



**Center for Ministry
and Lay Training**
Phillips Theological Seminary

AREA OF MINISTERIAL PRACTICE: MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

COURSE NUMBER: MCW 9

COURSE TITLE: Mission of the Church in the World

DATES: August 21-October 15, 2023

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(home)

Course Description:

Jesus called us to follow him into the world. This course will focus on the critical importance of Mission in the life of every congregation and the Church at large. We will engage this theologically and biblically. Students will explore many alternatives and ideas for doing congregational mission, not only in their own communities but globally. By the end of the course students will articulate the relationship of mission to the gospel, create Bible studies on the subject, and explore possibilities for mission settings for use in their congregations.

Prerequisites: None

Course Overview:

This course will be focused on the critical importance of Mission in the life of every congregation and the Church at large. We will engage this theologically and biblically. Students will explore many alternatives and ideas for doing congregational mission, not only in our own communities but globally.

Required texts:

- *Going Global: A Congregation's Introduction to Mission Beyond Our Borders*, by Gary Nelson, Gordon King, and Terry Smith; Chalice Press, St. Louis, 2011. **ISBN: 0827212577**
- *Borderland Churches: A Congregation's Introduction to Missional Living*, by Gary Nelson, Chalice Press, St. Louis, 2008. **ISBN: 0827202385**
- "The Liturgy of Abundance, the Myth of Scarcity," (article) by Walter Brueggemann, *Christian Century*, March 24-31, 1999, pages 342-347. (To be provided at the online class site.)

Suggested Bibliography:

- *Sabbath and Jubilee*, by Richard Lowery, Chalice Press, St. Louis, 2000. (former textbook)

- *Resident Aliens*, by Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1990.
- *The Underground Church*, by Robin Meyers, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2012.
- *Small, Strong Congregations*, by Kennon L. Callahan, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2000.
- *Mission: the Small Church Reaches Out*, Anthony Pappas and Scott Planting, Judson Press, Valley Forge, 1993. (former textbook)
- *Missional Worship/Worshipful Mission*, by Ruth A. Meyers, Wm. B Eerdmans Publ., 2014.

Course objectives: By the completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Outline a mission enterprise for the church—proposed or already in place—including where its funding comes from, who are the beneficiaries, where must leadership and support come from, how partnership is shared, and why the mission is necessary to the Rule of God and to congregation’s identity as the Body of Christ. Who holds your congregation accountable to this mission?
2. List at least three global mission projects that your congregation could participate in, what Christian practices they comprise and how they articulate God’s place in the world. How do they participate in God’s larger mission of redemption, liberation, reconciliation and renewal of creation in the local community and the world?
3. Locate at least ten scripture passages that display an understanding of mission as God’s action. What do they say, if anything, about the church’s essential purpose and function? From a passage selected by the instructor, the student will be able to organize a detailed Bible study on mission in her congregation.
4. Articulate in concrete terms what mission has to do with the Gospel of Jesus Christ (the “Good News”).

Course requirements:

1. Each student will read and engage the required texts above. Although the suggested reading list is not required, the student will find a wealth of insight by reading some or all of them. Students also will be asked to use their Bibles throughout the course.
2. Participation is important. The character of an online class and of our busy lives means that we might not always get to meet at one online class time. So, students will be asked to meet as each is able before posted deadlines. Weekly, I ask each student to create an original post and respond to at least two other students’ posts with more than just "I agree" statements.

Students will relate not only to fellow students but, when appropriate, to the instructor.
Discussion will count for 50% of the final grade.

3. On October 5, each student will be asked to produce an outline plan for at least an hour-long Bible study on either one of two scriptures selected by the instructor: *Isaiah 58:1-12 and Luke 4:16-21*. This might be a Bible study a leader would conduct in a Sunday school class, board meeting or other congregational forum, and its purpose would be to help educate a congregation in its critical call to the church to do mission. **This assignment will count for 20% of the final grade.** (If the student is fulfilling requirements for Disciples standing, the Bible Study might be added to student's portfolio on completion.)

4. Each student will be asked to write a five-page essay answering the question, "Why is the mission of the Church (global *and* local) critical to the message of the good news of God in Jesus Christ?" Specifically:

"Gary Nelson hints at his own concept of 'good news' (gospel) in the textbook Borderland Churches (page 48): 'It is in the church that we see a glimpse of the enormous potential of the upside-down kingdom of God, where the first shall be last, the least shall be greatest, and where those without hope begin to dream dreams again. Here, the person far from God finds forgiveness, the outsider finds a place to belong, and where those who in the eyes of the world are nothing find possibilities in the affirmation of God.'

- A. In your estimation, how does this constitute (or not) 'the good news' that is reflected in the Bible?**
- B. If you were writing a book or preaching a sermon, how would YOU describe the gospel (good news) in your own words?**
- C. How is your description different from Nelson's or the same?**
- D. Why is the gospel critical to church mission?**

Some of this essay may be based on additional required and suggested readings, and research. But I especially want to know what you think. As part of the essay, the student will be asked to outline his/her *own* idea of what the mission of the church is regarding the world outside their boundaries. **This will be due within a week after the final class (no later than October 22). It will count for 30% of the student's final evaluation.** (If the student is a Disciple seeking standing in a region, this paper might be added to student's portfolio on completion.)

Grading scale: A, B, C, D, and F

- • 90-100 = A
- • 80-89 = B
- • 70-79 = C
- • 60-69 = D
- • 50-59 = F

Other policies and information:

This class was designed to address the following section of the

Disciples of Christ Sixteen Areas of Ministerial Practice

9. Mission of the Church in the World: Be able to understand and articulate the centrality of the call to mission given by Jesus Christ and the prophets. Be able to empower congregations to engage in mission from our doorsteps to the ends of the earth.

Learning Outcomes: (Outcomes in bold to be emphasized)

- **Articulate an understanding of the world as a place of God’s activity—witnessing and participating in God’s mission of redemption, liberation, reconciliation, and renewal of creation in our immediate communities and in the world;**
- **Teach and practice in the Christian community what it means to be participants in and recipients of God’s mission activity in the varied contexts of congregation, community and the world;**
- **Identify an array of practices of Christian mission in the immediate and global community and discover connections with theologies that undergird those practices;**
- Articulate a theology of mission which is consistent with both our immediate Christian community’s context, as expressed in our Church’s document “From our doorsteps. . . ,” and our global mission philosophy as proposed by Global Ministries/DOM;
- Exercise an understanding of the Disciples of Christ Division of Overseas Ministry’s understanding of “critical presence” in its global work and the role of congregations to serve as “Global Mission Partners” in the mission of the church worldwide;
- Articulate the long history of Disciples mission practices and theologies that shaped, and continue to shape, Disciples of Christ ecumenical relationships, cross-cultural encounters, interfaith encounters and dialogues;
- Show an appreciation for and commitment to ministries and mission practices that nourish and sustain healthy local Christian and non-Christian communities, develop global mission partner congregations, promote justice, foster peace, seek reconciliation, and live in the expectation of the coming Reign of God.