

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE TWIN CITIES
CL481: The Spiritual Life of the Congregation
Spring 2010

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course resource:
www.spiritualtree.org

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.

APPOINTMENTS

Barbara Anne is available for appointments in three modes. You may set a time to meet with her in person or by telephone. If you are unable to be on campus but would like to meet face-to-face, she is also experimenting with meeting by Skype at professorkeely. She will post possible meeting times each week.

COURSE RESOURCE PERSON

The Reverend Kathy Smith is a student in United's Doctor of Ministry Program and took this course in 2008. An ordained Presbyterian, she earned her M. Div from UTS and has served in two congregations. She has interest in the spiritual life of the congregation and will be part of some on-line discussions.

TEXTBOOKS

Required

- Diana Butler Bass. *Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church is Transforming the Faith*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2006.
- Craig Dykstra. *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices* Second Edition, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005.
- Howard Friend. *Gift of an Uncommon Life: The Practice of Contemplative Activism* Alban Institute, 2009.
- 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.
- Robert Schnase. *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Marjorie Thompson. *Soul Feast*
- 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.

Either Miller or Rice:

- James F. Miller. *Go Grow Your Church!* Pilgrim Press.
- Howard Rice. *The Pastor as Spiritual Guide*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1998.

Recommended

- Corrine Ware. *Discover Your Spiritual Type*. Alban.

ASSIGNMENTS

- It would be helpful to identify a specific congregation to be the focus for some of your work. This will give you an on-going community upon which to reflect.
- The course will meet on campus two times: February 12 and May 21; attendance for on-campus classes is required. The course requires on-line work during each week of the term. This will include readings, posting responses to questions regarding the readings, and responding to classmates' postings. Most weeks you will respond to the same group (6 students).
- If you have any problems working on-line, email both bakeely@unitedseminary.edu and computersupport@unitedseminary.edu. Responses to your concerns will be made during office hours of computer support staff.
- There will be scheduled opportunities to be live on-line with Barbara Anne and other students. Each student is required to participate in 2 of these; they will be times of reflection and integration of course material.
- As one encourages the spiritual life of the congregation, one must also attend to one's own spiritual life. The resources for this aspect of the course are Soul Feast by Marjorie Thompson and materials that are posted on www.spiritualtree.org
- A final paper/project will be posted before May 20th and will be presented in class.
 - Part 1: write a 6-7-page paper presenting your understanding of the theology of spirituality and ecclesiology. Citation of course material is expected.
 - Part 2: will describe a three-hour event to nurture one aspect of the spiritual life of a congregation.

SCHEDULE

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

- *By Tuesday midnight post the assignment*
- *By Friday midnight respond to all members of your small group*

February 12th **What is a "spiritual life"?** Class will meet; getting acquainted; the on-line process; spiritual types using Corrine Ware

The week of

February 15th **Theology of Spirituality**

Read: "Church Alive in the Holy Spirit" (www.spiritualtree.org)
Thompson. Ch. 1

February 22nd **What is 'church'?**

Read: Butler Bass, pp. 1-70 & Thompson, Ch. 2
The 2 posted articles on the emerging church
Emergent Church: Maturing or Dying?
Emergent Church Movement

March 1 **Spiritual roots**

Read Schnase & Thompson, Ch. 3
“Benedictine values” www.spiritualtree.org

March 8 **Church as Community**

Read Butler Bass & Thompson, Ch 4 &
“Community as Spiritual Patterning” www.spiritualtree.org

March 15 **Spiritual patterns**

Read Friend & Thompson, Ch. 5 & “spiritual roots” www.spiritualtree.org
Live chats with BAK

March 22 Reading week (no assignment)

March 29 (Two weeks, including Easter vacation)

to April 9 **Spirituality of the Pastor and religious leader**

Read Johnson and Driecter; and Rice *or* Miller & Thompson, Ch. 6

April 12 **Spiritual Leadership in/of the Congregation**

Read Law & Thompson, Ch. 7
“Living as Spiritual Community” www.spiritualtree.org

April 19 **Education as spiritual patterning**

Read Dykstra & Thompson, Ch.8

April 26 **Spiritual formation of children and families**

Read Yust

May 3 **Spiritual formation of youth**

Read Yaconelli

May 10 The Church Dispersed: Ordinary Spirituality

Read Thompson, Ch. 9 & www.spiritualtree.org

May 17 Class will meet on May 21 to present final projects; course evaluations

CL481 2010 assignments, posted on Moodle

Class meeting: What is a "spiritual life"?

Class will meet; getting acquainted; the online process and schedule
Explore "spiritual types"

Theology of Spirituality

Posting: Discuss the following questions:

What is Christian spirituality for you?

BAK uses the image of the tree. What images help you understand Christian spirituality?

Is the Holy Spirit a helpful connection for you, or is there a better one for you?

What is 'church'?

Assignment: In addition to the syllabus reading:

- read the attached articles
- explore the internet, finding sites that talk about 'church' (do not use emergentvillage.com or emergentchurch.com)

- By Tuesday midnight,
 - post two sites you have found, how each defines/understands 'church' and what you find useful about each one (1-2 paragraphs per site)
 - one paragraph responding to the Butler Bass reading
 - your response to the question "what is church?" (2-3 paragraphs), integrating the above material)
- By Friday midnight,
 - respond at least once to each of your group member's postings

Spiritual Roots

Choose two values that are discussed by Schnase and Keely. Compare and contrast the presentations, along with describing why each value is essential for the spiritual life of a congregation (2 paragraphs per value)

Discuss what the impact of not having these values might have for a congregation's spiritual health (1 paragraph)

As you discuss these values with each other, draw upon your and each others' descriptions of spirituality posted the first week. How do these values affirm and/or expand your understanding of a congregation's spiritual life?

Church as Community

Having now read all of Butler Bass, think about the language used in Part III, like *conversion* and *metanoia*. Then choose one of the "signposts" and describe how in your ministry this signpost might help tourists to become pilgrims. In this process, put yourself into conversation with Butler Bass.

Spiritual Patterns

Take one chapter of Friend to be in conversations with. In that chapter:

- Present the key ideas that Friend is addressing
- How do you respond to them from your perspective?

Friend takes each chapter and names a "gift" that it describes.

- Take time to reflect upon your own life and ministry.
- We are assured in scripture that we are all gifted by God.
- Name one "gift" that you know in your life and tell one story that tells us about the gift and how it is evident in your ministry.

Draw upon your readings of the other chapters as you respond to your colleagues.

Spirituality of Pastor and Religious Leaders

Please identify if you read Miller or Rice, along with Johnson & Dreitcer.

Consider these possibilities:

- Without leadership that is growing spiritually, a church will struggle
- Spiritual leadership has to be explicit or it will fail to model spiritual growth for members
- Spirituality permeates every corner of the work of a pastor/lay leader
- Lay leadership often fail to see themselves as "spiritual leaders" because that is what the clergy are paid to do.

Post a thought-out response to one of these possibilities, drawing on both books you have read.

Education as Spiritual Patterning

After reading the whole text

- re-read Bass (Forward) and Dykstra's "Introduction: Mystery and Manners"
- read the Study Guide, pp. 169-171
- Review Ch. 6: "The Formative Power of the Congregation"
- read the Study Guide, pp. 184-187

Post your response to:

- What is your understanding of the "mystery and manners" of spiritual formation?
- What are two ways you might bring them (or a specific one) to life in a congregation?
- What would you hope for in such a process?

Children's Spiritual Lives

This is a terrific book for both church leaders and parents.

- If you had the opportunity to teach this material in a congregation, what are three of Yust's insights that you would want to focus upon and why?
- Any other comments you wish to make about her subject?

Youth Ministry as Spiritual Formation

Yaconelli places youth ministry into the heart of what we have been studying and discussing.

- Read Yaconelli, exploring his approach to youth and ministry with youth and their families
- Using page 240 "three approaches to youth ministry" and consider:

- Of the 3 approaches, which is most familiar to you? What does that suggest about your experience of youth ministry?
- What about his approach engages you as you consider the pastoral role of spiritual formation of youth?
- What excites you and/or concerns you about the "contemplative" approach?

Topic 13: Everyday Spirituality

Reflect on the course discussions and your own understanding of how spirituality permeates every day of One's life. What is one conversation you would want to have with (children/youth/adults) in your congregation about how to live the spiritual life well in every day live? What issues might you raise, what questions might you ask, and what might you want to share with them?