

3.521 Church Administration, Leadership and Polity

Spring Semester, 2007

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Rationale

Those called to lead in congregations and other ecclesiastical and public arenas require an in-depth knowledge base, as well as a set of practical skills and abilities. The purpose of this course is to enable students to develop a personal theology of administrative leadership, explore organizational dynamics at play in congregations and other settings, and learn practical approaches to common challenges of planning, budgeting and fiscal stewardship, personnel management, and coping with conflict. To function effectively within a church “system,” the leader must also understand its structure and way of being or polity. An in-depth knowledge of the ELCA’s (or one’s own church) constitutions, organization patterns, code of ethics, and resources is also crucial to effective leadership.

Objectives

This course explores theological foundations and theoretical frameworks for “leadership,” and provides practical approaches to real life situations encountered in most parish and other ecclesiastical and public ministry settings. By means of readings, lectures and class discussions, as well as case studies and presentations, students will grow in confidence as church leaders. It is expected that by the end of the course, students will be able to:

- articulate a theological foundation for mission-oriented public leadership in faith communities;
- evidence a systemic approach to complex interpersonal and organizational dynamics at play in small groups and congregations;
- explicate a framework for analyzing a congregation in terms of its life cycle, mission context, and interrelationship with larger church and societal dynamics;
- describe various approaches to organization development and planning processes appropriate to a given group or congregation;
- exegete issues of power, authority, integrity and the interplay of “leaders” and “followers” in relation to specific congregational contexts;
- approach internship or a first call with confidence in one’s ability to exercise various required practical leadership skills: e.g. planning, budgeting and fiscal monitoring, overseeing staff and volunteers, dealing with legal issues, etc.;
- describe the nature of healthy and creative vs. unhealthy and destructive conflict, together with various approaches to conflict creation and strategic intervention;
- become confident in navigating the polity and capturing the broad array of resources available from the synods and churchwide expressions of the ELCA (or another church);
- demonstrate an understanding of the role of public theologian and leader, both within a congregation and in the larger “public square”;

- describe and exercise leadership according to a “code” of professional ethics.

Strategies

1. The class will meet weekly. Required and recommended readings are assigned for each class preparation. The latter are placed on reserve in the library. By means of **readings, use of the course web-site, lectures and instructor- and student-led case presentations and discussions**, theological foundations, theoretical frameworks and practical skills for ministry leadership will be developed.
2. Students will submit **three brief papers (3-5 pages)** on assigned topics. Each paper will incorporate insights gained from the readings, class sessions and personal student research.
3. Students will present one or two **case studies or reading summaries** during the course of the semester on topics or readings assigned by the instructor.
4. Students will analyze in-depth a “leadership moment,” in which a leader (which might be oneself) made a significant difference in the outcome of an incident or “chapter” in the life of a parish or other ministry setting. A final **10-12 page paper** will be submitted in which the selected context, situation and leader’s actions, attitudes and approaches are described and assessed. This paper will also demonstrate the student’s integration of all topics treated throughout the semester.

Required Readings (Note also Multiple Readings on Course Website)

Constitutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, latest edition
(available at ELCA website or in published format)
 Lowell Almen, *One Great Cloud of Witnesses!* Augsburg/Fortress, 1997
 Robert Bacher and Michael Cooper-White, *Church Administration*
 Michael Cooper-White, *On a Wing and a Prayer: Faithful Leadership in the 21st Century*
 Augsburg Fortress, 2003
 Celia A. Hahn, *Growing in Authority, Relinquishing Control*, Alban Institute, 1994
 Speed Leas, *Discover Your Conflict Management Style*, Alban Institute, 1997
 Bruce P. Powers, editor, *Church Administration Handbook*, Broadman & Holman, 1997
 Steven B. Sample, *The Contrarian’s Guide to Leadership*, Jossey-Bass, 2002

Recommended Additional Readings (On Library Regular Reserve)

Carol E. Becker, *Becoming Colleagues: Women and Men Serving Together in Faith*,
 Jossey-Bass, 2000
 Jim Collins, *Good to Great*, HarperBusiness, 2001
 Otto F. Crumroy, Jr. et al., *Church Administration and Finance Manual: Resources for
 Leading the Local Church*, Morehouse 1998
 Rudolph Giuliani, *Leadership*, Hyperion, 2002
 Susan K. Hedahl, *Listening Ministry: Rethinking Pastoral Leadership*, Fortress, 2001
 Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, Harvard Business School
 Press, 2002
 Loren B. Mead, *Five Challenges for the Once and Future Church*, Alban, 1996

Evaluation

Class attendance and participation, case study responses and/or student led discussions (20%), three brief topical papers (15% each), and the final integrative leadership assessment paper (35%) will provide a basis for evaluating how well the students have achieved the course objectives. Students may elect to receive a letter grade or take the course on a pass/fail basis. It is expected that student written materials and class presentations be in conformity with the Seminary's policy regarding inclusive language. Repeated deviations may result in a request for resubmission of paper(s). Instructor and overall course effectiveness will be assessed by student evaluations.

Class Sessions

January 29

- GETTING STARTED IN A PARISH OR OTHER SETTING
 - ❖ Readings: “Starting Your New Ministry” Parish Paper (website)
Powers, Chapter 19: Getting Started in a New Ministry
 - Guest Presentation: *My First Year in Ministry* (Pr. James Dunlop)
- COURSE OVERVIEW AND STUDENT INTRODUCTIONS & INDIVIDUAL GOAL-SETTING
- LEADERSHIP: WHAT IS IT? HOW IS IT EXERCISED? (*Powerpoint* presentation)
 - ❖ Readings: “Administrative Leadership as a Calling of the Spirit” (website)
“Leadership from a Feminist Perspective” by Rhodes (website)
- WHAT IS THE CHURCH AND WHAT IS IT FOR? (*Powerpoint*)

February 5

- ONE CHURCH IN THREE EXPRESSIONS
 - ❖ Readings: ELCA Constitution: Preamble, Chapters 1-6
- CHARACTERISTICS OF CONGREGATIONS (*Powerpoint*)
 - ❖ Readings: ELCA Constitution, Chapter 9
Model Constitution for Congregations
Almen, Chapters 1-4
Powers, Chapter 2
- GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING
 - ❖ Readings: Bacher & Cooper-White, Chapters 2 & 3 (website)
Powers, Chapter 1

February 12

- APPROACHES TO PLANNING
 - ❖ Readings: Cooper-White, Chapters 1-3
Bacher & Cooper-White, Chapter 4 (website)
“Leading Goal-Resistant Congregations” *Parish Paper* (website)
“Meeting Change-Resistant Challenges” *Parish Paper* (website)
- SOME CONSTITUTIONAL CASE STUDIES (in-class handout)

- WHAT ARE SYNODS FOR?
 - ❖ Readings: ELCA Constitution, Chapter 10
Constitution for Synods, esp. Chapter 8
Almen, Chapter 5
Cooper-White, “What Are Synods For?” (website)
Cooper-White, “A Primer on ELCA Ecclesiology”
 - A synodical bishop’s reflections on her ministry and the role of synods (Bishop Carol Hendrix of Lower Susquehanna)

February 19

Collegiality, teamwork (with special reference to gender dynamics)

- View & Discuss: “Talking Nine to Five” video
- ❖ Reading: Hahn, Chapter IV
Powers, Chapters 3, 16
Recommended: Becker, especially Chapters 2, 5 & 6
- ROSTERED LEADERS
 - ❖ Readings: ELCA Constitution, Chapter 7

February 26

- PLANNING AGAIN (STRUCTURAL MAPPING)
 - Guest: Pr. John Spangler, Ex. Asst. for Comm. & Planning
- COLLEGIALLY, TEAMWORK, STAFF MINISTRIES (CONT.)
 - ❖ Readings: Cooper-White, Chapters 4-6
Bacher & Cooper-White, Chapter 9 (website)
“Issues in Multiple Ministry” (website)
“Ministry Teams Are Not Committees” (website)
“A Summary of Themes Regarding Leadership Teams” (website)

FIRST PAPER DUE: In a 3-5 page paper, provide a “script” that you would use in a class for new members on the theme of “the church.” Assume that your prospective members come from a variety of backgrounds—totally unchurched, Roman Catholic, fundamentalist, congregational (i.e. non-affiliated, independent “community” churches) etc. Be sure to incorporate (and cite) appropriate constitutional provisions and other relevant documents of the ELCA or other church.

March 5

- STAFF SUPERVISION
 - ❖ Readings: Bacher & Cooper-White, Chapter 7 (website)
Powers, Chapter 4
 - Case discussion: “The PGLC Personnel Committee Meeting”
- CONSTITUTIONAL CASE STUDIES
- CONGREGATIONAL LIFE CYCLE (Optional)

March 12

- PREPARING FOR AND LEADING MEETINGS
 - ❖ Readings: “Great meetings aren’t just held in La La Land” (website)
“The Role of the Chair” *Board Sense* F-49 (website)
“Going Round the Table” *Board Sense* F-42 (website)
“The Art/Science of Chairing Meetings” *Parish Paper* (website)
“Making Meetings Matter” See www.pcusa.org website
- CONFLICT: IT’S ALWAYS WITH US IN THE CHURCH
 - ❖ Readings: “Church Fights: A Survivor’s Guide” (website)
“Toward A Theology of Conflict” by Cooper-White (website)
“Preventing and Curing Conflict Triangles” *Parish Paper* (website)
 - View & discuss ELCA *Mosaic* “Conflict in the Congregation”

March 19: No Class (Spring Break)

NOTE: Prepare for March 26 session by completing and studying Leas, *Discover Your Conflict Management Style*

March 26

- CONFLICT AGAIN (*Powerpoint* on Sources of Conflict etc.)
 - ❖ Readings: Leas, “Conflict in the Parish: How Bad Is It?” (website)
Bacher & Cooper-White, Chapter 11 (website)
- PAROCHIAL REPORTS & OTHER PAPERWORK (see forms on website)
- WHAT I LEARNED FROM LEAS’ INVENTORY
 - Student small group discussion

SECOND PAPER DUE: In a 3-5 page paper, reflect upon a conflict situation in which you were involved. What was your role? How did you respond? What might you have learned that can help you prepare for future conflicted situations? Reflect theologically on the conflict and how you might have “seen the face of God” in its midst.

April 2 (Guest Instructor: Dr. Marty Stevens, CPA)

- STEWARDSHIP AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
 - ❖ Readings: Bacher & Cooper-White, Chapter 6
ELCA (or other church) website resources of your choice
Stewardship of Life website resources (see “Resources” on LTSG site)
“Ten Financial Stewardship Tips” *Parish Paper* (website)
- FINANCIAL PLANNING, BUDGETING AND MONITORING
 - ❖ Readings: “The Monthly Financial Report” *Board Sense* F-43 (website)
“Fixing and Preventing Financial Shortfalls” *Parish Paper* (website)
“Annual Budget Development.” *Covenant Church Manual* (website)
Bacher & Cooper-White, Chapter 5 (website)
Powers, Chapter 7

April 9 (Guest Instructor, The Rev. John Spangler)

- COMMUNICATION IS KEY, ESPECIALLY IN CRISIS TIMES
 - ❖ Reading: “*The Impact of Technology*” Parish Paper (website)
Bacher & Cooper-White, Chapter 8

April 16

- AN INTRODUCTION TO “SYSTEMS THINKING”
 - ❖ Readings: Hahn, Chapters V-VI
“Learning a New Way of Thinking” by Mitchell (website)
 - CHURCH AS CHURCHWIDE ORGANIZATION: HISTORY, DEFINITIONS, ROLES
 - ❖ Readings: ELCA Constitution, Chapter 11
Almen, Chapters 6-10
Bacher & Cooper-White, Chapter 10

THIRD PAPER DUE: In a 3-5 page paper, develop a “script” that you would use to present your suggestion for a congregational planning process, and describe your approach to planning. Assume that your “audience” (congregational council or perhaps annual meeting) is resistant to planning; assume also that the congregation has experienced membership, worship attendance and financial decline, but that the surrounding community is growing and becoming more racially diverse.

April 23

- LEGAL ISSUES IN MINISTRY
 - ❖ Readings: Powers, Chapter 12
Bacher & Cooper-White, Chapter 12 (website)
- PRINCIPLES FOR LEADERSHIP I
 - ❖ Reading: Sample, Chapters 1-5

April 30

- AGENCIES, INSTITUTIONS & “OTHER UNITS”
 - ❖ Readings: ELCA Constitution Chapter 8
Almen, Chapter 6
- PRINCIPLES FOR LEADERSHIP II
 - ❖ Reading: Sample, Chapters 6-11

May 7

- THE ADMINISTRATOR AS PERSON
 - ❖ Bacher & Cooper-White, Afterword
- UNFINISHED TOPICS
- COURSE SUMMARY & FINAL QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION

FINAL PAPER DUE: See #4 under “Strategies” above for final paper description.