

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 explores 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 formation of a congregation's identity and implementing congregational mission. The church takes on the character of Jesus Christ through immersion in the biblical narrative and the pattern of liturgy 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. Practices in congregational leadership are examined.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To introduce Luther's two strategies paradigm for the 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 complex analysis).
4. To reclaim the four marks of the church for social ministry (practice of engagement with cross-cultural and global dimensions).
5. To become conversant about the theology and practice of full communion with the partners of the ELCA (practice of ecclesial partnership).
6. To claim one's own theological voice in articulating a theology of the congregation (practice of pastoral concern).

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

EVALUATION: Evaluation is based on: 1) Demonstrated preparation in class participation based on readings (20%); 2) Writing and sharing an evangelizing testimony (20%); 3) Group presentation on an assigned topic (20%), and 4) Summative assignment (40%).

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Required Reading:

Martin Luther, "The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ..." (1519), in LW 35:49-67.

Jason A. Mahn, editor. *Radical Lutherans/Lutheran Radicals*.

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).

Recommended Reading:

Richard Bliese and Craig Van Gelder, editors. *The Evangelizing Church: A Lutheran Contribution*

Karen L. Bloomquist. *Seeing-Remembering-Connecting: Subversive Practices of Being Church*.

E. Chenoweth and M. Stephan. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*.

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

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

Anna M. Madsen. *I Can Do No Other: The Church's New Here We Stand Moment*.

Mary Clark Moschella. *Caring for Joy: Narrative, Theology and Practice*.

Deanna Thompson, *The Virtual Body of Christ in a Suffering World*.