



**CL7531**  
**THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR**  
**CONGREGATIONAL VITALIZATION—PART I**  
**April 2009—September 2009**

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## **INSTRUCTORS**

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## **SEMINAR DESCRIPTION**

This seminar provides participants opportunities to reflect theologically on aspects of congregational life in light of missional ecclesiology, with an eye toward engaging the community context of the congregation. Particular attention is given to developing the capacity for critical reflection on the theological foundations for engaging in contextual congregational vitalization, along with designing effective strategies to carry it out.

## **APPROACH**

Engaging the understandings of missional ecclesiology and missional leadership developed in previous seminars, participants now explore the missional character of specific practices which contribute to congregational vitalization. This seminar focuses on the outer life of the congregation. A preliminary assessment of the existing relationship between the participant's congregation and its wider community provides the operating framework for this exploration. Guided by an understanding of critical social theory and global civil society studies, participants will engage in a grounded theory study of their

setting to interpret that community relationship and its potential in light of civil society. This is designed to lead to an integrative theological interpretation of congregational missional ecclesiology within a specific community context, demonstrating the missional character and potential for congregational vitalization through public companionship with God in global civil society.

## **OBJECTIVES**

Each seminar participant will . . .

1. Become familiar with reading, interpreting, and critically analyzing a congregation's community engagement through grounded theory research.
2. Demonstrate skills in integrating missional ecclesiology into a specific congregational community context.
3. Demonstrate skills in applying missional hermeneutics to the diverse congregational practices of public companionship with God in global civil society.
4. Complete the seminar project of integrating these congregational practices of public companionship into an understanding of the missional character and potential for the vitalization of a specific congregation.
5. Engage in peer learning through regular on-line interaction and seminar participation.

## **SEMINAR FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS**

### ***Seminar Structure***

The seminar is divided into three phases.

Phase I: Preparation, April 20, 2009—July 13, 2009

Phase II: Seminar, July 20-24, 2009

Phase III: Project Completion, August 3—September 30, 2009

## **SEMINAR ASSIGNMENTS**

### ***Required Texts***

*Critical Social Theory* by Gary Simpson

*Leadership for the Common Good* by Barbara Crosby and John Bryson

*Constructing Grounded Theory* by Kathy Charmaz

*Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization* by David Coghlan and Teresa Brannick

*Living Out Our Callings in the Community* by Gary Simpson, et al.

(Centered Life Publication from Luther Seminary)

## **Congregational Vitalization, Part I – April 2009 through September 2009**

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*Public Church for the Life of the World* by Cynthia Moe-Lobeda

*Precarious Life* by Judith Butler

*Church and State: Lutheran Perspectives* by John Stumme and Robert Tuttle

*The Resilient Sector: The State of Nonprofit America* by Lester Salamon

On-Line Library Reserve Texts (e-reserves)

### **SCHEDULE AT-A-GLANCE**

#### **Module 1**

<u>Readings/Assignments</u>	<u>Posting Dates</u>
E-reserves (minus “God in Global Civil Society” for Mod. 1 assignment 3, and Anheier et al for Mod. 2)	May 4, 2009
<i>Critical Social Theory</i>	June 1, 2009
“God in Global Civil Society” (by Simpson); <i>Public Church for the Life of the World</i> ; <i>Church &amp; State</i>	June 22, 2009

#### **Module 2**

<i>The Resilient Sector</i> ; <i>Precarious Life</i> ; <i>Leadership for the Common Good</i> ; <i>Living Out Our Callings</i> ; “Introducing Global Civil Society” (by Anheier et al)	July 13, 2009
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**Week off** July 13-20, 2009

#### **Module 3**

Seminar Week	July 20-24, 2009
<i>Constructing Grounded Theory</i> ; <i>Doing Action Research</i>	

**Week off** July 27—August 3, 2009

#### **Module 4**

Reading from Annotated Bibliography	August 31, 2009
Grounded Theory Final Project	September 30, 2009

### **Module Assignments**

Each participant is expected to complete four modules for this seminar, which includes participating in the module conducted during the week-long seminar meeting in July. The cohort will be divided into two smaller groups for online posting of assignments and responding to each other; responses will be ONE collective response to colleague

postings, 500 words minimum, at the posting site for the assigned group. Participants are expected to fully involve their congregational conversation teams in each module, convening the team at the end of each module.

## **Module 1**

**April 20 – June 22, 2009**

### **Introduction to Congregational Public Companionship**

The purpose of this module is to understand and theologically interpret the mission of the congregation as public companion with God in civil society in light of critical social theory.

#### **MODULE 1 REQUIRED READING**

E-reserves (minus Anheier et al for Mod. 2)

*Critical Social Theory* by Gary Simpson

*Public Church for the Life of the World* by Cynthia Moe-Lobeda

*Church and State: Lutheran Perspectives* by John Stumme and Robert Tuttle

#### **ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Read required articles on e-reserve (all but “God in Global Civil Society” for Mod. 1 assignment 3, and Anheier et al for Mod. 2). Conduct an initial assessment (min. 1000 words) of the existing relationship your congregation has with its wider community, along with your initial thoughts regarding opportunities for further development of that relationship.  
DUE: May 4, 2009.  
COHORT RESPONSES DUE: May 11, 2009 (one response, min. 500 words).
2. Read *Critical Society Theory*. Post a 5-page (at least 1500 words) analysis of critical social theory as it applies to your congregational setting. Include a discussion of your congregation in light of the distinguishing marks of missional congregations as public companions with God in civil society.  
DUE: June 1, 2009.  
COHORT RESPONSES DUE: June 8, 2009 (one response, min. 500 words).
3. Read *Public Church for the Life of the World*, *Church and State*, and “God in Global Civil Society” (e-reserve). Post a 5-page (at least 1500 words) reflection on 1) the missional calling of congregations to be public companions with God in civil society as we enter a new era of mission; 2) practical implications of this for your congregation.  
DUE: June 22, 2009.  
COHORT RESPONSES DUE: June 29, 2009 (one response, min. 500 words).  
CONVENE CONVERSATION TEAM TO DISCUSS MODULE 1: By June 29, 2009.

## **Module 2**

**June 22, 2009 – July 13, 2009**

### **Public Church in Civil Society**

The purpose of module 2 is to reflect on the missional character of congregations as public companions with God in the civil society arenas of their particular communities.

#### **MODULE 2 REQUIRED READING**

*“Introducing Global Civil Society”* by Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius, and Mary Kaldor (e-reserve)

*Leadership for the Common Good* by Barbara Crosby and John Bryson

*The Resilient Sector: The State of Nonprofit America* by Lester Salamon

*Precarious Life* by Judith Butler

*Living Out Our Callings in the Community* by Gary Simpson, et al. (Centered Life Publication from Luther Seminary)

#### **ASSIGNMENT**

- 1) Complete required readings. Post a 5-page (at least 1500 words) reflection on the civil society context and societal challenges facing the public church today. Discuss the particular context and challenges in your community, the participation by congregations in your community in general, and the specific calling and participation of your own congregation.

DUE: July 13, 2009.

COHORT RESPONSES DUE: July 20, 2009 (one response, min. 500 words).

CONVENE CONVERSATION TEAM TO DISCUSS MODULE 2: By July 20, 2009.

## **Module 3**

**Seminar Week, July 20-24, 2009**

### **Conducting Congregational Study: Public Companionship with God in Civil Society**

#### **MODULE 3 REQUIRED READING (in preparation for the seminar week)**

*Constructing Grounded Theory* by Kathy Charmaz

*Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization* by David Coghlan and Teresa Bannick

This week will provide opportunities for reflection on critical social theory in light of missional ecclesiology. Participants will be trained in conducting grounded theory research and introduced to action research. They will design a grounded theory research project regarding their congregation's public companionship with God in civil society for the final

project in this seminar. All required readings assigned so far will be engaged during the seminar week.

CONVENE CONVERSATION TEAM TO DISCUSS MODULE 3: By August 3, 2009.

## **Module 4**

**August 3, 2009 – September 30, 2009**

### **Congregational Vitalization as Public Companionship**

#### **REQUIRED READING**

Selected reading from a bibliography (to be supplied during the seminar week) to bring seminar readings to 2500 pages.

#### **ASSIGNMENTS**

- 1) Post a 400-500 word annotation of each additional reading that has been completed, with particular focus on congregational public companionship with God in civil society. DUE: August 31, 2009.
- 2) SEMINAR PROJECT – Design, conduct, and present the findings of a grounded theory study in your congregation regarding its public companionship with God in civil society, in light of the hypothesized contributions and drawbacks of civil society organizations in communities. This project is designed to introduce the participants to the process of engaging in theologically-framed social science research. This project will have three main sections, approximately 30 pages total.

##### A) Section 1: Introduction

Introduce your study and research question, and identify how this study is theological-framed and theoretically-informed in light of missional ecclesiology and critical social theory.

##### B) Section 2: Methodology

Describe the methodology you employed to address your research question. Include the research design, role of the researcher, and ethical issues involved.

##### C) Section 3: Research Results and Conclusion

Summarize the results of your grounded theory study and your conclusions regarding the contributions it makes and drawbacks it experiences in your community as a public companion with God in civil society.

DUE: September 30, 2009.

CONVENE CONVERSATION TEAM TO DISCUSS MODULE 4: By Oct. 15, 2009.