

The Course Of Study
North Texas Conference Extension/Saturday School
Course 524 - Theological Reflection: Practice of Ministry

Fall Semester 2019 – class sessions 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Saturdays of Sept. 21, Oct. 19, Nov. 16
North Texas Conference Ministry Center, Plano Tx.

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Welcome to the North Texas Conference Extension School of the Course Of Study, and Course 524 – *Theological Reflection: Practice of Ministry*. In the overall plan of the basic Course Of Study, this course is offered as a capstone to students' learning and growth. Its focus is integrative: to serve your integration of the biblical, theological, and practical aspects of ministry - *your* ministry – as a pastor.

As such, the **course objectives** are four:

1. That you be able to state clearly the nature & mission of the Church and the relation of that nature & mission to pastoral ministry > *your* ministry.
2. That you be able to articulate a Trinitarian theology (or theological approach) for the practice of ministry.
3. That you show an ability to reflect theologically.
4. That you develop a plan for lifelong theological reading, reflection, and growth (as a pastor and as a disciple of Jesus Christ).

With this course's opportunities come certain **expectations**:

1. That you attend all class sessions; and, if you cannot attend a class session due to illness, family concerns, or unavoidable pastoral responsibilities you communicate with me in a timely manner.
2. That you do all within your power to meet the deadlines for written work. If circumstances interfere with that ability, communicate with me in that timely manner.
3. That you honor and follow the standards of academic integrity as established by the Course Of Study and the North Texas Conference Extension School.
4. That you enjoy each class session .. participating, listening, sharing, respecting those on the journey with you.
5. That if you have questions about class information, assignments, or instruction you seek me out.

Required reading:

1. William H. Willimon – PASTOR: THE THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF ORDAINED MINISTRY, revised edition (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016)
2. Charles Wood & Ellen Blue – ATTENTIVE TO GOD: THINKING THEOLOGICALLY IN MINISTRY (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008)
3. Kenneth Carder & Lacey Warner – GRACE TO LEAD: PRACTICING LEADERSHIP IN THE WESLEYAN TRADITION (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education & Ministry, UMC 2016)
4. Stephen Seamands – MINISTRY IN THE IMAGE OF GOD: THE TRINITARIAN SHAPE OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE (Downers Grove, IL.: IVP Books)

In addition, we will refresh our core-pastoral ministry reflections utilizing the 2016 BOOK OF DISCIPLINE, as noted below.

***Reading schedule:** if not already in your library, please order/purchase these books immediately and begin reading:

- September 21/class session 1: Willimon, pgs. 9-136
Wood & Blue, pgs. v-24
Book Of Discipline 2016, pgs. 47-top of 55, 80-top of 101, 275-top of 278
- October 19/class session 2: Willimon, pgs. 137-238
Carder & Warner, pgs. 9-53
Seamands, pgs. 9-74
- November 16/class session 3: Willimon, pgs. 239-339
Carder & Warner, pgs. 55-92
Seamands, pgs. 75-178

‘Expectation is that all the assigned reading per session will be completed in advance of the session. However, life and ministry can jump up, inhaling time & energy. So: don’t panic if demand gets in the way of completing the reading; read what you can, and come to class.

Writing & other assignments:

= Writing and other assignments will come in three (3) forms:

- a. For grade: brief papers due *after* class sessions according to date-deadlines stipulated below
- b. For grade: 500-600 word essay, during class sessions 1 and 3; topic of each essay will be communicated to class members one week before the respective class session
- c. facilitate a 20-minute case study of your choosing from Wood & Blue during class session 2 (part of your course-class participation grade element)

= Brief papers due after class sessions:

➤ **After class session 1. Due by 11:59 p.m. on Oct. 4**

(Paper #1)

In ATTENTIVE TO GOD, Wood & Blue define “theology”.

- a. Why do they think that particular definition of reflection-in-practice is so essential to pastoral ministry? Evaluate the appropriateness of their definition from your perspective and exposure to-date.
- b. Identify and offer response to Blue & Wood’s MAIN POINTS in each of their *Part One* subsections: *The Shaping of Attentiveness, Elements of Theological Judgment, and Vision and Discernment*. (If helpful, you might want to context your comments in a specific, practical scenario; example: you are leading an adult Sunday School class in a discussion of “Why Have Pastors At All?”.)

(up to 4 pages)

(Paper #2)

In his Introduction of PASTOR, Bishop Willimon describes the ministry of all Christians, and pastoral ministry, as a “vocation”.

- a. Discuss his understanding of vocation. Share your insights about Christian vocation. From your perspective and exposure, evaluate his conclusion about ministry as vocation.
- b. Also in his Introduction, Willimon offers *four guiding assumptions* for engaging in, and living out, ministry in Jesus’ name. Identify those four assumptions. Give a brief statement to each about how, or how not, that assumption resonates with your experience as a pastor or local church leader. At this present time, how are you “living within” one or some of these assumptions?

(up to 4 pages)

➤ **After class session 2. Due by 11:59 p.m. on Nov. 2**

(Paper #3)

In his opening chapter – TRINITARIAN MINISTRY: WHY IT MATTERS – Professor Seamands understands our Christian ministry to be “*of* Jesus Christ, the *Son*, *to* the *Father*, *through* the *Holy Spirit*, *for* the sake of *the church and the world*”. He then devotes the remainder of the chapter to fleshing out this sentence and seeking to demonstrate the significance of the doctrine (and our experiencing) of the Trinity for the vocation of ministry.

- a. Discuss Seamands’ basic idea. Note any particular resonating-place within what he says or uncertainty about what he says for you.

- b. To Seamands, the most relevant, fruitful, and satisfying experience of a pastor's personhood & ministry, comes from knowing and loving God in God's trinitarian fullness - and having both the *life* and *work* of ministry reflect God's inner trinitarian life and outward trinitarian mission: briefly reflect upon this dual-notion (the *life* of a pastor and the *work* of a pastor) and the suggested connectedness between the two: share any personal conviction, question, or a sense of challenge about this connectedness. *For the sake of Church and world*, what would you say toward the crucial-ness of this connectedness?

(up to 4 pages)

(Paper #4)

In Willimon's chapter 3, THE PASTOR AS PRIEST: THE LEADERSHIP OF WORSHIP, the First Apology of Justin Martyr is identified as offering a time-honored liturgical model for the worship life of the congregation. Eight common acts therein are noted by Willimon as also being insightful for the basic shape & practice of pastoral work. Said another way, all the types, or forms, of pastoral work .. as suggested in Justin Martyr's liturgical model .. are part of the vital PRIESTLY ministry of pastors.

- a. From your own experience and prior studies briefly note what a "Priest" is in the biblical record/definition. What is the priest's purpose & function toward God and God's people?
- b. How might these eight common acts give full-substance to the priestly work of pastors?
- c. How might everything a pastor does, and who a pastor is, be appropriately full of priestly potential?
- d. Include the comments in Willimon's end-note #7 on page 352 and end-note #6 on page 354 in your reflecting on the priestly ministry of pastors.

(up to 5 pages)

➤ **After class session 3. Due by 11:59 p.m. on Dec. 3**

(Paper #5)

In a broadly reaching way – for the sake of your pastoral identity & practice - discuss the topic of LEADERSHIP (or LEADER-SHIP) as the overarching element or focus of your ministry .. a primacy of Pastor as Leader in your settings. In so doing, consider things amid the following:

- a. Your personal discernment about this as informed by insights gained from your journey in The Course Of Study, the authors & discussion of this Course 524, from mentors, in the example of the Lord Jesus Christ and other keystone biblical leaders of God's People, and the brothers Wesley.

- b. What you are drawn to from images, metaphors, and functions of the pastoral office.
- c. How God's Triune presence & redeeming doings could reveal themselves through your pastoral presence & leadership: in your *life* among the people and in your *work* with the people.
- d. From what is current & probable in the future: what demands upon the pastor – or pleas toward the pastor - do you hear from Church and world? How might those things influence or shape your leadership?
- e. If you feel the necessity of a counter-point to, or alternative for, Leadership in your calling's fundamental definition, briefly introduce that counter-point or alternative as a possibility for you.
- f. SO, at Course's end, in one paragraph what would you propose the nature & mission of the Church of Jesus Christ to be, AND the nature & mission of pastors to be amid the nature & mission of the Church?
- g. And in closing, briefly discuss: (select one)
 - 1) benefits from
 - 2) temptations about
 - 3) resources for

a pastor's commitment to *regularly think theologically* about her/his calling, life, and practice --- and what you intend to do toward it going forward, for the sake of Church, world, and yourself.

(up to 10 pages)

Course Grading:	class participation	20%
	papers 1-4	50% (12.5% each)
	paper 5	20%
	in-class essays	10% (5% each)