

CL896 Theology and Practice of Stewardship
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities
Fall semester 2007, Thursdays 8:15-11:30 AM
Prof. Joseph Bush

INTRODUCTION

This course addresses a range of issues related to the theology and practice of stewardship: ecological stewardship, economic stewardship, stewardship of life, stewardship of political power, stewardship of the gospel and of God's mysteries, and stewardship of the gifts for ministry of the whole people of God. Matters of church finance, fund-raising and church stewardship programs are considered within this broader theological framework.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course has a dual focus as reflected in its title, "theology and practice."

- (1) A first objective of the course is to reflect theologically on the idea of stewardship as a paradigm, root metaphor or polyvalent symbol that is used to express multiple dimensions of faithfulness in church, society and personal lifestyle. **By the end of this course students will be able to articulate a theology of stewardship that integrates these multiple dimensions of faithfulness.**
- (2) A second object of the course is to attend to practical aspects of designing and implementing stewardship programs in congregations in order to (a) promote a holistic understanding of discipleship among congregants as well as to (b) enable the financial health of the congregation as a ministering community. **By the end of this course students will be able to critique stewardship programs by attending to the theology implicit in these programs, and they will be able to construct their own stewardship programs which reflect their own theologies of stewardship.**

COURSE METHODS AND ASSIGNMENTS

The course will be taught as a seminar. A primary vehicle for learning will be class discussion of reading in light of our various experiences in ministry. Assigned reading and topics for each class are detailed in the attached schedule along with due dates for written assignments.

- (1) Because of the importance of class discussion, "class participation" will be worth 25% of the grade for this course. This includes attendance, preparation for class sessions, and constructive contributions to class discussion.
- (2) Students should write a brief précis (concise, single paragraph summary) or abstract of the book assigned for each week of class as well as prepare questions for class discussion. This entire assignment should be no longer than one page per week. (worth 25% of the final grade or approximately 2% for each weekly assignment)

- (3) Students are to critique the stewardship program of a particular congregation, or a stewardship program promoted commercially or by a denominational agency. Students will present these stewardship programs as well as their critiques of these programs in class during the first half of the semester. This is to be a theological critique—attending to the theology implicit in the program in question as well as to the theological issues being raised in the course itself (see below) (Worth 25% of final grade)
- (4) Students' final presentations (scheduled during the second half of the semester) will be by an outline of a stewardship program that might be constructed with a particular congregational context in mind (see below). (worth 25% of final grade)

ASSIGNMENT #3: Program Critique

Select a denominational stewardship program or a stewardship program that is used by a congregation with which you are familiar. Briefly describe that program. Then critique it in light of the course so far (course readings, lectures and class discussion). Are there ways in which you would want to strengthen this program if you were to use it yourself in a congregation? Please note that the purpose of this exercise is not to describe a stewardship program that would be all things to all people. Effective programs are selective in their emphases and in that which they require of people. While you will want to critique this program broadly with reference to the areas covered so far by this course, your prescriptive and constructive suggestions should entail a degree of decision and selectivity based on the actual needs and requirements of a congregation in context.

ASSIGNMENT #4: Final Presentation

For a program with which you are familiar, begin to design a stewardship program. Present this incipient design to the class in summary or outline form. One purpose of this stewardship program should be to encourage financial support for the congregation as an institution engaged in ministry. What other purposes would this stewardship program be designed to promote? Exactly how would these purposes be pursued? Provide as much of the actual detail of this program as you can. Strong presentations will: (1) show coherence between theology and practice of stewardship; (2) be realistically selective for the particular context and its particular requirements; and (3) be lucidly presented so that a third party (other than yourself) could further develop this program and implement it.

EVALUATION

In summary, assignments are weighted as follows:

- 25% Class participation
- 25% Brief précis on assigned reading
- 25% Critique of a stewardship program
- 25% Final presentation

Additionally, see the UTS [Student Handbook](#) for relevant policies, such as that on extensions and inclusive language [2005-06 edition, pp. 40, 102]

SCHEDULE

- Sept. 14 Introductions
- Sept. 21 Stewards of the Gospel
Reading: Birch & Foster, ch. 1; Hall, *The Steward* chs. 1-5, pp. 1-121.
[supplemental reading: Vallet, *Steward Living in Covenant*]
student presentation _____
- Sept. 28 Stewards within Creation I
Reading: Birch & Foster, ch. 2; Hall, *The Steward* pp. 122-258.
Recommended: McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, ch. 16, pp. 231-244
[supplemental: Berry, *Environmental Stewardship*, Intro, chs. 1-4, 11-18]
- Oct. 5 Stewards within Creation II
Reading: Birch & Foster, ch. 3; Cindy Ubben Causey, *Cherish the Gift*;
Karen J. Warren, "An Eco-Feminist Critiques . . ."
<http://www.nacce.org/1998/ecofem.html>
[supplemental: Berry, ed. *Environmental Stewardship*, chs. 5-10, 19-26]
- Oct. 12 Stewards of "God's mysteries"
Reading: Birch & Foster, ch. 4; Dan R. Dick, *Revolutionizing Christian...*
[supplemental: Frank C. Senn, *A Stewardship of the Mysteries*]
- Oct. 19 Stewards of the "manifold gifts of God"
Reading: Birch & Foster, ch. 5; Mary Shramm, *Gifts of Grace*
[supplemental: Jean Morris Trumbauer, *Created and Called*;
Elizabeth O'Conner, *Eighth Day of Creation* (Either Trumbauer's
or O'Conner's books may be substituted for Shramm's)]
- Oct. 26 READING WEEK: no class session
- Nov. 2 Stewards of God's Hospitality
Reading: Birch & Foster, ch. 6; Hellwig, *Guests of God*
[supplemental: Westfield, *Dear Sisters: A Womanist . . .*]
- Nov. 9 Stewardship as Lifestyle
Reading: Birch & Foster, ch. 7; Levan, *The Dancing Steward*
*[supplemental: Hudnut-Beumler, *Generous Saints*]
- Nov. 16 Stewards of Life
Reading: Birch & Foster, ch. 8; Sondra Ely Wheeler, *Stewards of Life*;
Campolo, *20 Hot Potatoes*, ch. 12, pp. 141-7.
[supplemental: Bush, *Gentle Shepherding*]
- Nov. 23 THANKSGIVING no class session. Take time to return thanks.

- Nov. 30 Economic Stewardship
Reading: Birch & Foster, ch. 9; Stackhouse, *Public Theology*, pp. viii-83
*[supplemental: Durall *Creating Congregations . . .*]
- Dec. 7 Stewardship of Political Power
Reading: Birch & Foster, ch. 10; Stackhouse, *Public Theology*, pp. 83-177
[supplemental: Beckmann & Simon, *Grace at the Table*]
- Dec. 14 “Household” Reconsidered
Reading: Birch & Foster, ch. 11; Vallet, *Congregations . . .* pp. 1-135;
[supplemental: Peter Block, *Stewardship*]
- Dec. 19 Stewards of Hope and Imagination
Reading: Birch & Foster, ch. 12; Vallet, *Congregations. . .* pp. 136-213;
John H. Thomas, “Stewards of the Church’s Imagination”
[supplemental: Clifford A. Jones, *From Proclamation to Practice: A Unique African American Approach to Stewardship*]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CL896 Theology and Practice of Stewardship

REQUIRED:

- Birch, Bruce C. and Charles R. Foster. *Steward: Living Disciples in Everyday Life: Participants Manual*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2000.
- Causey, Cindy Ubben. *Cherish the Gift: A Congregational Guide to Earth Stewardship*. Valley Forge: Judson, 1996.
- Dick, Dan R. *Revolutionizing Christian Stewardship for the 21st Century: Lessons from Copernicus*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1999.
- Hall, Douglas John. *The Steward: A Biblical Symbol Come of Age*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and New York: Friendship, 1990.
- Hellwig, Monika K. *Guests of God: Stewards of Divine Creation*. New York: Paulist, 1999.
- Hoge, Dean, Patrick McNamara and Charles Zech. *Plain Talk about Churches and Money*. Alban Institute, 1997.

- Levan, Christopher. *The Dancing Steward: Exploring Christian Stewardship Lifestyles*. Toronto: The United Church Publishing House, 1993.
- Schramm, Mary. *Gifts of Grace*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1982.
- Stackhouse, Max L. *Public Theology and Political Economy: Christian Stewardship in Modern Society*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.
- Vallet, Ronald E. *Congregations at the Crossroads: Remembering to be Households of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Wheeler, Sondra Ely. *Stewards of Life: Bioethics and Pastoral Care*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.
- “RECOMMENDED”
- Campolo, Tony. *20 Hot Potatoes Christians are Afraid to Touch*. Dallas: Word, 1988.
- Foster, Charles R. *Steward: Living Disciples in Everyday Life: Training Manual and Leaders' Guide*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2000.
- McLaren, Brian D. *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I Am a Missional, Evangelical, Post/Protestant, Liberal/Conservative, Mystical/Poetic, Biblical, Charismatic/Contemplative, Fundamentalist/Calvinist, Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Green, Incarnational, Depressed-yet-Hopeful, Emergent, Unfinished CHRISTIAN*. Zondervan: 2004.
- Thomas, John H. “Stewards of the Church’s Imagination,” Address to the Joshua Society, United Theological Seminary, May 20, 2003.
- Warren, Karen J. “An Eco-Feminist Critiques Stewardship Ethics: Excerpts From a 1993 Essay On Environmental Stewardship.” *Earthkeeping News: A Newsletter Of The North American Coalition For Christianity And Ecology*. Vol. 7, No. 4. May/June 1998. <http://www.nacce.org/1998/ecofem.html> .

SUPPLEMENTAL

- Berry, R. J., ed. *Environmental Stewardship*. New York: T & T Clark, 2006.
- Block, Peter. *Stewardship: Choosing Service Over Self-Interest*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1996.
- Beckmann, David and Arthur Simon. *Grace at the Table: Ending Hunger in God's World*. New York: Paulist, 1999.
- Bush, Joseph E., Jr. *Gentle Shepherding: Pastoral Ethics and Leadership*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2006.
- Crumroy, Otto F., Jr., Stan Kukawka and Frank M. Witman. *Church Administration and Finance Manual*. Harrisburg: Morehouse, 1998.
- Durrall, Michael. *Creating Congregations of Generous People*. Alban Institute, 2001.
- Hudnut-Beumler, James. *Generous Saints: Congregations Rethinking Ethics and Money*. Alban Institute, 1999.
- Jones, Clifford A. *From Proclamation to Practice: A Unique African American Approach to Stewardship*. Valley Forge: Judson, 1993.
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