

APPALACHIAN LOCAL PASTORS SCHOOL - 2018

Course: COS 123 - Formation and Discipleship
Date/Location: April 6-7, 20-21, 2018 / Madisonville, KY
May 21-25, 2018 / Union College, Barbourville, KY
Instructor: Paul H. Walles (pwalles@mtco.com)

Course Description:

This course grounds the student in the theology and core practices of personal and congregational formation and discipleship. Readings, course assignments and class experiences are designed to help students reflect on personal Christian formation practices, as well as develop an appreciation for the importance of discipleship groups.

Goals: Students will begin and/or deepen their ability to:

1. Articulate a theological basis for the Wesleyan emphasis on spiritual disciplines
2. Practice spiritual disciplines as means of grace.
3. Explain and implement the General Rules and the practices of small groups in a congregation.
4. Educate and resource a congregation in the disciplines of Christian formation.
5. Organize congregations to help people discern their callings and gifts for ministry.

Required Readings:

Marjorie J. Thompson, Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life (Newly Revised Edition). ISBN 978-0-664-23924-4

Sondra Matthaei, Formation in the Faith. ISBN 978-0-687-64973-0

"The Nature, Design, and General Rules of Our United Societies" (p. 75-78), 2012 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church.

John Wesley's Sermon "The Means of Grace" which you can access at <http://www.umcmission.org/Find-Resources/John-Wesley-Sermons/Sermon-16-The-Means-of-Grace> .

Suggested Reading:

Eugene H. Peterson, Working the Angles. ISBN 0-8028-0265-6

Robert Schnase, Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations.

ISBN 978-0-687-64540-4

Supplemental Reading:

Jack Seymour, Teaching the Way of Jesus. ISBN 978-1-4267-6505-6

Norma Everiste, Church as Learning Community. ISBN 978-0-687-04500-6

Anne Wimberly & Evelyn Park, In Search of Wisdom: Faith Formation in the Black Church. ISBN 978-0-687-06700-8

Preface:

In August of 1760 John Wesley wrote to one of his itinerant preachers. He included the following admonition:

“You wrong yourself greatly by omitting this (*daily reading, meditation and prayer*). You can never be a deep preacher without it, any more than a thorough Christian. O begin! Fix some part of every day for private exercises. You may acquire the taste you have not; what is tedious at first will afterwards be pleasant. Whether you like it or not, read and pray daily. It is for your life; there is no other way; else you will be a trifler all your days. Do justice to your own soul; give it time and means to grow. Do not starve yourself any longer.”

Wesley’s counsel is timeless for all who would live a vital Christian life. Within the context of contemporary parish ministry there is still the constant challenge of “doing justice to one’s own soul; giving it time and means to grow.” This class will focus on finding a healthy rhythm and practice of life with God. Eugene Peterson has written, “The pastor’s responsibility is to keep the community attentive to God.” For the pastor to do this effectively, the pastor must first learn to be attentive to God.

Pre-Class Assignments:

Assignments must be submitted by the required date. Please carefully read the directions for each assignment and follow the directions in your writing. Written assignments should be single-spaced, not larger than 12-pt. font size, and margins not larger than 1 inch.

Assignment #1:

Read Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life and Wesley’s sermon “The Means of Grace.” This will serve as an introduction to Christian formation and the spiritual disciplines. This assignment will ask you use the readings to reflect on your own Christian formation practices. In order to accomplish this assignment:

1. After having read the Introduction and Chapter 1 of Soul Feast and Wesley’s sermon “The Means of Grace”, write a 1-2 page reflection identifying key elements of

how a person experiences a hunger for God, and how that hunger motivates people to seek effective means to experience God's grace. In what way does this reflect your experience?

2. After each of the chapters 2–9, write a 1–2 page reflection first identifying Soul Feast's key points on that chapter's spiritual discipline, and secondly identifying how that particular practice is a part of your personal discipline, or if it is not, how it might enrich your relationship with God.

3. Finally, write a one page reflection on the correlation you find between Soul Feast and Wesley's sermon "The Means of Grace."

Your first assignment should be a minimum of 10 full pages. Do not shortchange your reflection on any of the spiritual disciplines.

Assignment #2:

Read Formation in the Faith and "The Nature, Design and General Rules of Our United Societies." This assignment will ask you to consider your church (whether it is the church you serve as pastor or, if you are not a pastor, the church you attend), and how you might either design or enhance a ministry of Christian growth. While Assignment #1 emphasized your individual personal growth, this assignment is designed for you to consider how interconnectedness and community life are required for effective growth to take place. In order to accomplish this assignment:

1. Identify the key elements for a local church to effectively make disciples of Jesus Christ.

2. Use Formation in Faith to help assess where your church finds itself in the process of developing a congregational ministry of "making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." Is your church intentionally doing anything to make disciples? Even if they are done unintentionally, are there any ministry pieces in your church that serve that end?

3. Consider how a process may either be begun (if one is not in place) or enhanced (if one is currently in place) to help the church's ministry be more effective in helping people grow in their relationship with God.

4. Given Wesley's insistence on the importance of small groups, give special attention to how Wesley's General Rules could be adapted for a congregation like yours.

Your second assignment should be a minimum of six full pages. Attempt to be as honest and as practical as you can be. Do this assignment to put it into practice.

Class Assignments:

During the week of class (or weekends) you will have two short readings that will be handed out in class and which will be a part of subsequent class discussion.

During the week of class (or weekends) you will be asked participate in covenant group conversations, as well as to do some reflective Bible studies.

Final Assignment:

During the week of class (or final weekend) you will be asked to pull together your readings, class lectures and discussions, and give special attention to Chapter 10 of Soul Feast in the development of a personal covenant for health and growth. A written copy of your personal covenant will be turned in on the final day of class. More specific instructions will be given in class.

Grading:

The final grade will be calculated by:

Pre-Class Assignment #1: 40%

Pre-Class Assignment #2: 40%

Class Participation: 10%

Final Assignment: 10%