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**MISSIONAL THEOLOGY IN A POST-CHRISTENDOM WORLD**  
**SAH-TH 6/723**  
**(Revised for Fall 2018)**

**PURPOSE**

A distinctive theological movement emerged in late-twentieth century, centered on the idea of the church's "missional" identity and calling. This course explores the historical and theological roots of this movement by considering key voices who shaped and contributed to it. This provides an entry point into earlier controversies and debates concerning Christian mission, which continue to reverberate within the church today. The course will equip students to make theologically-informed decisions concerning how Christian mission might best be understood and practiced by churches in our contemporary, post-Christendom global context.

**PREREQUISITES**

TH500 – Constructive Theology

**COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES**

Upon successfully completing this course, students should be able to:

- Discuss the essential ideas and emphases of missional theology
- Assess the issues that impinge on Christian mission in a post-Christendom context
- Describe core ideas involved in the notion of a "missional church"
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the missional church movement, including the theological tensions inherent in the movement
- Compare and contrast the emphases of the missional church movement in relation to their own denominational tradition

## FORMAT AND CONTENT

This is a weekly, 3.0 credit course that meets once a week for eleven weeks on Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. For *on-campus students*, work in the course consists of classes including lectures, discussions, assigned readings, précis of required texts, and a research term paper. *Distance students* will do the same work but participate by Zoom.

## TEXTS

*Students should purchase books through Amazon or another source. Articles marked with an asterisk\* will be available on Moodle for registered students.*

### Required Reading

#### Primary Texts

Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics* IV, 3 (second half), “4. The Christian as Witness” pp. 554-614. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1960.

Guder, Darrell L., ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, Gospel and Culture. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986.

Walls, Andrew F., and Cathy Ross. *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 2008.

#### Supplementary readings

In addition to the primary texts, journal articles and short sections of books will be assigned for class discussion. These will be made available through Canvas as PDFs whenever possible; otherwise, they will be available in the library.

## COURSE POLICIES

1. **Attendance:** For a weekly course, VST requires at least 80% attendance. For on-campus students, this means attending at least 9 of 11 classes. For distance students, this means participating synchronously via Zoom. Asynchronous distance students should contact the professor to discuss expectations for participation.
2. **Reading and assignments:** Students are expected to read all required assignments before class and to complete all assignments as outlined in the syllabus within the specified dates of the course and term.
3. **Academic honesty:** Students are expected to adhere to VST’s requirements for academic honesty as published in the Student Handbook.

**4. Inclusive language:** In speaking and writing, inclusive language is expected when making reference to humans and a variety of metaphors are anticipated when making reference to God.

**5. Assignment and Course Evaluation**

Course evaluations at VST combine a letter grade system (A+ to B-; course failure is “Not Approved”) including narrative comments based on the competencies of the course. No number grades or weights of assignments are calculated, nor are final grades given numerical equivalents.

Individual assignments within a course are given narrative evaluations, that is, APP (Approved) or INC (Incomplete) with narrative comments, based on the competencies and expectations set for that assignment. One re-write is allowed on any assignment that is INC. The re-written assignment is due two weeks after the work is returned. The final evaluation for an assignment can be APP or NAPP after a re-write. For a passing grade in the course, all assignments must be Approved.

**6. Late assignments**

Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. All assignments in courses are due on the dates specified in the syllabus. Failure to submit an assignment on time will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment. Repeated failure to submit assignments on time may affect the final grade for the course.

**7. Social Media**

Ordinarily, the use of electronic devices in the context of classrooms or meetings will be limited to support the learning, formation, or agenda at hand. Behaviors that distract the user or others from these purposes are socially discourteous and will be noted negatively in evaluating class participation.

**8. Special Needs**

VST is committed to creating safe space and an inclusive learning environment. If you have a diagnosed or suspected learning disability, chronic condition, mental health concern, or physical requirement which may impact your participation in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs with the instructor and the Dean within the first week of classes.

**COURSE CALENDAR (TBD – See Canvas)**

**EXPECTATIONS, ASSIGNMENTS, AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA**

**1. Class participation:** Students are expected to be familiar with the texts assigned for advance reading (see calendar), and to participate in class discussions.

2. **Précis:** Students will write a one-page (250-300 word) précis of two of the required texts for the class (*Missional Church*, and *Foolishness to the Greeks*) summarizing the main points and ideas of each book.
3. **Online Discussions:** Students will participate in on-line discussions by posting their thoughts and questions on Canvas. Specific topics and expectations will be provided by the instructor.
4. **Research Paper:** Due at the end of the term. The research paper will focus on a particular theme from the course chosen by the student and approved by the instructor. It should demonstrate the student's grasp of the subject matter of the course, and show evidence of additional research. The paper should be 12-15 pages (3,000-3,750 words), and should include at least ten research references.
5. **Th.M.** students will be expected to do expanded reading and write a longer research paper. Please check with the instructor about selecting your topic and bibliography.
6. **Certificate students** are required to do all the reading, participate in class discussions, and submit a brief paper (5-8 pages) according to the outline specified above.
7. **Audit students.** Auditors who want to participate in class discussions are expected to read the required texts and supplementary readings assigned in order to participate knowledgeably.

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Additional readings relevant to the subject of this course*

"Anglicans in Mission: A Transforming Journey - Report of Missio, the Mission Commission of the Anglican Communion." 1999.

Bevans, Stephen B., and Roger P. Schroeder. *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004.

Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Twentieth Anniversary Edition ed. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991, 2011.

Guder, Darrell L. *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*. Gospel and Our Culture. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000.

Guder, Darrell L. *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015.

Hastings, Ross. *Missional God, Missional Church*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012.

- Hunsberger, George R., and Craig Van Gelder, eds. *The Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996.
- Hunsberger, George R. *The Story That Chooses Us: A Tapestry of Missional Vision*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015.
- Jackson, Eleanor, ed. *A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Missions*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994.
- Martin, David. *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory*. Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005.
- McNeal, Reggie. *Missional Communities: The Rise of the Post-Congregational Church*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011.
- Morrison, Bradley T. *Already Missional: Congregations as Community Partners*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016.
- Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989.
- Newbigin, Lesslie. *Signs Amid the Rubble: The Purposes of God in Human History*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003.
- Newbigin, Lesslie. *Unfinished Agenda: An Updated Autobiography*. Edinburgh: St Andrew, 1993.
- Presler, Titus. *Horizons of Mission*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cowley Publications, 2001.
- Roxburgh, Alan J. *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011.
- Schmemman, Alexander. *Church, World, Mission: Reflections on Orthodoxy and the West*. St. Vladimirs Seminary Press, 1979.
- Sparks, Paul, Tim Soerens, and Dwight J. Friesen. *The New Parish*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014.
- Stetzer, Ed. *Planting Missional Churches*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2006.
- Tanner, Kathryn. *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology*. Guides to Theological Inquiry. Edited by Kathryn Tanner and Paul Lakeland Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1997.

Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.

Tickle, Phyllis. *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008, 2012.

Van Gelder, Craig. *The Ministry of the Missional Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007.

Van Gelder, Craig, and Dwight J. Zscheile. *The Missional Church in Perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011.

Zscheile, Dwight J. *People of the Way: Renewing Episcopal Identity*. New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2012.