

Course Number: MN294

Course Title: Revisioning and Reforming Mission for Sustainability and Vitality in Rural Contexts

Instructor: Mark Yackel-Juleen

Semester and Year: Fall 2022

Fulfills: Rural Requirement, Mission Development & Redevelopment Concentration

Open to all students, 1 Credit Hour, Credit/No Credit only

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Many small town and rural congregations and communities are facing significant changes and challenges in their context. Their leaders realize that their congregations need to adapt their mission to respond to these challenges in ways that support sustainability and promote vitality. Yet they often struggle in discerning what God is calling them to do and how to practically implement new visions and forms that emerge. Students will learn and develop skills for entering a congregation and leading a discernment process. Students will learn how to concretely implement a vision for new strategies or forms for mission aimed at sustaining and revitalizing congregational ministry. Students will be offered methods, tools, and processes to assess the congregation's current situation using hard data as well as the congregation's energy and spirit. This course highlights numerous possible missional formations as well as other creative adaptations and the methodology to bring them to reality.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Through this course, participants will:

- Learn to use tools and methods to identify factors in the local congregation and community that impact ministry sustainability today and into the future;
- Learn and practice techniques and processes to guide congregations in discerning future options for their mission and ministry;
- Gain aware of various congregational missional forms and adaptations and their particular benefits and challenges;
- Learn and practice implementation techniques and tools to put those forms and adaptations in place; and
- Engage biblical and theological concepts which scaffold the endeavor of discerning and implementing God's vision for missional sustainability and vitality.

PROCEDURE:

Synchronous Section: The class will meet for one hour synchronously on Friday morning. The class times will be devoted to discussion. Content will take the form of the assigned readings and recorded lectures and interviews to be viewed prior to class time. The discussions will address the content presented the prior week or the expected readings. Please inform the instructor if you need to be absent from class in any given week.

Asynchronous Section: The class meets asynchronously. Content will take the form of the assigned readings and recorded lectures and interviews to be viewed prior to responding the discussion prompt. The instructor will determine the format for the discussion or assignment in any given week. The discussions will address the content presented for the week or the expected readings. Engaging the week's content and the student's initial response must be completed by midnight on Thursdays. Any required follow-up discussion must be completed by midnight Saturday. Please inform the instructor if you cannot complete work as scheduled.

EVALUATION:

- Complete required course readings and attendance—30% of grade.
- Participation in class discussion, completion of assignments, and/or required postings—30% of grade.
- A final project demonstrating learnings from the course—40% of grade.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Required:

Sellon, Mary, Smith, Dan, and Grossman, Gail. *Redeveloping the Congregation: A How to for Lasting Change*. Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2002

Cheyney, Tom et al. *Church Revitalization in Rural America: Restoring Churches in America's Heartland*. Renovate Publishing Group, 2018

Recommended:

Mann, Alice. *Can Our Church Survive?* Lanham, MD: Rothman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000.