

CD 4001/5001/301 CONGREGATIONS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY
JUNE 4-8, 2012
Seabury-Western Theological Seminary

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Congregations constitute the largest volunteer gathering of religious people in North America. Yet as institutions many Episcopal/Anglican and mainline Protestant congregations are in serious decline. This course will examine the religious congregation from a theological, historical, sociological, economic, and leadership perspective. Two major questions guide the inquiry: What is a religious congregation? Why have one?

Course Objectives and Goals:

1. To engage in theological reflection centered on the nature and purpose of the church from a “missional” perspective.
2. To engage in discussions wrestling with the implications of this “missional” approach for Episcopal/Anglican congregations as well as congregations of other traditions.
3. To share in community worship in order to remember “whose we are.”
4. To examine the research around characteristics of congregational vitality as a way to frame directions for congregational development.
5. To explore characteristics of “multicultural” congregations as a way of looking at race and ethnicity in forming faith communities. This exploration is to assist church leaders in working toward radical hospitality and engaging with the wider community’s diversity.
6. To strengthen participants in advanced Doctor of Ministry studies in their identity as congregational leaders and scholars for the church.

Basic Expectations of ALL participants:

- Full attendance at all class sessions and preparation of required readings.
- Four one-page reflection papers examining each of the assigned books.
- Participation in class discussions and interactive learning experiences. Evaluative Criteria: Comments and questions show a familiarity with the required reading and readiness to engage the implications for congregational vitality and leadership.
- All course participants are to follow R-E-S-P-E-C-T guidelines:
 - Responsibility for what you say and feel without blaming;
 - Empathic listening;
 - be Sensitive to difference, including communication styles;
 - Ponder what you hear and feel before you speak;
 - Examine your own assumptions and perceptions;
 - keep Confidentiality;
 - Tolerate, even trust, ambiguity.

(From Eric Law, www.kscopeinstitute.org, adapted by Marilyn Legge at Emmanuel College, University of Toronto.)

Required Reading:

Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary* (New York: HarperOne, 2006).
ISBN 978-0-06-143434-1

Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Become One* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009).
ISBN 978-0-8010-7212-3

Diana Butler Bass, *The Practicing Congregation: Imagining a New Old Church*. (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2004). ISBN-10: 1566993059

Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, *A House of Prayer for All Peoples* (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2002). ISBN 1-56699-282-6

The Anglican Theological Review, Volume 92 (Winter 2010), Number 1. (These articles will be available on the Moodle classroom site and are available once you are assigned a Moodle username and password)

“From Church-Shaped Mission to Mission-Shaped Church,” by Christopher Duraisingh
“The Church Awake: Becoming the Missional People of God,” by Stephanie Spellers

Required 1-Page Reflection Papers on Each Book

The reflection papers (1-page only for each of the four books and may consist of phrases, not full paragraphs) are to cover the following and are **due by the first class, June 4, 2012**:

- The book's strengths
- One aspect of the book that struck you personally as you think about your calling
- The book's shortcomings
- Ways the book helps you think about ministry
- (If not covered in the above: Ways the book helps you think about congregations)

Course Requirements (For participants taking course for academic credit):

For Masters-level Participants:

1. Post your 1-page reflection paper in each of the designated **Moodle** forums at <http://seabury.mrooms3.net>
2. Following class discussion on each text, post an additional 2-paragraph Moodle reflection that builds on your thinking, reaffirms your earlier perspectives, and/or suggests new ways of conceptualizing ministry in the 21st century.
3. Post a 1-paragraph Moodle response to each of your colleagues' reading reflections.
4. A final paper (10-12 pages or 2500-3000 words, typewritten) where you explore the following:

Develop a well-crafted, organized, and articulate essay whereby you explicate the nature and purpose of the church for contemporary times, giving special attention to the course readings and classroom discussions. What does it mean to be a community of faith? What does it mean to be a religious congregation? Develop this essay with your own ministry setting and your unique gifts, interests, and calling in mind?

(Assessment criteria for this paper will be posted on the Moodle site.)

Post on Moodle by 5:00 p.m., Thursday, June 28th.

1. Post a Response to Each Final Paper posted on Moodle. **Due by 5:00 p.m. Monday, July 2nd.**

(Assessment Criteria for this Response will be posted on the Moodle site.)

Doctor of Ministry Level Participants:

1. Post your 1-page reflection paper in each of the designated Moodle forums at <http://seabury.mrooms3.net>
2. Following class discussion on each text, post an additional 2-paragraph Moodle reflection that builds on your thinking, reaffirms your earlier perspectives, and/or suggests new ways of conceptualizing ministry in the 21st century.
3. Post a 1-paragraph Moodle response to each of your colleagues' reading reflections.
4. A final paper (15-18 pages or 3750-4500 words, typewritten) where you explore the following:

Develop a ministry project whereby you explore the difference a “missional” approach to community faith life would have in your ministry setting. Define what you mean by “missional.” Delineate the social, cultural, theological and faith context of your ministry that would lead to a shift in congregational self-understanding. Why does your congregation need a shift? What are the resistances to such a shift?

Write a paper that outlines the project, that includes your rationale for this particular project, and that covers the above concerns and questions. If you are able to implement your project, give a summary of the results with feedback from participants. What led to a deeper faith understanding in your congregation from this project? What needs more reflection in order to design and implement a more satisfactory project in the future?

(For persons for whom the above project and paper would not work in your setting, please negotiate a more applicable topic and paper assignment with Professor Harlow.)

Post on Moodle by 5:00 p.m. Friday, June 29, 2012.

(Assessment criteria for this Project Paper will be posted on the Moodle site.)

5. Post a Response to Each Final Paper posted on Moodle. **Due by 5:00 p.m. Monday, July 2nd.**

((Assessment Criteria for this Response will be posted on the Moodle site.))

Criteria for Overall Course Participation Evaluation:

- a.) Contribution to the class discussion of inquiry;
- b.) Evidence of having read course texts;
- c.) Originality, clarity and strength of writing;
- d.) Creativity, critical judgment, constructive engagement and imagination;
- e.) Accuracy and precision of scholarship, as well as proper use of style manual for footnotes, bibliographic references, grammar and word usage;
- f.) Evidence of assimilation of course insights; and
- g.) Ability to draw connections between course topics, readings, and class discussions to one's own ministry.

Evaluation for a Grade in the Course

50% for attendance, readings, active engagement in class exercises, and class discussion participation

50 % for final paper