

**The Course of Study**  
**Course 524 - Theological Reflection: Practice of Ministry**

**North Texas Conference Extension School**  
Fall Semester 2021 – class sessions 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.  
Saturdays of Oct. 2, Oct. 30, Dec. 4  
North Texas Conference Ministry Center, Plano Tx.

**Instructors:**

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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 strategic plan of the basic Course of Study, this course is offered as a capstone to students' learning and growth. Its intent is integrative: to serve your integration of the biblical, theological, and practical aspects of your ministry as a pastor in the United Methodist experience & tradition.

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 your pastoral ministry.
2. That you be able to articulate a Trinitarian theology (or theological approach) for the practice of ministry.
3. That you show a competent ability to reflect theologically.
4. As a pastor and as a disciple of Jesus Christ, you develop a plan for lifelong theological reading, reflection, and growth.

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

1. That you attend all class sessions. If you cannot attend a class session due to illness, family concerns, or unavoidable pastoral responsibilities you communicate with your instructors in advance. Missing more than one class session should prompt you to drop the course.
2. That you do all within your power to meet the deadlines for submitting written work. If circumstances interfere with that ability, communicate with your instructors in a timely manner and in advance.
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 open yourself to enjoy & benefit from each class session by a glad participation: listening well to others, creatively thinking, and sharing your insights & contributions in a spirit of respect for those on this journey with you.

5. That if you have questions about class information, assignments, or instruction you visit with your instructors.

### **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, 2005)

These titles can be purchased at Cokesbury or Amazon, paperback or e-book.

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

**\*Reading schedule.** If not already in your library, purchase these four books and begin reading asap according to the schedule:

- October 2/class session 1: Willimon, pgs. 9-74  
Wood & Blue, pgs. v-24  
Carder & Warner, pgs. 9-17  
Book Of Discipline 2016 pgs. 80-101, 275-278
- October 30/class session 2: Willimon, pgs. 75-155  
Carder & Warner, pgs. 19-53  
Seamands, pgs. 9-74
- December 4/class session 3: Willimon, pgs. 227-238, 254-262, 281-339  
Carder & Warner, pgs. 55-92  
Seamands, pgs. 75-178

Our expectation is that all the assigned readings per session will be completed in advance of the session. However, life and ministry throw curveballs, inhaling time & energy. So: don't panic if demands 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: two 500-600 word essays written during a one-hour writing period during class sessions 1 and 3; each essay's topic will be communicated to class members one week before the class session so you can be thinking on it. **Do not write the essay before class.**
- c. Facilitate a 20-25 minute case study of your choosing from Wood & Blue during class session 2. (will be part of your class participation grade component)

= The following brief papers will be due *after* the class sessions as follows:

**After class session 1. Due by 11:59 p.m. on October 18:**

**(Paper #1)**

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 personal 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 into” one or some of these assumptions?
- c. In chapter 2, Willimon identifies a number of images for ministry in the twenty-first century. With which image do you most closely identify on a “good day” in ministry and why? With which image do you most closely identify on a “difficult day” in ministry and why? After which image do you most aspire to model your ministry and why?

**(up to 7 pages)**

➤ **After class session 2. Due by 11:59 p.m. on November 15:**

**(Paper #2)**

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 this basic idea of Seamands. Note any particular resonating-place within what he says - or challenge about what he says for you. What could be a “next step” you might take with this definition of Christian ministry?
- 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 #3)**

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 or definition. What is the priest’s purpose & function toward God? Toward God’s people?
- b. How might these eight related 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. Involve 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. 20:**

**(Paper #4)**

In a broadly reaching way discuss the topic of LEADERSHIP as the overarching element or focus of your ministry: a primacy of “Pastor as Leader” in your settings. In so doing, you are welcome to consider some or all of the following:

- a. Your *personal discernment* about You as Leader as informed by insights gained from your study/growth journey from The Course Of Study, the resources of this Course

524, from mentors (lay or clergy), from the example of the Lord Jesus Christ and the brothers Wesley.

- b. What are you uniquely drawn to from *images, metaphors, and functions* of the pastoral office?
- c. How God's Triune presence & redeeming activity could reveal themselves through your pastoral presence & leadership: in BOTH 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.

**And:** at Course's end, in *100 words* 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?

**(up to 10 pages)**

**Course Grading:**

class participation	20%
papers 1, 2, & 3	50% (16.5% each)
paper 4	20%
in-class essays	10% (5% each)

