

## Carey Theological College

### SPIR 692 Deepening Congregational Spirituality: Responding to the Reign of God

Professor: Dr. Les Biggs  
lsbiggs@shaw.ca  
April 9 – June 29, 2012  
On Site: April 16 – 19, 2012  
3 graduate credit hours

#### **Course Description**

Central to the message and mission of Jesus was the reign of God. This course will explore spiritual formation through the lens of what was so central to Jesus, the in-breaking reign of God. Looking through the lens of the reign of God will lead us to discuss spiritual formation for the whole congregation. A focus on developing congregational spirituality will be the practical outworking of that discussion. Through this course, it is hoped that the participants will gain a better understanding of the kingdom of God, the role of the church within the kingdom and an improved capacity to foster spiritual formation within the people of God.

#### **Course Objectives**

Through the process of bringing the reign of God, the church and spiritual formation together, the student will:

1. Understand implications of the reign of God for congregational spiritual formation.
2. Value spiritual formation for a congregation and articulate goals that may enhance that formation
3. Define and utilize practices that will lead a congregation toward those goals of spiritual formation.
4. Gain skill in identifying the stories that congregations are living as part of a commitment to live more fully into the kingdom of God story.

#### **Course Outline**

##### On Site – Day 1 – Polishing the lens - Understanding the Reign of God

- understanding the reign of God as story
- world view and story
- the story of the dominant culture in Jesus' time and ours
- idolatry and other stories

##### Day 2 – Looking through the lens – The role of the church in light of the Reign of God

- the place of the church in the kingdom story
- understanding the church as agent of the kingdom
- the gospel and reductionism
- spiritual formation as the changing of stories

Day 3 – Interpreting what we see – Defining the goals of spiritual formation within a congregation

- defining the goals of spiritual formation when church is understood to be agent of the kingdom
- defining the indicators that we are reaching those goals

Day 4 - Acting on what we have seen - Developing congregational spirituality

- corporate spiritual practices
- linking corporate practices to specific ministry contexts

**Course Requirements**

**Prior to the intensive:**

1. Read *Models of the Kingdom* by Howard Snyder. 176 pages = 8 hours
2. Write a 1000 word essay on the kingdom of God covering the following topics:  
a) a definition/brief explanation of the kingdom of God, b) a study of the Parable of the Weeds (Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43) focusing on what that parable contributes to our understanding of the kingdom of God and c) identify which of the models of the kingdom described by Howard Snyder has had the most influence in your life up until this point. Due: April 16, 2012 8 hours

**After the intensive:**

1. Read:  
*Missional Small Groups* by M. Scott Boren 186 pages  
*Truth is Stranger Than it Used to Be* by R. Middleton and B. Walsh 250 pages  
*God so Loved the World* by Jonathan Wilson 216 pages  
**And** 475 pages from the following books: 24 hours  
Dickau, Tim. 2011. *Plunging into the Kingdom Way*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books.  
Guder, Darrell. 2000. *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.  
Kraybill, Donald B. 2003. *The Upside Down Kingdom*. Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press.  
McLaren, Brian. 2006. *The Secret Message of Jesus*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2007. *Everything Must Change*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson.  
Snyder, Howard. 1985. *A Kingdom Manifesto*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press.

**Then:**

2. Write a 2000 word essay on one of three topics (related to the goal of spiritual formation within a congregation) to be discussed during the intensive. The focus of the essay will be explained during the intensive. **Due: May 31, 2012**
3. Develop 'a ministry plan' to be enacted in your ministry context. The goal of the ministry plan will be to positively influence spiritual formation within your ministry context. The proposed ministry plan (500 words) must be submitted to

- the professor no later than June 7, 2012 for approval. After completing the ministry action, which should represent approximately 6 hours of involvement: Write a 1000 word report covering the following topics. A) What did you learn from the experience about spiritual formation, both about yourself and about your ministry context? B) What was your perception of the results of the ministry action? C) What did you learn that will help in future efforts to develop congregational spiritually? **Due: June 29, 2012**
4. Submit a reading log listing the titles and page numbers of the books that you read for this course, and key quotations, sentences or paragraphs that you found valuable and would like to remember. Be sure to include a total count of pages read. **Due June 29, 2012**

**Evaluation**

Reading	10 %
Pre- Intensive paper	20 %
Post – Intensive paper	35 %
Ministry Project	35%

**Time Investment**

Class participation	28 hrs
Reading (1300 pages)	65 hrs
Pre- Intensive paper (1000 words)	8 hrs
Post – Intensive paper (2000 words)	16 hrs
Ministry Involvement includes:	
- planning ministry involvement	
- writing proposal (500 words)	
- implementing ministry plan	
- writing report (1000 words)	<u>18 hrs</u>
Total	135 hrs.

**Select Bibliography Recommended for this Course**

Barrett, Lois Y. 2004. *Treasures in Clay Jars*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.

Brueggemann, Walter. 1978. *The Prophetic Imagination*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Campolo, Tony. 1990. *The Kingdom of God is a Party*. Dallas: Word Publishing.

Dickau, Tim. 2011. *Plunging into the Kingdom Way*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books.

Grenz, Stanley J. 1998. *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books.

Guder, Darrell, ed. 1998. *Missional Church*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.

Guder, Darrell. 2000. *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.

Kraybill, Donald B. 2003. *The Upside Down Kingdom*. Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press.

Ladd, George Eldon. 1959. *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.

- McLaren, Brian. 2006. *The Secret Message of Jesus*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2007. *Everything Must Change*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson.
- Newbigin, Lesslie. 1986. *Foolishness to the Greeks*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1989. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.
- Snyder, Howard. 1985. *A Kingdom Manifesto*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press.
- Wilson, Jonathan. 1997. *Living Faithfully in a Fragmented World*. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2001. *God So Loved the World*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2006. *Why Church Matters*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press
- Wright, Christopher J. H. 2006. *The Mission of God*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press.
- Wright, N. T. 1996. *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1992. *The New Testament and the People of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Van Gelder, Craig. 2007. *The Ministry of the Missional Church*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books.
- Volf, Miroslav and Dorothy C. Bass eds. 2002. *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans.