

STMM 554 FOSTERING COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

Spring, 2006

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Hunthausen 212

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Grounded in theological understanding of the nature of Christian community, students learn and apply theories of group dynamics. Class sessions dedicate significant time to group processes that engage students in practicing skills of: facilitation, participation, observation and diagnosis of major forces affecting a group's functioning. Students identify their leadership styles and develop skills to include diverse participants. Prerequisite: STMM 553, STMM 560.

Competencies:

- Awareness of one's personality and its impact on leadership style.
- Awareness of the need to become healthy, balanced persons in honest and honoring leadership relationships.
- Increased ability to be truly present, attentive and honestly participative within group settings.
- Ability to form, nurture and support diverse teams for ministry within diverse communities of faith.
- Knowledge of group theories regarding the purpose, developmental stages and healthy functioning of groups.
- Understanding of the need for and ability to integrate the skills of planning meetings, building agendas, creating climate, designing helpful beginnings, breaks, endings; leading prayer; listening actively, communicating honestly and directly; giving and receiving feedback; managing conflict; building in evaluation and closure processes, and working with diverse populations.
- Awareness of prayer and personal integration as foundation for effective group leadership.
- Increased ability to reflect on one's role as group leader and member.

This course is divided into three units, each emphasizing a different aspect of becoming a minister/leader of a faith community. First, you will develop a "working theology" about what you mean by "community of faith". Second, you will explore and practice a variety of group theories and skills that are designed to assist facilitators, leaders, and participants in fostering healthy groups. You will identify those that come more naturally to you, those which will require more intentional effort to acquire over time, and those you hope others will contribute. Third, you will increase your understanding of theories and practices that will assist you in leading inclusive and diversely populated faith communities in action for justice.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Completion of assigned reading:

Callahan, Sharon, Coursepak, SUp'er Copy

Doherty, Jerry C. A Celtic Model of Ministry. Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 2003.

Everist, Norma Cook, Ed. The Difficult but Indispensable Church. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2002.

Sofield, Loughlan, Hammett, & Juliano. Building Community, Notre Dame: Ave Maria, 1998. **OR**

Turner, Nathan. Leading Small Groups. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1996.

Yancey, George. One Body, One Spirit. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003.
Scripture: *Acts of the Apostles, 1 Corinthians and Philippians*.

Highly Recommended Readings listed on resource bibliography and posted on Angel site:

REQUIREMENTS (Cont'd):

2. ANGEL WEB BASED threaded discussion. We will use a “threaded discussion” to experience the kind of contribution that “virtual community” can make to our class community and potentially to the communities we serve. This computer-based community sharing will allow us to write reflections and share them with the entire class. Each person will read all the others and choose to respond in a formal way to one, and may respond informally to others. The formal postings and responses will be graded using the “writing rubrics” attached to this syllabus. Increasingly church communities rely on all technologies to build communities of faith. Your contributions will be interpreted as essential to building community in this class. During the first class session, each will learn how to “sign in”. We will then conduct two dialogues in our virtual community. For each dialogue you will submit two separate contributions.

Writing Requirements for the ANGEL postings: The *first contribution* for each dialogue topic will consist of no more than three paragraphs (one page) of your reflection on the topic. The *best contributions* combine personal experience, reference to the required readings, class lectures and discussions, and your own reading on the topic. You might find that writing your contributions before reading the others’ keeps you focused and fresh in your own response. The *second contribution* on the topic will be no more than two paragraphs (half a page). The second contribution on each topic should pick up on an idea put forward by another student’s first contribution. This second contribution should build on the other student’s ideas and relate to your own experience and reading. Dr. Callahan will read the threaded discussion frequently, noting the quality of the postings, and attempting to integrate some of the ideas into the class sessions. Using the writing rubric for each posting, she will assign a grade for that posting. Here are the assignments:

- 1.) Log on and indicate you are “here”. **We will demonstrate this during our first session, and you will sign in as soon as possible after the first session.**
- 2.) **Topic One:** You are to address the question: What does “community of faith” mean to you? In your student coursepak, you will find a reflection on “ubuntu”- and the African concept/ experience of being human. You will also find a reflection from Ron Rolheiser suggesting the Church is by its essence communal. Bellah, et alii., suggest that Church is community and it necessarily contributes to the “common good.” Yet a North American, dominant culture emphasis on individualism, challenges community in many churches. Draw insights from the coursepak writers as well as from Sofield, Hammett and Juliano who develop small group theory within the context of community (pp. 43-46) and the Acts of the Apostles which depicts the ideal Christian community, Chapters 1-4 in Doherty’s *A Celtic Model of Ministry*, and chapters 2, 4 5, 6, and 8 in *The Difficult but Indispensible church*. Include insights from your own experience in faith communities. Write your reflection, footnote your insights as they draw from these and other readings. Be prepared to post the resulting paper as your ***first contribution to Topic One by 7am April 7, 2006.*** Pick another person’s contribution and post your ***second contribution to Topic One by 7am April 11, 2006.***
- 3.) **Topic Two:** Address the **dilemmas faced by communities that embrace diverse individuals.** If people each bring co-cultural identities with specific styles and personality types, how does one honor the differences while nurturing the community? What are some of the tensions? The benefits? The challenges? How does diversity impact this juxtaposition? Draw on insights you bring from your own experience, as

well as those you find in *The Indispensable Church*, chapters 5, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18; all of *One Body, One Spirit*, and chapter 6 in *A Celtic Model of Ministry*. Write your own reflections, footnoting texts you use, and post them as your ***first contribution to Topic Two by 9am May 5, 2006 and post your second contribution to Topic Two by 9 am May 9, 2006.***

3. Decide what you most want to learn in this course. Create goals and objectives to define your learning goals and to organize strategies toward achieving those goals during the quarter. ***Submit your goals and objectives for the course on the first morning of class.*** These must be typed and should be no more than one page. Two goals with one or two objectives each are quite adequate sufficient. Remember you want to help yourself focus your learning for the course. To help draft your goals, look at the competencies on the first page of this syllabus, and the two pages defining how to write goals and objectives in the Coursepak. I will return the first draft to you. ***Please revise and return to me by April 5, 2006.*** I will keep the final draft of your goals.
4. **Consistent, Active and Reflective participation** in your small group during class sessions. This will include preparation for small group sharing based on the small group processes. It also includes giving your small group members careful feedback, as well as ownership for your participation as a member. Willingness to enter conflict negotiation, vulnerability and openness to deeper levels, and participation in discussion topics are some of the contributions you make to any group. Your journaling will assist you in reflecting on your contribution both to your small group and to the large group that is the class. Your participation in the threaded discussion using the ANGEL course tool will offer both you and your peers the opportunity to explore the material in the readings and in the class presentations. Additional supportive and interactive comments on the ANGEL postings increase your participation in the course.
5. **Journal throughout** the quarter using the process outlined on page 4 of this syllabus packet. You will not hand in the journal. The discipline of the process is designed to assist you in meeting competencies of reflection as a leader as listed on the first page of the syllabus. In addition, your ongoing reflection recorded throughout the course will impact your participation in your small group, increase your skill level in other groups and provide you with material you will be able to use to complete your final reflection paper. Some areas for consideration in this reflection practice include: your participation in your small group process or in the class process; your new or deepened insights and connections especially as they relate to the readings; previous and/or current experience in other groups; and unfolding understandings about your own ability to contribute to the health of a group. Attend to resistances as they surface in you. These often teach us a lot about our expectations, assumptions, and judgments.
6. **Written feedback to student participants** in your small group:
 1. All group members will give written and specific feedback to the facilitator of the small group session.
 2. After the small group session on the second to last class day, (**May 21, 2006**), give each person in your small group written feedback concerning your experience of their participation and facilitation in the group. The feedback needs to be specific and concerned with observable behavior. Please address both your assessment of each person's contribution to the group and identify an area of growth. Refer to the Giving

and Receiving Feedback guidelines in your coursepak and the course competencies listed on the first page of the syllabus for help in framing your feedback to your peers.

7. **Final Paper:**

a. **A 4-7 page paper** due in the STM office by *3pm June 5, 2006*. The paper needs to demonstrate a growth of understanding of your ability to both lead and participate in a community of faith. It will also address the specific ways in which your leadership and participation will foster those communities for justice and action. Include insights from: your journal, feedback from your peers, your goals and objectives, your ANGEL contributions and those of your peers, your experience in your small group, class lectures and discussions, and your experience and reading. Be sure to cite specific texts and resources. I look both for your integration of skills and learning in practical application (your small group, other groups) and understanding of the literature that is available in the area of fostering communities of faith. Please use the STM writing guidelines as contained in your Student Advising Handbook. (You may use another source for writing format if you are more familiar with it.)

b. **Your suggested self-grade with a rationale** for assigning the grade due with the final paper on the last day of class. Direct your rationale toward the listed competencies of the course, your energy and commitment to the processes outlined in the syllabus, your reading, and your assessment of your skill level and your attaining your goals as submitted in writing on the first day of class. Include your learning from self and peer evaluation throughout the course. Remember that completion of all the requirements earns a "B". To earn an "A" one needs to demonstrate *superior* use of skills and processes, read beyond the requirements, and demonstrate in the final paper and other assignments a level of excellence beyond the norm.

JOURNALING QUESTIONS:

The same four questions are intended to guide your reflection for the entire quarter. These are intended to help develop a habit of reflection on your skills, your body, your gifts and your growth areas in a group. These questions are not intended to limit, rather they are proposed as "pump primer". You may wish to use both your class group experience and other group experience. Please feel free to do so. It is hoped that over the course you will be able to read your disciplined responses to discover the growth, the continuing themes, and the insights.

Each time you write, take time to breathe and to center yourself. Image the group process you are considering. Image yourself in that group. Try to create the scene through your senses, identifying sights, sounds, and smells (what were people wearing? what did you see in your space? how did the room smell? what noises did you notice? how did people's voices sound?, etc.) As you replay the group, tune into your own body responses to the discussion. When did you feel relaxed? tense? anxious? confident? angry? hopeful? excited? etc. Try to listen to your remembered body responses as you replay the group time in your imagination. If you are experiencing some resistance to the group, the course, a particular person, let yourself enter into dialogue with that resistance, resistance can often be a signal of a growth area.

Begin to write on these questions:

1. What did I experience as energizing/life-giving in my small group?
2. What did I experience as de-energizing/ life draining in my small group?

3. What specifically made the experience life-giving. . . life-draining?
4. In what specific way did each experience affirm me? invite me to grow?

“Consider that God, your Benefactor, is present
in all creatures
and in yourself.

If you look at every step of the visible creation,
in all you will meet God.”

St. Ignatius Loyola

CLASS ONE: INTRODUCTIONS AND BEGINNINGS
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Goal: To begin to form small groups through personal introductions and sharing stories.

Readings Required: Coursepak:
 Goals and objectives;
 Small group guidelines;
 Michael Battle's chapter "the Delicate Networks of Interdependence;"
 Ron Rolheiser's "A Spirituality of Ecclesiology;"
 Robert Bellah "Conclusion: Competing Visions of the role of Religion in American Society;"
 Robert Bellah "Religion and the Shape of National Culture;"
 Desmond Tutu's definition of "ubuntu".
 Sofield, Hammett and Juliano, p. 43-46
Acts of the Apostles, which depicts the ideal Christian community,
 Doherty's *A Celtic Model of Ministry*, Chapters 1-4
The Difficult but Indispensable Church, Chapters 2, 4 5, 6, and 8.

Assignments: email me your Student Survey (scal@seattleu.edu)
 Goals and Objectives for the class turned in during the class.

CLASS TWO: GROUP DEVELOPMENT

Goal: To initiate the process of becoming a group/ community.
 To define group goals and identify group norms.

Readings Required: PowerPoint on community posted on Angel

CLASS THREE: INDIVIDUAL STYLES

Goal: To become more aware of how one's personality and values impact every group experience.

Readings Required: Coursepak:
 Rag Tag Band a Community? How did it happen?;
 Theories of Group Development chart
 Which Way Are You Bent?
 Simplified Approach
The Indispensable Church, Chapters 5, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18;
One Body, One Spirit, all
A Celtic Model of Ministry, Chapter 6
 Turner, Chapters 1-3
 Sofield, Hammett and Juliano, Chapters 1-6

Assignments: Submit final Goals and Objectives

CLASS FOUR: PERCEPTIONS AND STEREOTYPES

Goal: To embrace diversity in fostering communities of faith

Readings Required: *One Body, One Spirit*, all

BETWEEN WEEKENDS:

April 5, 2006: Submit final copy of goals and objectives

April 7, 2006: First Contribution to Topic One (See p. 2 in Syllabus)

April 11, 2006: Second Contribution to Topic One (See p. 2 Syllabus)

May 5, 2006: First contribution to Topic Two (See p. 2 Syllabus)

May 9, 2006: Second contribution to Topic Two (See p. 2 Syllabus)

CLASS FIVE: PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING

Goal: To understand the value and dynamics of a group's planning, decision making and agenda setting processes.

Readings Required: Coursepak: Consensus Model, Sample Agenda
Sofield, Hammett, Juliano, Chapters 9, 10, 14 & 15.
Turner, Chapters 5 & 6;

CLASS SIX: PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING

Goal: To understand the value and dynamics of a group's planning, decision making and agenda setting processes.

Readings Required: Same as previous session

CLASS SEVEN: COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT

Goal: To identify styles of conflict, and specifically what works and what obstructs conflict resolution or management.

Readings Required: Sofield, chapters, 7-8, 16, 17
Turner, chapter 4
The Indispensable Church, chapters 6, 8, 9, 10, 11
Read *1 Corinthians*

Assignments: Ponder your own conflict style; think of a conflict you recently had and describe it- the data, facts, interactions, etc. Try to recreate the actual physical scene, and then move to what “triggered” your reaction to conflict and what it takes for you to reconcile, ameliorate, or solve the conflict. Be prepared to share parts of this in the small group in class.

CLASS EIGHT: COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT
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Goal: To identify styles of conflict, and specifically what works and what obstructs conflict resolution or management.

Readings Required: *Philippians*

Assignments: Written feedback to give to each of your small group members. See Syllabus, p. 3. You will hand the feedback to each member of your small group during or immediately after class today.

CLASS NINE: CLOSING AND EVALUATING

Goal: To provide feedback to group members about their contributions to the group;
To close the group.

Readings Required: None

AFTER FINAL WEEKEND:

June 5, 2006: Final paper and grade rationale, see Syllabus, p. 4

Assignment chart

Assignment	Find description on syllabus page	Due date
Student Survey		April 1, 2006
Goals and Objectives	3	April 1, 2006
Angel Posting Topic One	2	April 7, 2006
Second Contribution to Topic One	2	April 11, 2006
Angel Posting Topic Two	2	May 5, 2006
Second Contribution to Topic Two	2	May 9, 2006
Written feedback to group members	3	May 21, 2006
Final paper with grade rationale	4	June 5, 2006