

DM 6461 Seminar I

Theology of Ministry—the Minister in Context

January 5-9; 12-15, 2015

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Seminar Description

At the heart of our work together will be discussions of ministry situations—that is, your context for ministry as well as your sense of who you are in ministry, including your pastoral imagination and decision-making. The seminar is an opportunity for getting to know yourself, developing or renewing your sense of vocation, and learning to read imaginatively the context in which you practice your ministry.

Seminar I addresses the following D.Min. Student Learning Outcomes:

SLO1: Students will demonstrate an advanced (comprehensive, appreciative, and critical) understanding and integration of ministry in relationship to several theological disciplines, including practical theology

SLO3: Students will be able to identify areas of personal and vocational growth in spiritual awareness by the development of a personal-professional plan for self-care, spiritual nurture, and lifelong learning

Course Requirements

We have three types of assignments for preparation:

- 1) Story in Ministry (1 page, due December 30th)
- 2) Reading and Preparing to Lead a Discussion (discussion questions)
- 3) Reflection on Context (brief presentation, artifact/props)

There is plenty of preparation to do, but not a lot of writing for this seminar.

Story in Ministry

“Tell me about a time when....”

That’s how we often are invited to tell another person about what matters most to us.

For the seminar we want you to tell a story to the group. We want to hear a true story about a time in ministry, at your present location, when you were faced with a difficult challenge, when your expertise made a difference, when something unexpected happened. **We want to learn from your experience and expertise.**

Write the story down. Make it concise (under 600 words).

The experience can span months or be a particular pastoral conversation.

Include a description of those involved.

Be clear about the timeline; movement in time forwards and backwards.
 Describe the tension related to a quest or a goal. What was at stake?
 Identify a key moment or key moments.
 Mark decision points.
 Note whether there was resolution or partial resolution of the tension.
 Tell whether there was some change in the characters as a result of the experience.

You will present your story to the seminar. Together, we will dig deeper using a very particular method of interviewing to get a richer story that will add to our reflection of the practice of ministry, one based upon studies of professional expertise. (See also the description under Gladwell's *Blink* below for more.)

Please send the story to both Drs. Grosseohme and Hester by Dec. 30th

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Reading and Preparing to Lead a Discussion

Below are the required readings for our seminar and we ask you to read them before Jan. 5th. (All are available for purchase online.) We have chosen a variety of works to support our seminar conversations and to feed and challenge our theological imaginations, especially in relation to practice.

Books:

Eck, Diana L. *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras*. Beacon Press, 2nd Edition, 2014.

Questions to consider: *How do Eck's experience shape and inform her personal identity and self understanding? How does place shape her imagination? How has your own vocational journey shaped your self-understanding and identity? What have been your surprises along the way? How have your perceptions and experiences with difference and diversity shaped your theology and ministry?*

Gladwell, Malcolm. *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005.

Gladwell's description of the role of experience in shaping intuition and judgment will be crucial to the seminar. We are assuming that all participants are coming to the seminar with expertise born of ministry experience. We believe we will all learn from your "stories in ministry" and we will explore these, assuming that you are the expert—somewhat like John Gottman is described in chapter one. [If you would like to read more on this, see Klein, Gary. *The Power of Intuition: How to Use Your Gut*

Feelings to Make Better Decisions at Work. New York, Currency/Doubleday, 2003.
(The Klein book is not required reading.)]

Lischer, Richard. *Stations of the Heart: Parting with A Son*. Alford A. Knoff, 2013.
Questions to consider: *What role does Lischer's pastoral imagination play in his story of dealing with the death of his son? How did Adam's deep embrace of his spiritual practices contribute to his effort to make sense of his life, his suffering, and his unreasonable death? What metaphors or symbols or stories have you used to make sense of times of grief and loss in your life or the lives of others?*

Peterson, Eugene H. *The Pastor: A Memoir*. New York: HarperOne, 2011.
Questions to consider: *How does Peterson's experience help clarify your own sense of who you are in ministry and the context in which you serve? What disciplines and practices sustain or energize your faith and vocation? What beliefs and convictions? How do the answers to these questions and your experiences affect your intuition and decision-making?*

Robinson, Marilynne. *Gilead: A Novel*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, Reprint edition, 2004.
Questions to consider: *Compare the portrait Robinson paints of the minister John Ames with the self-portrait painted by Eugene Peterson. What do you find striking between the two? How does memory function to shape John Ames decision making? Where do you see pastoral imagination in play in John Ames life as a pastor?*

Townsend, Loren. *Introduction to Pastoral Counseling*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2009.
Those in the Pastoral Care and Counseling Track should read the entire book—you will be meeting with Dr. Townsend for a discussion of his ideas and the Track. Those in the Advanced Practice of Ministry Track can focus on Chapters 3 and 4 as they focus upon pastoral identity, critical not only for counseling situations but for more general ministry situations. For all, the discussion about the relationship between science and theology will be relevant to your D.Min. projects—they typically involve working with biblical/theological material as well as material from the human arts and sciences (e.g., psychology, education, sociology, literature, philosophy).

Volf, Miroslav and Dorothy C. Bass, Editors. *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*. Wm. B. Erdmanns Publishing Co., 2002.
Read the following essays in the book: (1) *A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices*; (2) *Attending to the Gaps Between Beliefs and Practices*; (3) *Graced Practices: Excellence and Freedom in Christian Life*; (4) *Is There a Doctor in the House? Reflections on the Practice of Healing in African American*

Churches; (5) A Community's Practice of Hospitality: The Interdependence of Practices and of Communities; (6) Theological Reflection and Christian Practices; and (7) Theology for a Way of Life.

Questions to Consider to Reflect on the film we will see together: “Weapons of the Spirit: the Astonishing Story of a Unique Conspiracy of Goodness.” *What Christian practices did you see in the film? What motivated the people of Le Chambon to take such risks that so many persecuted Jews could be sheltered and saved from Nazi annihilation? Can you imagine such conspiracies of goodness “breaking out” in our times and places? How could we foster them?*

Articles:

Dykstra, Craig. “Imagination and the Pastoral Life” Reprinted at Religion on Line from “The Christian Century,” March 8, 2008. Online:

<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=3523>

Boers, Arthur Paul. “What does a Pastor Need to Know,” *Research for American Christianity*. January 31, 2003. Online:

<http://www.resourcingchristianity.org/research-article/what-must-a-pastor-know-reflections-on-congregational-studies>

Specific. Please come prepared not only to participate in, but also to lead, a discussion with the group concerning any/all these readings (except Townsend). We will determine who leads which discussions when you arrive; and depending upon the final count of seminar participants, we will pair or triple you up as discussion leaders. Keep preparation simple: we suggest creating a handful of good questions—possibly including the ones we raise above—for each work that will lead us to the heart of their core ideas.

Reflection on Context

We would like you to reflect upon your context for ministry, either your congregation or other institution or community in which your ministry takes place.

In light of the Boers article (or any of the other readings) reflect upon strengths and changes in your setting.

Strengths. What are the strengths of your situation? What practices of the community are

particularly revealing: its uses of power and ways of making decisions, its rituals/patterns of inclusion and belonging, and/or its care for boundaries.

Change. Are there any significant changes in the *surrounding community* of the ministry

setting (e.g., shifts in demographics, culture, economy, political structures)? Are there changes in the *life of the congregation* in such things as:

- 1) Changes in lives of the leaders of the organization, either clergy or others, such as family changes—birth, death, illness, marriages or divorces, changes in parents or children of key leaders,
- 2) Changes in personnel (hiring/firing/resignation of key leaders)
- 3) Rise or resolution of conflict
- 4) Restructuring in the organization or governance

(these examples are drawn from Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, Guilford, 1985, pp. 204-205)

In light of these reflections, be prepared to introduce and summarize your context to the seminar in 15-20 minutes. You may want to prepare a brief handout of key issues (no more than a page). Consider using other aids, such as photos, artwork, short video/audio clip of a story told, or a map of the neighborhood, to help us understand your situation more vividly.

We are very excited about our chance to learn together! See you January 5th.

