Carey Theological College

APPL 640 Pastoral Life: Calling, Identity, Ethics

Spring 2020

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Date: March 30 – June 12, 2020

3 Graduate Credits (127.5 hours)

*While every effort has been made to be accurate as of January 30, 2020, syllabi produced before the beginning of class are subject to change*.

# COURSE DESCRIPTION

A Christian leader’s character and call are the essential foundation of ministry and leadership. Skills, knowledge, ministry practices and spiritual gifts are built on this essential core. The purpose of this course is to assist students in discerning their call to vocational pastoral ministry and to explore with them the essential spiritual, familial, personality, emotional and character issues that enable a lifetime of faithful and enjoyable Christian service. This course also navigates issues in pastoral ethics and aims to help students to establish accountability and a code of ethics for ministry.

The approach to learning in this course is personally reflective and discovery focused, requiring more than academic competency.

# LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course is a shaping and learning experience focusing on the person and health of the pastor and the health of their ministry. Through participation, research, writing and discerning, you will have the opportunity to mature in the following ways:

1. You will discern and articulate your particular pastoral identity from God’s calling and your relationship with others.
2. You will nurture self-awareness and emotional maturity and be able to demonstrate this through thoughtful decisions about personal life, family, and relationships, all of which are essential for health and wellbeing in Christian ministry.
3. You will develop a capacity to evaluate how the unconscious aspects of life, including inner motivations, assumptions, emotions, hopes, and expectations impact your ministry.
4. You will define issues encountered in the life of pastors, and take measures that help to safeguard you against the particular temptations that confront those in pastoral life and ministry.
5. You will develop a philosophy of ministry that begins with your pastoral identity and calling.

# REQUIRED READING

**Choose from the following to read:**

Willimon, William H. *Calling and Character: Virtues of the Ordained Life*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000.  
***OR***  
Willimon, William H. *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*, rev. ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2016, pp. 11-54, 294-339.  
***OR***  
Oden, Thomas C. *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*. New York: HarperCollins, 1983, pp.3-81.

**And also choose between:**

Gula, Richard M. *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*. New York: Paulist Press, 1996.  
***OR***  
Trull, Joe E. and James E. Carter. *Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation for Church Leaders,* 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004.

**In addition, read either:**

Baxter, Richard. *The Reformed Pastor*. Abridged ed. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974 (Reprinted from the 1862 edition; first published, 1656), pp. 53-80.  
***OR***  
Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule*. Trans. George E. Demacopoulos. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2007, pp. 29-85.  
***OR***  
Nouwen, Henri J. M. *Creative Ministry*. New York: Image Books, 2003.  
***OR***  
Purves, Andrew. *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.  
***OR***   
Spurgeon, Charles H. *Lectures to My Students*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1954, pp. 7-41.

You will notice that there are several options. One of the reasons for this is that I am aware that not all these books are easily available to all students. Texts in red are not available through the Carey EBSCO library and will need to be procured through other means. Public domain copies of the Baxter and Gregory the Great texts may be available for free online. Another is that we are able to cover the essentials of the course via a number of routes and I will provide some supplementary material in the modules.

So, to be clear:

1. You will read ***EITHER*** William Willimon’s book, *Calling and Character* ***OR*** a selection from his book *Pastor* ***OR*** a selection from Thomas Oden’s *Pastoral Theology.* This has to do primarily with the matter of our call to (pastoral) ministry.

***AND***

1. You will read ***EITHER*** Richard Gula’s *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry* ***OR*** *Joe Trull and James Carter’s Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation of Church Leaders.* Both of these texts address the important matters of character and ethical standards among ministers.

***IN ADDITION,***

1. You will read ***ONE*** of the following:

Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor.*

Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule.*

Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*.

Henri Nouwen, *Creative Ministry*.

Andrew Purves*, Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition.*

Andrew Purves’ book introduces us to the works of five of the church’s noted pastoral theologians: Gregory Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Gregory the Great, Martin Bucer and Richard Baxter, each committed in practice to the life and ministry of the church. In each case, he gives us a brief biography of the pastor-theologian and identifies his main contributions to the discipline.

# TIME INVESTMENT

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| --- | --- |
| **Activity/Assignment** | **Hours** |
| Reading of material in the modular course notes | 30 |
| Discussions 4 @ 3 hours | 12 |
| Assignments 1-3 (Reading, preparation, and writing) @ 20 hours each | 60 |
| Assignment 4 (Reading, preparation, and writing) | 25.5 |
| **Total Hours** | **127.5** |
| **Please note:** Refer to the Carey Reading/Writing scale. The amount of time taken by students will vary. The information is intended to be used as an approximation for planning purposes. | |

# EVALUATION

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| --- | --- |
| **Activity/Assignment** | **%** |
| Discussions 4 @ 5% | 20 |
| Assignments 1-3 @ 18% each | 54 |
| Assignment 4 @ | 26 |
| **Total** | **100** |

# COURSE NOTES

Each of the ten modules into which the course is divided contains: (1) An introductory **Overview**, which orients you to what we will be covering in the module; (2) the **Study** itself, which covers an important aspect of vocational pastoral life and ministry; and (3) a **Review**, which briefly recaps what we have covered and provides a bridge to the next module.

Please note that an **Easter Break** has been scheduled from 6 – 13 April to accommodate students for whom this is a particularly busy time of the year.

# DISCUSSION FORUMS

All students will actively participate in four segments of online discussions (March 30-April 03; April 20-24; May 04-08; May 18-22). This entails an initial post which addresses the discussion questions, and a response to *at least* two of your classmates’ posts. Please read *all* the posts. These discussions need to give evidence of thoughtfulness and must be clearly expressed (4 @ 5 = 20% of final grade). Please bear in mind that these forums serve a purpose greater than the contribution they make to your final grade. They are an important aspect of our cohort’s learning experience. We are blessed at Carey to have a culturally and denominationally diverse student body. Our conscientious participation is a way of serving one another and, in the process, benefitting ourselves. Your opinions are of benefit to us all, even when (perhaps especially when) they differ from the conventional line.

**Discussion # 1 – A Call to the Ministry: Affirming the Need; Dispelling the Mystique (March 30-April 03).**

Introduce yourself to your classmates (some personal details would be appreciated). Explain briefly how you came to serve in the ministerial/pastoral capacity you currently occupy (or for which you are preparing). Do you believe that a call to the ministry is a necessary prerequisite for ministerial service? Why would you think a clear sense of call is important? Or has this insistence on “a clear call” been overdone? What if you cannot point to a moment in which God spoke decisively to you and commanded you to become a minister/pastor? Are you, yourself, settled in a ministry to which you feel called or would you say you are en route to a ministry future that is not yet clear to you? What do you hope to gain from this course? And what might you be able to contribute to our shared learning experience (don’t be bashful)? Please confine your post to a maximum of 300 words. In addition to your post, respond briefly to the posts of *at least* two members of the cohort.

**Discussion # 2 Called by God but not Approved by a Human Tribunal (April 20-24).**

Just how important is it that one’s call be affirmed by a responsible church body that has been mandated to approve candidates for the ministry? Amos and Paul seemed to think that their divine call made human approval unnecessary (Amos 7:10-17; 2 Cor 10:12-17; Gal 1:11-24; 2:6-10). Or did they? Thomas Oden asserts that our inward call “also requires the affirmation of the visible believing community . . . not merely the local church but the whole church on behalf of the apostolic community” (Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, p. 20). What do you think? Suppose you are absolutely convinced that God has called you, but are declined by the ministerial examining board of your denomination, what would you do? Or suppose that you, yourself, are invited to serve on a ministerial examining board at which a candidate speaks sincerely and graphically of their call to the ministry. But you are not convinced that they are suitable for ministerial office. Dare you vote against them? Could you be hindering the work of the Holy Spirit? Since such boards have sometimes made mistakes (both in approving and in rejecting certain candidates for the ministry), should we not find other ways to validate ministries? Or should we simply “leave it to God”? What do you think? Please confine your post to a maximum of 300 words. In addition to your post, respond briefly to the posts of *at least* two members of the cohort.

**Discussion # 3 The Importance of Integrity (May 04-08).**

What do you understand by the term “integrity”? On the assumption that integrity and character are more important than giftedness, ability, and even “spirituality” (a reasonable assumption in the light of passages like Acts 20:17-35; 2 Cor 4:1-6; 1 Thess 2:3-12; 1 Tim 3:1-13; 4:15-16; 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:1-4 and common sense), what steps ought we to take to ensure that we live morally exemplary lives that are “above reproach”? We live, nowadays, at a time when the ministry has been brought into disrepute, so people not longer simply assume that pastors can be trusted. Are there areas in which we ought to exercise particular caution so as to live “beyond reproach” among those inside the church and maintain a good reputation with outsiders? While we do not wish to appear like prudes or parade our righteousness, are there extra precautions we should take *because* we are pastors and are held to a higher standard? Please confine your post to a maximum of 300 words. In addition to your post, respond briefly to the posts of *at least* two members of the cohort.

**Discussion # 4 Keeping Mentally-Healthy and Balanced (May 18-22).**

Pastors and their families occupy a unique and a somewhat “unnatural” position. A pastor can be placed on a pedestal and almost revered by some, and mercilessly criticized by others. Expectations can be unrealistic. We all carry some baggage and we do have our quirks and idiosyncrasies. Despite our sincerity and the fact that we are living lives of integrity, sometimes our human weaknesses can be irritating to others and may cost us and our churches dearly. One of the problems is that, like everybody else, we can’t see ourselves. For a variety of reasons, over time, we may become socially mal-adjusted, starved of the “regular” company of peers, and possibly co-dependent. What steps are you taking to help ensure that you know yourself and are able to detect danger signs? And what practical steps will you take to help create as normal an environment as possible for your family? Please confine your post to a maximum of 300 words. In addition to your post, respond briefly to the posts of *at least* two members of the cohort.

# ASSIGNMENTS

Each of the four assignments seeks to engage you in important practical aspects of living out your calling. They therefore encourage personal refection and application of biblical and theological principles to *your* life and ministry. This requires more than an autobiographical description of what you happen to think on the subject. Your assignments must give evidence that you have reflected biblically and theologically on these matters and that you have considered reasons for the lifestyle positions you take. The first three assignments ought to be approximately 1500 words in length; the final assignment ought to be between 2000 and 2500 words

**Assignment # 1 The Call and Its Implications**

Present a biblical justification for the idea that in addition to the general call of all believers to service within the body of Christ, some are called to particular ministries within the church that could/should entail specific preparation, official church recognition, and life-long vocational service. Is it essential for one who wishes to pursue pastoral ministry to have received such a call? (Yes, we have already discussed this, but now you set out your view in greater detail). If not all calls to ministry are dramatic (most are progressive and unspectacular), how would one know that one is being called into ministry? Specify factors, prior to ministerial credentialing and/or ordination, that you would see as confirmation of a subjective call. What personal impediments could there be to the pursuance of life-long ministry?

**Due: Wednesday, April 29**

**18% of final grade**

**Assignment # 2 Ordination**

In some free-church traditions, ordination is virtually a non-event. Why is this? What, in your view, is the meaning of ordination. Is it important? If so, why? Do you see it as a *recognition* of a divine calling and equipping, a *bestowal* of a ministerial anointing, or *both*? Do you think that we may have reacted excessively against “high church” notions of clergy as a special “caste”?

Write an essay on the meaning and value of the practice of ordination.

**Due: Friday, May 15**

**18% of final grade**

**Assignment # 3 Integrity, Character, and Mental Health.**

It is clear, from Scripture, that the integrity and character of those who hold pastoral office in the church is of the utmost importance. How would you define “integrity”? Knowing that we are all fallible, what practical steps would you take to guard yourself against character flaws and the danger of a possible moral failure? Realizing also that the position pastors occupy calls for mental soundness and emotional balance, what steps would you take to counter foibles and enhance your spiritual and mental well-being?

**Due: Friday, May 29**

**18% of final grade**

**Assignment # 4 “Philosophy of Ministry” and a Personal Code of Ministerial Ethics**

“Philosophy of ministry” is an inclusive term. It rests on one’s understanding of the gospel and reflects one’s understanding of one’s identity and role as a minister of the gospel. It includes practices and policies one adopts that are consistent with this understanding. A philosophy of ministry is therefore far more than “here’s what works” pragmatism, but is pastoral practice built on theological and biblical commitments. Describe your own philosophy of ministry, showing how this arises out of your commitment to the Lord and your ministry. How, in particular, does it influence your family life, your attitude to other members of your pastoral team, your elected leaders and the members of the church you serve?

Write your own Code of Ministerial Ethics covering such matters as responsibilities: (1) to Self, (2) to family, (3) to members of the congregation, (4) to elected leaders, (5) to colleagues, (6) to the denomination, and (7) to the community. You do not necessarily have to cover all of these areas and you may add some that I have not mentioned. The code should be specific and one that you fully intend, by God’s grace, to observe.

**Due: Friday, June 12**

**26% of final grade**

# COURSE OUTLINE

As a graduate student, you will naturally work according to your own schedule and plan your own progress. This course outline seeks to coordinate discussions and assignments in such a way as to help keep you on track and cover important aspects of the course in helpful sequence. Each module contains a proposition that is central to it and a brief indication of the related discussion that is developed in further detail in the module itself.

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| **Week 1**  March 30-April 04 | **The Call: Dispelling the Mystique but Affirming the Need**  Proposition: Any person who holds the permanent ministerial office of pastor needs to be convinced that they are called to it by God.  Description: We consider, from a biblical point of view, the contention that “there are persons within the ministry of the baptised who are called of God and set apart by the whole church for the specific tasks of an ordered ministry” (Thomas Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*, p. 26). In particular, we seek to distinguish between matters that are essential to a divine call and those that are occasional and may be present in some calls, but are not normative for all. This entails a brief consideration of relevant biblical passages and a survey of the development of ecclesiastical office within the early church. We also suggest a number of relevant questions that those contemplating a life-long, pastoral ministry ought to consider and several steps they ought to take in pursuance of their call. |
| **Break**  April 06-13 | **Easter Celebration** |
| **Week 2**  April 14-18 | **Ordination: The Church’s Confirmation of a Call to Ministerial Office**  Proposition: A subjective call to ministerial office needs to be examined and attested by the local church and by the properly-constituted, ministerial examining board of a denomination and/or a grouping of churches. After thorough and prayerful examination, a successful candidate is publicly ordained to the Christian ministry.  Description: We consider the need for ordination to pastoral ministry, as well as the scope and meaning of ordination. In addition, we discuss the kind of investigation that ought to be undertaken by the examining board and the form and significance of the ordination ceremony itself. |
| **Week 3**  April 20-25 | **The Primary Importance of Integrity and Character**  Proposition: As those called and commissioned to hold ministerial office within the church, we are to live lives of unquestionable integrity and Christian character. Such is the emphasis of Scripture on character that neither general competence, nor spiritual giftedness can ever be seen as substitutes for godliness and integrity.  Description: We examine the biblical requirements for holding spiritual office within the church as well as perspectives on pastoral morality from classical pastoral theologians and some contemporary writers on the subject. |
| **Week 4**  April 27-May 02 | **The Pastor’s Own Spiritual Formation**  Proposition**:** As those who lead others in their spiritual journey, we pastors need to pay careful attention to our own spiritual lives. This entails a disciplined devotional life in which we seek to deepen our knowledge of the Lord and our walk with him.  Description: We consider practical steps through which we, as pastors, seek to ensure that we are growing in our relationship with God. Many pastors have tended to conflate their ministry functions with their spiritual walk. While there are devotional dimensions to pastoral functions, these cannot simply be substituted for practices and disciplines that are intended to deepen our *own* walk with the Lord. We explore practices that help us to maintain a fresh and vibrant spiritual life. |
| **Week 5**  May 04-09 | **The Pastor’s Family**  Proposition: Every married pastor has a responsibility toward their spouse and nuclear family that takes priority over their service to the church. The order of priority is: God>spouse>family>church, not God>church>spouse>family.  Description: The demands of pastoral ministry can place a strain upon family relationships. Tension in the home can be a serious impediment to ministry. A breakdown in a pastor’s marriage can destroy their ministry and inflict major damage on the church. We examine, from both biblical and practical points of view, steps that both a pastor and a church need to take to help ensure that the family life of the pastor is healthy. |
| **Week 6**  May 11-16 | **The Pastor’s Mental Well-being**  Proposition: It is important that we as pastors, are well-adjusted human beings, who take care of their mental health.  Description: We consider some of the reasons that many pastors find it difficult to engage in “normal” relationships, and may become socially maladjusted. Many pastors do not have regular friendships and believe they cannot interact normally with members of their church and community. We are also conscious of the danger of burnout and nervous breakdowns in ministry. In particular, we consider steps one might take to avert possible breakdowns and become calm, balanced leaders, demonstrating the peace of Christ to parishioners.  The purpose of this module is not to disqualify from pastoral ministry those who may face conditions such as depression, any more than it is to exclude from pastoral ministry those with chronic physical ailments. It is, rather, to ensure that we are *all* taking reasonable steps towards physical and mental health and wholeness. |
| **Week 7**  May 18-23 | **The Pastor and Financial Integrity**  Proposition: As pastors, we need to be wise financial stewards, demonstrating “godliness with contentment,” and generosity. We need either to be debt-free or be managing our credit responsibly. Our simple lifestyle should demonstrate a value system informed by radical commitment to the Lord and the kingdom of God.  Description: We examine the pastor’s attitude towards material possessions, their financial integrity, and the need for exemplary stewardship. |
| **Week 8**  May 25-30 | **The Pastor and Sexual Integrity**  Proposition: As pastors, we are encouraged to shepherd all members of God’s flock. Aware that romantic and sexual attractions can arise, we need to be committed to marital fidelity or, if single, to chastity. We are to be especially vigilant in respect of our interaction with members of the opposite sex.  Description: We examine the question of relational appropriateness and decorum and consider practical measures to avoid situations that are dangerous and could bring the pastor and the ministry into disrepute. Our consideration is focussed on, but not confined to, the avoidance of sexual misconduct. |
| **Week 9**  June 1-6 | **The Pastor’s General Demeanor and Personal Code of Ethics**  Proposition: The office we pastors occupy involves us in several important “professional” relationships. These relationships need to be conducted in a collegial spirit and with the utmost integrity.  Description: We consider, in particular, the dynamics of our relationships with: (1) members of the pastoral team, (2) other members of the church staff, (3) elected church leaders, (4) ministerial colleagues from other churches, and (5) community leaders and officials.  We pay particular attention to occasions when we believe we have been misrepresented or maligned and are tempted to retaliate or, at least, to defend our reputation.  There is particular value in developing our own personal code of ethics and ensuring that we are in a relationship of accountability in respect of this code. The development of such a code will form a part of our final assignment. |
| **Week 10**  June 8-12 | **Longevity in Pastoral Ministry**  Proposition: One of the indications of a call to ministerial office is faithful perseverance in the face of disappointment and adversity.  Description: We consider the importance of faithfulness and constancy in pastoral ministry. While there is no greater privilege than being a pastor, pastoral ministry can be difficult and complex. The attrition rate is high. We attempt to understand reasons for the discontinuance in pastoral ministry of many pastors who (believed that they) had received a call from God to pastoral ministry, which was confirmed by the church. We cannot settle for simplistic answers or deduce that they were never called in the first place. We ask instead what steps they themselves, the local churches that they serve, and the denominational network can take to help enable them to continue in pastoral ministry or to redeploy them so that they continue to use their giftedness, training, and experience in the service of God and his church. |

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# Academic Policies

Please see the **Carey Academic Catalog** for more details:  
<http://www.carey-edu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Academic-Catalog-2016-2017-FINAL.pdf>

**Course Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all scheduled class sessions to fulfil degree requirements. This includes on-line webinars and/or live-streamed portions of courses.

**Carey Grading Scale**

See the Carey Academic Catalogue for details on the Carey grading scale.

**Course Withdrawal Policy**

A student who withdraws after the period for which tuition refunds are available within the first half of the course will receive a “W” on their transcript. Beyond those dates, they will receive an “F.”

**Extensions**

Extensions for course work will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. If an extension will make it impossible for the professor to submit the final grade no later than one month following the final assignment, the student must petition the Registrar’s Office. If the Registrar’s Office grants such a request, the final extension deadlines will be clearly established. Work granted an extension may receive a grade reduction of up to one-third of the final mark.

**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is honest and responsible scholarship. Students are expected to submit original work and give credit to other peoples' ideas. Academic dishonesty is acting in a manner to gain unearned academic credit. Examples of academic dishonesty are:

* Plagiarizing by misrepresenting the work of another person (in whole or in part) as a student’s own work or failing to give credit for either wording or ideas that belong to another.
* Submitting the same material for credit in more than one course (whether the earlier submission was at Carey or another institution).
* Using unauthorized aids of any sort in examinations, completing work in unauthorized collaboration with others, or the unauthorized recording and use of class lectures.

Penalty for a lack of academic integrity may include a failing grade in the assignment, examination or course, depending on the severity of the offense. All students are responsible for knowing and practicing academic integrity and must become familiar with the plagiarism student resource at: <http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/academic-integrity/>.

**Gender Language**

As language usage changes, the church must discern where its language must change in order to bear faithful witness to the gospel. Modern English usage has moved away from using masculine terms to refer to groups that include women. Using of such terms in worship, writing, or conversation miscommunicates the invitation of the gospel and the nature of the church. Assignments that don’t conform to the gender language policy will be returned to the student for resubmissions.

See the Carey Academic Catalogue for more details on this policy.