GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
WM/EV 665 CHURCH PLANTING AND GROWTH
Summer Session I, 2013
Lectures: May 20-23 – 8:30am-12:30pm, 1:30pm-5pm
Final Submission of All Work – On or Before August 16

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers an introduction and systematic overview of the process of starting new churches. It explores biblical and theological rationales, provides an overarching conceptual framework, and engages the student in a process-oriented approach, using specific tools, techniques, and resources for winning those who are far from God. In addition to lecture-discussion and group participation, primary emphasis is placed upon assisting students in the design of an evangelistic strategy from a culturally sensitive and missiological perspective that is based on personal experience within their own communities.

MINISTRY COMPETENCIES

The major purpose of the course is to develop understanding and beginning skills to plant and to nurture churches. To this end, the student will:

1. Define and describe his/her own biblical rationale for church planting consistent with personal theological convictions and church tradition.

2. Identify and discuss particular principles and skills needed for healthy church planting and growth.

3. Design an individual strategy proposal for planting a church in a community selected by the student.

4. Assess his/her own competency to engage in church planting ministry related to the above strategy proposal, and identify and discuss ways to acquire necessary capabilities or resources as needed.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The primary learning experience for the course is the writing of a formal written proposal for planting a church in a community of the student’s choice. The class will provide all the structure and guidance needed to do an excellent job. Students will create an end product that will provide practical assistance in the planting of a new church by (1) generating interest and a sense of confidence with potential new church members, (2) create web sites and marketing materials to advertise in their communities, and (3) engendering support from sponsoring churches or a denomination.

Generally there are three distinct groups of students who take this course. (1) You may be considering the possibility of church planting at home or abroad as a pastoral calling. (2) You may wish to become knowledgeable about church planting so that you can be more supportive to those who are called to this ministry, even though you know this is not your own calling. If you find yourself in either of these two categories, the project proposal will be for you a “practice community” and a “practice exercise” that could be replicated in another community in the future. (3) You may already be a church planting pastor. If so, the proposal will be a way for you to sharpen the focus of the ministry you have already begun.

All work in and out of class will be directed toward preparing you to write your proposal. Each student will work on a team with one or two other students [who choose the same community for a church plant]. The team will share responsibility for data collection and analysis, although each student will write his/her own proposal.

Auditors are welcome. Spouses are particularly encouraged to audit the class.
I. REQUIRED READING (15%)

Only the texts listed in this section are required reading for the class. Complete all required reading prior to the first class on Monday, May 20. Read enough to be familiar with the material – read with a curious mindset. As you read, write down questions that come to you for your own benefit (not to be handed in).


Submit a one-page Reading Verification Sheet (due on August 16) that indicates you have completed assigned reading, along with any extra credit books, articles, or videos. Indicate for each citation the number of pages read or number of page credits for videos (each video is worth 150 pages).

**Recommended Optional Reading**

Books listed in this section are optional reading and will be considered as “extra credit” which will contribute to a higher grade if the student’s final course grade is in the balance. The extra credit may be completed any time up to August 16. Submit a one-page Reading Verification Sheet that indicates you have completed the optional reading. Indicate for each citation the number of pages read.

II. COMMUNITY PROFILE  

Preliminary draft is DUE: June 14  

Final Draft is DUE: August 16  

NOTE: FOR ALL WRITTEN WORK SUBMITTED, INCLUDE A COVER PAGE WITH THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION AT THE VERY TOP OF THE PAGE -- Your Name & P.O. Box.; Tel.; E-Mail Address.  

Note Carefully: All work below marked with an asterisk (*) requires a passing grade in order to pass the class.  

The community setting is no accident, but rather God’s gift to the church—the place for His special dwelling, and the place for corporate witness and loving service in His Name. Are you excited about God’s call to your church, to minister to the larger community of which the church is a part?  

Excitement and vision, and realistic planning, depend upon how well you know your community, its opportunities and challenges. This section of the course on data gathering for your ministry area will assist you to (1) anticipate your church’s unique identity and personality, and (2) begin thinking strategically about how to build bridges of loving Christian witness for evangelism and service to those in need.  

You will be introduced in class to an extensive set of tools that you will be able to use in the future to build a comprehensive community profile. However, because of the realistic time limitations within the space of one course, you will be asked for your class project to actually gather data with only a few of the representative research instruments, as indicated below. [The required tools, below, have been selected for their general adaptability for the overseas context as well as the US setting]. Each of the following will be introduced in class:  

The above required data will be incorporated into your formal proposal for planting a new church (defined below). The care with which you collect and report all of the Community Profile information will have a direct affect on the quality of your final proposal. All assignments marked with an asterisk (*) require a passing grade in order to pass the class.

A. Geographical Area Map  (pass/fail)*

Your first task is to define the physical dimensions of your primary service area. What will be the anticipated physical boundaries of the area served by the church? Follow either of the following procedures:

Define your church’s service area by an incorporated township or other legally defined area, provided you believe that your church can reasonably offer ministry to that entire area.  OR

Define your church’s service area by drawing a radius on an area map that extends 5 miles from the church; reduce the area to 3 miles if it includes more than one-half million persons; increase the area to 10 miles for a suburban church; increase the area to 15 miles for a rural church.

Area maps are generally available from a number of sources: state highway department, state development office, county planning office, Chamber of Commerce, American Automobile Association, or commercial maps for purchase at a local stationery store. A real estate agent willing to help can be a real God-send!

Use colored markers to identify different types of areas on the map [remember to place a legend on the map itself]:

- Major highways (purple)
- Railroads (black)
- Business/Industry (yellow)
- Residential (orange)
- Rural farm (green)

You may also devise symbols within your legend to indicate community agencies of various kinds: churches, schools, parks/recreation, hospitals, counseling centers, etc.

B. Windshield Survey  (pass/fail)*

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It will be helpful to gain an accurate overview of the community surrounding the church. This can be accomplished by driving through the community and making careful observations. Work within the defined radius of your church’s service area as defined above in your “Geographical Area Map”, and carefully respond to the questions below. Drive around and have fun!

Windshield Survey, Part I: Dominant Patterns of the Community

1. Are there natural boundaries, such as rivers, hills, lakes, etc, that affect ways in which people function in this area? Explain.
2. What are the man-made boundaries, such as highways, railroads, industrial zones, shopping centers, commercial areas, etc.? How do these affect life in the areas that surround them? What are the main thoroughfares that affect movement or traffic through this area?
3. What types of persons do you observe in the community? Are there distinct racial or ethnic enclaves within the general geographical zone under study?
4. What significant changes do you observe from one section to another as you drive through the area?
5. What residential areas exist within this zone?
6. Where are the agencies that affect persons in this area, such as schools, recreation centers, shopping malls, etc.?
7. What other churches are present in the area (list by name and denomination)?

Windshield Survey, Part II: Residential Configuration of the Community

1. How would you describe the type of housing in the area? Are the houses single or multiple-dwelling?
2. How would you describe the condition of the housing in the area? How well kept are the homes in the community or sub-community? Are the homes in good repair or are they deteriorating?
3. Is there evidence of mobility among the community or sub-community by “For Sale” signs appearing among the homes? Do the houses sell quickly in this community or sub-community?
4. How would you assess the socioeconomic status of the residents of this community or sub-community?
5. What types of automobiles are parked in the community or sub-community (describe)? Are they predominantly local or out-of-state?
6. What signs of life do you see, predominant age, activities, etc.?

C. Community Leaders’ Survey (pass/fail)*

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Interview a minimum of 4 leaders within the geographical boundaries of the community (from among representatives such as a school principal, director of a social service agency, owner of a business, an elected public official, a real estate agent, a pastor, etc.). You may wish to devise additional questions of your own.

1. What are some of the distinctives that give this community its identity?
2. What are some of the major issues facing this community at this time?
3. What are some of the needs people may have in this community which churches are currently attempting to meet? On which issues are they doing better, and on which are they less effective, in your view? Why?
4. Can you suggest major needs in the community with which churches are not involved, but could be if they were willing?
5. What advice would you give a pastor / new church in this community?

D. Other Churches (Detail Data)

(pass/fail)*

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Instructions will be given in class.

E. General Observations (pass/fail)*

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Over the past 5 years:

1. The average age of people in this community has:
   
   Stayed about the same        Increased        Decreased

   Your Source of Information:

   Briefly Describe/Explain:

   2. The educational level of people in this community has:
   
   Stayed about the same        Increased        Decreased

   Your Source of Information:

   Briefly Describe/Explain: (You may continue on opposite side of page)
3. The economic condition of this community has: stayed about the same increased decreased

Your Source of Information:

Briefly Describe/Explain: (You may continue on opposite side of page)

4. The ethnic/racial configuration of this community has: stayed about the same increased decreased

Your Source of Information:

Briefly Describe/Explain: (You may continue on opposite side of page)

5. The number of churches in this community has stayed about the same increased decreased

Your Source of Information:

Briefly Describe/Explain: (You may continue on opposite side of page)

F. Summary of the Community (35%) DUE: July 12 (or Before)

3+ pages, single-spaced, double spacing between paragraphs.
This is a narrative report of all the information about the community you have gathered so far in the class from the Community Profile (above), plus any additional elective research you have undertaken (see p. 3 of the syllabus).

- Geographical Area Map
- Windshield Survey
- Community Leaders’ Survey
- Other Churches (Detail Data)
- General Observations

Your Summary of the Community is for the purpose of casting a vision for planting a church in this community. Give those to whom you are presenting your vision a reason to care!!!

III. Formal Proposal for Planting a New Church in [name] Community

**PRIMARY CLASS ASSIGNMENT (50%)**

Final Copy is **DUE** Friday, **August 16**
(Please send by email)

*Note: Recognize the implementation of ongoing prayer as the most essential aspect of the entire proposal.*

Your formal written proposal for planting a church in your selected community is the culminating project from all you have learned in class, and from your reading, and from your own research.
Topical Outline with Suggested Subtopics

Topical Outline:

I. INTRODUCTION – Initial Conception Of The New Church
II. IMPLEMENTATION, PHASE I – Earliest Formation (Nucleus Building)
III. IMPLEMENTATION, PHASE II – Birth & Beginning Development of the New Church
IV. PERSONAL SELF-EVALUATION – Made in Light of the New Church’s Projected Needs.

Explanation of the Topical Outline with Suggested Subtopics:

I. INTRODUCTION – INITIAL CONCEPTION OF THE NEW CHURCH

Your assignment is to bring a dream to “life” in the hearts and minds of those you need to enlist to make it happen by God’s grace and empowerment. Who are you trying to influence? (e.g., your sending church for their prayer and financial support; e.g., the initial nucleus group who will comprise the embryonic beginnings of the new church; etc.). For each of these persons/constituencies: What can you say…how can you say it in order to: (1) increase their interest? (2) build their confidence in you and in your calling by God to this new work? (3) help them “own” with you God’s vision for the new church? (4) make their own personal commitment to the new church in specific and identifiable ways (e.g., prayer, time and talent, money, etc.).

Analogously, in the biological realm of reproduction this phase is conception.

Some suggested subtopics:
A. Biblical / Theological Foundations for Church Planting.
B. Community Description / Opportunity Assessment.
C. Mission / Purpose / Vision Statement (What Makes This Proposed Church Unique and Exciting?)
D. Needs & Resources.
E. Goals / Objectives (with Estimated Time Frames)
F. Budget (First Year)

II. IMPLEMENTATION, PHASE I – EARLIEST FORMATION (NUCLEUS BUILDING)

This is your plan to begin to bring the dream into being. As you anticipate God’s formation of the church, the following questions may assist you in your reflections about the future. [You may give theoretical projections to the questions, i.e., pretend, if you are not working with an actual group of people during this class experience]. Who is coming together to begin to realize the dream (general description)? How are they forming? What are their respective roles? What is exciting and contagious? How are the “people of God” loving and serving the Lord…one another…their community and world for whom Christ died? What does the start-up leadership and “followership” look like, and what are the implications for the future church?

Analogously, in the biological realm this phase is healthy prenatal development that eventuates finally in birth.

Some suggested subtopics:
A. Early Leadership / “Followership” Formation.
B. Team Development
C. Multiplication of People and Embryonic Beginning Ministries.

III. IMPLEMENTATION, PHASE II – BIRTH AND BEGINNING DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW CHURCH

Birth is generally defined as the first public worship service along with announcement to the community. Your assignment is to describe the new body with all its future potential. What organization and leadership are in place to make it possible for the organism to become all that God wants it to be?

Analogously, in the biological realm this phase takes us all the way from birth to growth to maturity and reproduction of more new churches.
Some suggested subtopics:
A. Dynamic Worship.
B. Church Governance / Relationships to the Denomination and to the Church at Large.
C. Leadership / Ministry Development.
E. Outreach, Evangelism, and Assimilation of New People Into the Church.
F. Reproduction of New Churches.

IV. PERSONAL SELF-EVALUATION IN LIGHT OF THE CHURCH’S PROJECTED NEEDS

This is a brief description of your own person and calling, including personal strengths and weaknesses. Given who you are by virtue of God’s call, how will you equip the new church to become in reality “the people of God”? How do you plan to utilize your strengths as you lead in the recruitment, encouragement, and coordination of those God has anointed to share leadership with you under your shepherding oversight?

Students will have opportunity to present the essential elements of their paper in class, i.e. while the final paper is still in process. Dates will be assigned in class. Think of your classmates as a church or denominational board whose endorsement you are seeking for your project. Please prepare a 1+ page handout with enough copies for each member of the class, to facilitate your presentation.

Final paper length should be approximately 15 pages more or less, single-spaced with double spacing between paragraphs, which includes all of your Community Profile data (above) and any other appendices you may have. If it seems more natural for you, you may include some of the Community Profile data, as appropriate, in the body of the paper itself rather than in appendix form.

GRADING

1. Required Reading 15%
2. Community Profile: Summary Data Reports 35%
3. Formal Proposal for Planting a New Church 50%

Note Carefully: All work submitted must be typed and single-spaced, double spacing between paragraphs, except for your research raw data and notes provided they are neatly hand-written and legible.

NOTE CAREFULLY: Submit all your papers as email attachments.

Papers submitted after midnight on the due dates will be graded down on the basis of 1 full grade point (i.e., A to B) for each day late. The only basis for extension will be debilitating illness, death in the family, etc.

The grade scale is listed in the catalog.

DUE On or Before Friday August 16:
Reading Verification Sheets;
Final Drafts of All of the Above;
Formal Proposal for Planting a Church.