (class meeting) What is 'church'?**
Reading: *Wolpert*, Chapter 1, *Butler Bass*, pp. 1-70;
Complete assignment on Moodle
Posting on Study Group by Monday (18th); responses by Thursday (21st)
3. **February 15-21 The changing church**
Readings: *Wolpert*, Chapter 3; identified selections from www.EmergentVillage.com and other posted materials
4. **February 22-28 Approaches to Spirituality**
Read: *Wolpert*, Chapter 2, *Butler Bass* (complete)
Topics: the spirituality shaped by the Holy Spirit, the Christian spiritual life
5. **February 29-March 6 Deepening the community's relationship with God**
Readings: *Wolpert*, Chapter 4 and from on-line sources
Topics include community practices such as worship, prayer, and music. We will also explore ways groups in the church can deepen their sense of God's presence
6. **March 7 – 13 Spring break**
****Mid-term paper: posted by March 7th**
7. **March 14-27 Spiritual life of church leaders**
(This a 2 week period, as it includes Holy Week and Easter)
Reading: *Wolpert*, Chapter 5 and *Johnson and Dreitcer*
Posting will include a self assessment of one's own spiritual life

8. **March 21-27 Living as Spiritual Community**
Reading: *Wolpert*, Chapter 6, *Rice* and *Law*
9. **March 28-April 3 Spirituality of Education and Nurture**
Reading: *Wolpert*, Chapter 7 and *Dykstra*
10. **April 4-10 Spirituality of Families**
Reading: *Wolpert*, Chapter 8 and *Yaconelli*
11. **April 11-17 Spirituality of Youth**
Reading: *Wolpert*, Chapter 9, *Caldwell* and on-line sources
12. **April 18-24 Spirituality of Children**
Reading: *Wolpert*, Chapter 10, and *Yust*
13. **April 25-May 1 Spirituality of Ministries**
Reading: *Wolpert*, Chapter 11
14. **May 2-8 The Church Dispersed: Living the Life**
Reading: *Wolpert*, Chapter 12
15. **9-15 (class meeting) Project presentations and Conversation**

