

Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary

Course Syllabus

January 12-16, 2009

8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

COURSE: Missional Church in a Postmodern Context - 2 or 3 Units

Instructor: Milfred Minatrea, D.Min.

Mailing address: PO Box 142412, Irving, Texas 75014-2412

Telephone (214) 418.8320

Email: minatrea@missional.org

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In a rapidly changing global environment, some view the church as irrelevant or incapable of making positive transformational impact in communities and nations. Formerly revered as a significant voice, in a post-Christian and post-modern culture the church is frequently dismissed by those who assume it offers little substantive effect.

Missional Church in a Postmodern Context will explore the dynamic impact being made by congregations who reclaim their role in the *missio dei*. Three converging elements of the missional church posture will be examined in depth:

- Biblical content
- Mission context
- Capacities of congregations within the Body of Christ

Using case study format, participants will investigate the practices of missional churches and analyze changes that led maintenance/survival oriented congregations toward a missional posture. Participants will read Biblical content with a missional hermeneutic, clarifying its application in contemporary cultural and in preparing disciples who are equipped to live God's mission in their vocations, communities and congregations.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Interpret scripture to underscore the *raison d'etre* of the church in terms of its purpose and mission.
2. Discuss behavioral practices of missional congregations and potential pathways toward the development of churches expressing a missional culture.
3. Explain the interrelationship between the church in mission and disciple-making in the local congregation.
4. Identify unique components of a congregation's primary mission context and how those components may inform appropriate mission ministries.
5. Assess the capacities of a congregation and how those capacities may inform appropriate mission ministries the church may offer in its context.
6. Evidence the ability to interpret and apply scripture through a missional hermeneutic.

RESOURCES

Required Texts Include:

Minatrea, M. (2004). *Shaped by God's Heart: the Passion and Practices of Missional Churches*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Wright, C. (2006). *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*. InterVarsity Academic Press.

Recommended Texts Include:

Hirsch, A. (2006). *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*. Brazos Press.

Willard, D. (2006). *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship*. Harper One.

COURSE FORMAT:

Due to the intensive nature of this course, students are expected to complete all assigned readings before each class. Students will be expected to participate in class dialogue, student interaction, writing assignments and complete a major project.

Proposed Class Schedule – January 12-16, 2009 – 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM

Date	Format	Primary Focus	Advance Preparation Required
January 12-13	Seminar (required of credit students)	Exploration of Missional Posture and Leading Congregational Change	Credit students should be conversant with <i>Shaped by God's Heart</i>
January 14	Dialogue/Case study/Lecture	Interpreting Scripture: a Missional Hermeneutic	Students should be conversant with <i>The Mission of God</i>
January 15	Dialogue/Video/ Networking	Effective mission: context and capacity	Students will be prepared to present <i>Missional Reflections</i>
January 16	Reflection/Video/ Dialogue/Case study	Disciple making: critical to mission expression	Students will be prepared to present <i>Missional Reflections</i>

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

In addition to class attendance, active participation in and contribution to class dialogue, students will complete the following course assignments.

Missional Reflection on Scripture:

Each student will prepare and present in class a reflection on a Scripture passage from a missional perspective. Student presentations shall be a maximum of seven minutes, Students are encouraged to choose passages other than those most often identified with a mission emphasis (Genesis 12: 1-3, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, etc). Reflections are strongly

encouraged upon passages in which the reader has a greater challenge in answering the question, “What does God reveal about Himself and His mission in this section of Scripture?”

For example: Deuteronomy 20:10-20 deals with instructions for treatment of inhabitants in lands that are taken in battle by Israel. A reflection upon this passage should move beyond formulaic explanations prompting the reader to seek insights about the character of God and the nature of His mission.

Students will submit a single page overview of their reflection at the time of their class presentation. Note: this assignment is not primarily exegetical but reflective. Students should exegete the passage in preparation for reflection, but that should be done to enable the student to do missional reflection. Students presenting only an exegesis of the passage, and failing to present their own reflections upon the passage, will not be given credit for the assignment.

Missional reflections do not have to be “correct” and they may well be provocative. As these reflections are presented, it is assumed that students within the class may not agree on all implications presented in the reflections. This disagreement will provide a platform for further discussion and desire for greater insights concerning God and the *mission dei*. The purpose of this assignment is to enhance the student’s capacity to reflect upon the missional implications of any passage of Scripture.

This assignment will be equal to 15% (2 credit) or 10% (3 credit) of the total course grade and is due as determined by class presentation schedule. Written reflection papers are due at the time the presentation is given in class.

Reaction Paper: *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*

The instructor has affirmed Christopher Wright’s *The Mission of God* as one of the most important contributions to theological literature over the last five years. In response to this text, students will submit a three to five page reaction to *The Mission of God*.

This reaction should include the following:

- student assessment of the major themes Wright addresses
- the student’s understanding of Wright’s use of the term “*missional hermeneutic*.”
- five major insights gleaned from the text that inform the student’s critical thinking of biblical content and mission
- up to three areas in which the student believes the author did not adequately clarify his positions, disagrees with the author, feels the author is wrong in his conclusions, or in which the author makes unjustified assumptions in his position.
- Student’s perception of the most important personal “take-aways” gained through reading of the text.

In preparing this reaction, provide careful documentation of the specific citations from the text to which the student is reacting.

This assignment will be equal to 30% (2 credit) or 20% (3 credit) of the total course grade and should be postmarked by January 30, 2009.

Comprehensive Class Project:

In fulfillment of this course, students will submit a comprehensive project of between ten and twelve pages. In the project the student will introduce the theological rationale for a local congregation's purpose and mission, analyze current reality and propose a strategic pathway toward a missional posture for that local congregation. Students may base their research upon their home church, the church of which the student is currently a member and/or serves as a staff member, or a local church that agrees to accommodate the student's research.

The theological framework should evidence a missional hermeneutic of the biblical mandate for the church. The current analysis should include

- current state of the congregation related to a missional posture with consideration given to the nine distinct practices presented in *Shaped by God's Heart*
- exegesis of the local mission context in which the church is located
- assessment of current mission ministry initiatives
- current disciple making processes
- current congregational (member) capacities.

Subsequent to analysis of the current reality, the student should articulate a strategic pathway toward a missional posture encompassing specific recommendations in areas enumerated in the analysis of current reality.

This project should allow the student to interact with a congregation's current status and reflect on potential actions that might move that congregation toward a more effective engagement in God's mission in its local context. The assignment is intended to enrich the student's capacity to combine biblical counsel and visionary skill sets to provide excellence in congregational leadership.

This project should be postmarked by February 13, 2009 and will comprise 40% of the student's grade for the course.

Three Credit Course Additional Assignment:

Students taking Missional Church Development for three credits will select one of the nine distinct practices of missional churches presented in *Shaped by God's Heart* (chapters three through eleven) upon which the student will conduct comprehensive research. Students should seek verbal approval of the course instructor for the practice they elect to address. The instructor will interact with the student regarding the proposed research paper prior to the student's embarking on that research. The student will research biblical, doctrinal and historical nuances related to the chosen practice of missional churches. The research may investigate but shall not be limited to:

- biblical counsel and interpretation regarding this missional behavior
- investigation of how various segments of the church have dealt with this practice historically citing specific examples, documents, and positions
- doctrinal distinctives that have arisen which address this behavior
- tensions or challenges regarding this behavior within various denominational traditions

The results of the student's research will be reflected in a paper that will provide a comprehensive portrait of that practice in the areas addressed. Specific formats for the project will be determined in individual consultation with the instructor.

This assignment will be equal to 20% of the total course grade and is should be postmarked by February 6, 2009.

Grading information:

Meeting the course requirements satisfactorily, as outlined above, will generally result in a grade of “B.” A higher grade will require a higher quality in interaction and integration of course content, reflection, writing and reflection.

Grading Standard

First Class A = 100-94 A- = 93-90 B- = 82-80	Second Class B+ = 89-87 B = 86-83 C- = 72-70	Pass C+= 79-77 C = 76-73	Fail F = 69-0
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Percentage of Grade per Required Component	2 Units	3 Units
Class participation and interaction	15%	10%
Missional Reflection presentation	15%	10%
Paper - Reaction to The Mission of God	30%	20%
Project - Congregational Assessment and Vision Path Development	40%	40%
Missional Practice Research – Applies only to 3 credit students		20%

All work submitted after the due date will be reduced in grade.
Work submitted with excessive spelling or grammatical errors will be reduced in grade.

Academic Policies

Academic Policies. MBBS academic policies (as well as other school policies) are described at <http://www.mbseminary.edu/fresno/policies/>. These policies provide guidance on academic integrity and plagiarism, accommodation for disabilities, incomplete course work, extensions, dates for changing registration, non-discriminatory and inclusive language, appeals, etc. Students are expected to be familiar with these policies and will be held responsible for adhering to them. If you have questions about how these policies relate to you or to a situation that you face in your studies, please speak to the professor or consult the Registrar.

Course evaluations are to be completed online and are due one week after the completion of the course. Official grades will not be posted until the student’s evaluation of the course is completed.

Confidentiality

Students who wish to have their work kept confidential should submit it in an envelope and it will be returned in the same way. Our classroom times will also constitute a covenant community and confidentiality guidelines will be reviewed on the first day of class.

Bibliography

Bibliography will be distributed on the first day of class.