AM-632 Final Syllabus for Transformative Leadership for Smaller Churches, June 2015

June 1-5, 2015, 9:00 – 5:00

Professor: The Rev. Dr. David Ray (207-563-1032; revdavidray@yahoo.com) Since 1971 Dr. Ray has been a pastor of five smaller churches, author of four books about smaller churches, staff for four denominational state conferences, adjunct at a half-dozen seminaries, and coast-to-coast speaker and program leader. He’s still actively engaged in ministry.

Course Description for Transformative Leadership for Smaller Churches (AM 632):
Two-thirds of Protestant churches in North America are smaller (having less than 100 in worship). And the number and percentage of smaller churches is growing, not declining. Whether they thrive, survive, decline, or close will be largely determined by how their leaders lead and the way these churches live out their congregational life. Size may be more important than any other factor in determining the nature of a congregation. The thesis of this course is that smaller churches are both the right size to be and do all that God asks a church to be and do and they are different from other sized congregations. With this dual thesis in mind, students will be helped to understand the characteristics, dynamics, particularities, practicalities, needs, potential, and possibilities that need to be addressed or realized through transformative leadership. Participants will explore a small theology and a body of theory that will provide the foundation for a faithful and effective twenty-first century smaller church. They will explore size appropriate worship, faith formation, care-giving, mission, church morale, money, growth and evangelism, etc. Finally, students will imagine themselves as transformative leaders for such a church and apply all of this in the development of a personal ministry plan for a real church.

Learning Goals:
1. Students will understand the unique nature of smaller churches—their theological truth and theory about them, their characteristics, dynamics, particularities, needs, and possibilities.
2. Students will develop a deeper sense of their own gifts for ministry and leadership in smaller church settings.
3. Students will develop an in depth plan for their own ministry in a particular smaller church setting.

Tentative Schedule for the Week:
Monday: Centering; intro to one another (including our places of ministry and/or plan for ministry); intro to course; intro to smaller churches; smaller theory including 30 characteristics of a smaller church; reading conversation.
Reading assignment: Intro and chapters 1 & 3 in Ray’s book. In addition, students are expected to read the Byassee and/or Willis book(s) as background reading.
Tuesday: Centering; presentation of brief strategy paper #1; a small theology; communal worship; wholistic faith formation; care-giving; reading conversation.
Reading assignment: Chapters 2, 4, 5, 6 in Ray’s book.
Wednesday: Centering; presentation of strategy paper #2; mission beyond the doors; building morale and self-esteem; money and stewardship; reading conversation.
Reading assignment: Chapters 7, 8, 10 in Ray’s book.
Thursday: Centering; presentation of strategy paper #3; growth and evangelism; transformative leadership; smaller church alternatives and models; ministry issues; reading conversation.
Reading assignment: Chapters 9, 11 in Ray’s book.

Friday: Students present the first draft of their Ministry Plans to a team of high priced consultants (the class members); left overs and final thoughts; celebration and leave taking.

Books to be read:
Required plus one of the following...
Dr. Ray will be glad to suggest additional reading that is relevant to particular interests.

Assessment Expectations:
1. Read and have a working knowledge of the required book and one of the others.
2. Write three brief (up to ½ page) strategy papers for three areas of church life and present one Tues., one Wed., and one Thurs.
3. Active participation in class.
4. A 10-15 page Ministry Plan describing how you as the pastor or leader of a particular smaller church (preferably a real one) will integrate course concepts, the particular context and culture of the church, your own gifts for ministry, and the size-determined realities of that smaller church that would lead to a more faithful and effective future. A first draft will be shared with the class on Fri. and a final draft will be due to the professor by June 15.

Attendance Policy: Class attendance is required, with no more than one day’s absence.

Office Hours: Dr. Ray will be available in advance and before and after class for individual consultation.