

MN 255W BEING BODY OF CHRIST

Instructor: Craig L. Nesson

Required for Second Year MDiv students; open to MA students

2 Credits; letter grade or credit/no credit

This course articulates the meaning of church as the body of Christ by constructing a theology of the congregation. Components of this theology include worship, prayer, education, community, stewardship, evangelizing, global connections, ecumenism, and social ministry. Special attention is given to the congregation's identity and mission. Implications for congregational leadership are examined. The church takes on the character of Jesus Christ through immersion in the biblical narrative and the pattern of worship as we are sent to engage in practices that conform to the way of Jesus Christ: peacemaking, justice, care for creation, and respect for human dignity. This semester will include special focus on the challenges of climate change. Readings, discussion, and speakers will engage the class in matters related to advocating for earth, sky, waters, and all creatures under threat in this era of the Anthropocene.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To introduce Luther's two strategies paradigm as a framework practice of ministry (practice of biblical and theological wisdom).
2. To consider how church becomes the body of Christ through Scripture and worship (practice of *Missio Dei* in Word and Sacrament).
3. To understand the interconnections between worship, prayer, education, life in community, stewardship, evangelizing, global connections, ecumenism, and social ministry in congregational mission (practice of pastoral concern).
4. To become conversant about the theology and practice of full communion with the partners of the ELCA (practice of ecclesial partnership).
5. To reclaim the four marks of the church as a schema for social ministry (practice of engagement with cross-cultural and global dimensions).
6. To claim one's own theological voice in understanding, acting, and advocating in relation to the challenges of climate change (practice of complex analysis).

PROCEDURE: The course will meet once per week. Teaching and learning methods will include presentations with interactive discussion, group discussion, guest lectures and student presentations.

EVALUATION: Evaluation is based on 1) Attendance and demonstrating informed contributions to discuss assigned readings. (10%); 2) Writing and sharing evangelizing testimony (20%); 3) Group presentation on assigned text (30%), and 4) Summative assignment (40%).

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Required Reading:

Craig L. Nesson. *Beyond Maintenance to Mission: A Theology of the Congregation*. 2nd Edition.

Craig L. Nesson. *Shalom Church: The Body of Christ as Ministering Community*.

ELCA Constitution (ELCA webpage).

ELCA full communion agreements with ecumenical partners (ELCA webpage).

"A Declaration of Our Inter-Religious Commitment: A Policy Statement of the ELCA" (ELCA webpage)
Hanover Report, The Diaconate as Ecumenical Opportunity (available online).

Climate Justice Reading (2 of the following texts will be required as assigned at start of semester):

Amitav Ghosh. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*.

Elizabeth A. Johnson. *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love*.

Kiara A. Jorgenson and Alan G. Padgett, editors. *Ecotheology: A Christian Conversation*.

Sallie McFague. *A New Climate for Christology: Kenosis, Climate Change, and Befriending Nature*.

Bill McKibben. *Falter: Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out?*

James B. Martin-Schramm. *Climate Justice: Ethics, Energy and Public Policy*.

Recommended: Lisa Dahill and James Martin-Schramm, editors. *Eco-Reformation: Grace and Hope for a Planet in Peril*.