

Size ALWAYS Matters: Spirituality, Leadership, and Administration in the Smaller Membership Church

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Course Overview

From several Biblical perspectives, small congregations reflect God's deep hopes for community, care, and witness. Ministers serving in these churches must be dedicated generalists with skills in every aspect of church life – including worship leadership, finances, administration, spirituality and spiritual growth, volunteer coordination, evangelism, and even building maintenance. One must also be prepared to cultivate a sense of community leadership and be willing to work ecumenically and across traditional faith lines.

While it is true that by sheer numbers, more people belong to larger-membership congregations than to smaller-membership congregations, it is also true that by sheer numbers, there are far more smaller-membership churches in the United States than there are churches of any other size. Clergy are likely to serve in at least one smaller-membership congregation during the course of their career, and many will only serve in those contexts. Successful leadership in a small church CAN have a huge impact on U.S. Christianity in the twenty-first century.

This class will explore how to provide competent leadership in smaller-membership congregations, typically defined as having a worship average attendance of less than 100. These churches are in cities, suburbs, small towns, and in the country, and they are made up of all kinds of God's people. A successful minister will know how to read and interpret a congregation's context, as well as how to effectively minister in a variety of small church settings. Toward that end, attention will be paid to several kinds of small-membership contexts – in small towns and big cities, among immigrant communities (including those where English is not the primary language), multiple-point charges, and tent-making ministries.

From mustard-seed faith to God's faithful remnant, and drawing on the best available research and personal experience, this course will explore theologies of size and how to shape thriving, faithful ministries in smaller congregations.

Learning Outcomes: At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate a compelling biblical theology affirming small congregations;
- Identify the unique leadership patterns in smaller member congregations;
- Understand the relationship between a smaller church's identity and its mission in the community/world, including its denominational relationships (if any);

- Utilize strategies for “traditional” and at least two non-traditional pastoral leadership models appropriate for small congregations and consistent with the norms of the denominational tradition of that congregation (if applicable); and
- Have the basic tools necessary to faithfully and effectively serve a smaller membership congregation.

Required Texts:

Anthony G. Pappas (ed.). *Inside the Small Church* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2002).
 Carl Dudley. *Effective Small Churches in the 21st Century*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003)
 Various articles as assigned. A course reader will be made available.

A bibliography with a number of other titles will also be given out at the beginning of the week.

Assignments/Expectations:

30% Consistent and active participation in all class sessions. As this class meets for only five days, your active and on-time presence each day is expected in order to facilitate discussion and learning. Additionally, you are expected to have completed the reading assignments **in advance of the class** to a level that you are able to discuss them critically.

20% Theological and Practical Reflection on a Small Church Case Study OR Two Critical Reflection Papers on Articles Read During the week.

Option A: On the first day of class, students will be given a handout with several case studies involving smaller-membership congregations in a variety of contexts. Please choose ONE of the case studies and take 2-3 pages to reflect on the theological issues raised, as well as some possible “ways forward” for that congregation. Please note that this is not about solving a particular church’s “problem,” but about finding ways for churches to live faithfully in light of this reality.

Option B: Students will be asked to provide TWO theological critical reflection papers (each being 1-2 pages in length), that examine themes from readings throughout the week. These are not SUMMARY papers, but an opportunity to critically and theologically reflect on the issues raised in the articles.

These reflections (whether Option A or Option B) will be due BY Thursday, July 8 at the beginning of class.

50% Final Paper. This should be a theological paper of 8-10 pages (12-point font, double-spaced) that incorporates and synthesizes your learning in the past week, utilizing one of the scripture texts noted in “A Small Theology” (or another appropriate scriptural passage from your faith tradition, if it is not Christianity). In addition to some exegetical work on the text, consider how this text speaks life to small congregations, and how you might use it in a worship (or leadership) context in a smaller congregation. This paper will be due one week after the class ends – that is, on Friday, July 16. It should be sent electronically to liturgygeek@yahoo.com. If you do not have internet access, **please talk to me before the last day of class to make other arrangements!**

Grades

Grades are pedagogical tools to help students understand two things: (1) where they stand on any one assignment in relation to others in the class (since grading is mainly a comparative matter); and (2) whether they have fully mastered a particular assignment or need to do further work on it before

moving on to the other issues. Thus, assigned grades should communicate the following. The grade point average (GPA) associated with each letter grade (LG) is also listed below.

Letter Grades

GPA	LG	Explanation
4.0	A+	Publishable material; superb work, far beyond the level of excellence generally found in student work.
4.0	A	Excellent work; work that shows a level of mastery <i>consistently</i> beyond the expected scope of the assignment;
3.7	A-	Excellent work; work that shows a general level of mastery <i>usually</i> beyond the expected scope of the assignment but also indicates a few instances of <i>only</i> adequate levels of mastery;
3.3	B+	Very good work; work that indicates a <i>consistently</i> full and adequate mastery of the assignment at the expected level;
3.0	B	Good work; work that indicates a basically adequate level of understanding of the assignment but where improvements are clearly possible;
2.7	B-	Passable work; work that shows a beginning grasp of the assignment but that needs improvement and additional study to reach a level of adequate mastery;
2.3	C+	Weak work; work that indicates significant lacunae in understanding, execution, or critical engagement; much additional study is needed to adequately fulfill the assignment;
2.0	C	Poor work; work that shows a lack of overall understanding of the assignment;
1.7	C- through D-	Levels of extremely poor work; work that indicates varying degrees of severe weakness in understanding, execution, and critical engagement; student needs to begin studying all over again;
0.7	-	
0.0	F	Failure -- Consistent inability to understand, execute and critically engage the material; student receives no credit for assignment or class.

Plagiarism Policy from Pacific School of Religion and Notes on Inclusive Language

In the United States and many other countries, one of the important markers of high academic standards is proper attribution (giving credit) for someone else's ideas, thoughts, words, or methods of scholarship. Proper credit should be given in both oral and written contexts. Proper credit is:

- When you use an actual sentence from a published article or unpublished essay, you must put the sentence in quote marks and give a footnote or citation to indicate who said it. The citation should include full bibliographic information. (For further information about correct citation form, see Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*.)
- When you paraphrase or summarize another person's ideas, you must give a footnote or citation to indicate whose ideas they are and where you got them.
- When you adopt a significant idea from someone else's work, you must give a footnote or citation to indicate where you got the idea.
- When you use a method developed by someone else, you must give a footnote or citation to indicate the source of the method.
- When you fail to do this, it is considered plagiarism. (Plagiarism can apply both to students and to faculty.) Plagiarism is using someone else's ideas, thoughts, words, or methods of

scholarship as if they were your own and without giving proper credit to that person. Plagiarism is considered wrong because (1) it is 'stealing' another person's ideas, methods, etc., and (2) it is 'lying' — representing something as your own when it is not yours. At PSR, as at many comparable graduate-level institutions, plagiarism is considered a serious offense.

- Plagiarism includes failing to give citations in the examples above.
- Plagiarism also includes copying another student's exam or part of an exam or essay.
- It is not plagiarism when you indicate clearly that you are summarizing someone else's views in order to provide the context for an assessment or critique of those views, or to incorporate them into a larger project. In this case, you must indicate clearly that you are giving the views of someone else — e.g. by starting with "so-and-so argues that..." It is also not plagiarism to use a well-established idea that has been developed in multiple sources — e.g. to claim that God can be called "woman" as well as man is now sufficiently well established that it needs no attribution. Some phrases — e.g. "the personal is political" — are in such wide usage that sometimes we do not know where they originated; in such cases, it is acceptable to use them without attribution. However, the best scholarship will make every effort to give attribution where possible (e.g. to note that this phrase came from Robin Morgan).

For procedures and penalties, please see the PSR Student Handbook. This material may also be found here: <http://www.psr.edu/plagiarism-policy>

This class also follows Pacific School of Religion's policies regarding ESL and technology in the classroom. Information about these policies can be found in the student handbook.

Additionally, inclusive language (that is, language that refers to humanity and to God in non-exclusively masculine or feminine terms) is expected in all papers. For more information on PSR's policies regarding inclusive language, look here: <http://www.psr.edu/policy-statement-use-inclusive-language>.

Lecture Schedule, Readings, and Assignments

Monday ~ Theologies of Size and Biblically Raising the Self-Esteem of Smaller Congregations

Bible Study ~ Deuteronomy 7: 7-8 "Because God Loved You"

Topics to Be Covered:

1. A Spirituality of Smallness
2. Size-Appropriate Worship
3. Biblical Self-Esteem For a Small Church

Readings in advance of Monday's class:

"Introduction" and "A Small Theology," (p. 1-21), in *The Big Small Church Book*, David Ray (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1992).

"Small Churches, Faithful Remnants," (p. 116-122) by Steven Burt, in *Inside the Small Church*.

“Small is Beautiful,” by Wendy McCormick, from The Alban Weekly, November 23, 2009.

<http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=8701>

“To God Be the Glory” and “Ride On, Ride On” (p. 37-78) in *Where 20 or 30 Are Gathered: Leading Worship in the Small Church*, by Peter G. Bush and H. Christine O’Reilly (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2006).

“Raising Morale in the Small Church,” by Glenn Daman, from the website:

http://www.ministryhealth.net/mh_articles/047_gd_raising_morale_in_the_small_church.html

** I am still looking for an article describing church size and its identifying characteristics. It’s a specific article I read, written by an author from the Alban Institute, but have not yet been able to find it. There is specific information about each church “size” and how size affects church functioning.

Tuesday: Varieties of Small Church Experience – Why Context Matters

Bible Study ~ Romans 11: 5-6 “Remnant Chosen By Grace”

Topics to Be Covered:

1. Does Size Really Matter? How Small Churches Function Differently
2. Discovering Your Church’s Identity
3. Different Ministry Models – Bivocational Ministry, Yoked Parishes, and More

Readings in advance of Tuesday’s Class:

“Five Discoveries About Small-Town Ministry” (p. 52-57), by Lawrence W. Farris; “The Bivocational Option” (p. 65-72) by Stephen Norcross; “Four Myths About Bivocational Pastoring,” (p. 73-77) by Anthony G. Pappas; and “New Realities Require New Responses,” (p. 223-231) by Anthony G. Pappas, in *Inside the Small Church*.

“Energizing From Within” and “Resources for Expanding Ministry” (p. 155-195), in *Effective Small Churches in the 21st Century*.

Selection from *Holy Places, Small Spaces*, by Bill Kemp (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2005), addressing small urban churches.

“Immigrant Worship Communities in the Public Square” (p. 115-150), in *Religion and the New Immigrants: How Faith Communities Form Our Newest Citizens*, Michael W. Foley and Dean R. Hoge (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

“How Faith Varies By Church Size,” survey results by the Barna Group.

<http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/289-how-faith-varies-by-church-size>

Wednesday: Transformative Evangelism ~ Getting the Word Out

Bible Study ~ Jeremiah 23: 3-4 “I Myself Will Gather the Remnant”

Topics to Be Covered:

1. Sharing Your Church's Identity in the Community
2. Capitalizing on Your Church's Strengths
3. Sharing the Good News!

Readings *in advance of Wednesday's class:*

"Growth by Adoption," (p. 51-68) in *Effective Small Churches in the 21st Century*.

"Evangelism" and "Vision" from *Evangelism in the Small Membership Church*, by Royal Spiedel (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007). Perhaps another selection as well.

"Emerging Strategies of Transformative Pastoral Leadership in the Black Church" (p. 87-115), in *Transformative Pastoral Leadership in the Black Church*, by Dr. Jeffrey L. Tribble, Sr., (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

Thursday: Small Church, Big Mission

Bible Study ~ Genesis 45: 7-8b "Saved for a Purpose"

Topics to Be Covered:

1. Shaping Your Church's Identity into Mission
2. Identifying and Developing Healthy, Sustainable Mission
3. Practical Issues – Bible Study, Youth Group, and More

Readings *in Advance of Thursday's Class:*

Selection from *Religion and the New Immigrants: How Faith Communities Form Our Newest Citizens*, Michael W. Foley and Dean R. Hoge.

"The Black Church and Economic Development," "The Black Church and Politics," "Black Women in the Ministry," and "Denominational Switching Among African American Laity" (p. 14-23), in the Pulpit and Pew Research on Pastoral Leadership article entitled *River of Struggle, River of Freedom: Trends Among Black Churches and Black Pastoral Leadership*. Full report can be found here:

http://www.namb.net/atf/cf/%7BCDA250E8-8866-4236-9A0C-C646DE153446%7D/PULPIT_AND_PEW_BLACKTRENDS.PDF

"Ten Ways to Build a Healthier Congregation" (p. 58-60), by Clay Smith, in *Inside the Small Church*.

"Size Matters: The Big Potential of Small Church Youth Ministry" by Mel Walker, which can be found here: <http://www.youthworker.com/youth-ministry-resources-ideas/youth-ministry/11575174/>

"Small Can Mean Great Potential," "The Congregation's Mission," "Achieving the Potential of Small Membership Churches" (p. 6-15) in *Small Membership Church: Creating Effective Ministries in Your Church* by Julia Kuhn Wallace, published by the UMC General Board of Discipleship. The full

"book" can be found online here: <http://www.gb-gm-umc.org/history/guidelines/smlmem.pdf>

"A Small Church Redefines Its Mission," from *The Christian Century*, July 12, 2003, p. 24-27 (found online at <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2878>).

**** CASE STUDY/THEOLOGICAL-CRITICAL REFLECTION PAPERS
IS/ARE DUE BY THURSDAY AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS. ****

Friday: Administration in a Small Church ~

Bible Study ~ Selections from Judges 6-7 “Gideon and the Midianites”

Topics to Be Covered:

1. Board Governance and Lay Leadership
2. Balancing a Budget
3. Finding the plunger, and other things to have at your fingertips (virtual or otherwise).
4. Translating Denominational Resources to Fit Your Needs

Readings in Advance of Friday's class:

“Finances, Program, Evaluating Success” (p. 71-77), in *Effective Small Churches in the 21st Century*.

“Time Management” from *Evangelism in the Small Membership Church*.

“Affording to be a Smaller Church” (p. 218-238), in *The Indispensable Guide to Smaller Churches*, by David Ray (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2003).

“Resources,” (p. 132-166) in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, edited by Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney.

FINAL PAPER IS DUE NO LATER THAN FRIDAY, JULY 16, VIA EMAIL. If you do not have email, please talk to the instructor BEFORE Friday to make other arrangements.