

Vancouver School of Theology  
**PT500 – Introduction to Practical Theology:**  
**Spiritual and Theological Foundations for Public and Pastoral Leadership**  
Thursdays, 9 am to 12 pm

*“God loves human beings. God loves the world.  
Not an ideal human, but human beings as they are;  
not an ideal world, but the real world.”*

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

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**Course Description:**

This course is designed for students approaching ministry in pastoral and public contexts. We will attend to the development of one’s call and purpose, to the practice and articulation of faith in the world, and to the shape of specifically Christian mission in the West today.

**Purpose:** To explore, examine and engage the critical questions facing pastoral and public leadership through the Christian Church in our Post-Christendom Canadian context. What is God up to in the world today and how might we faithfully witness and encourage others to participate in the triune life of God? In a time of denominational decline and missional church movements, what might pastoral and public leadership look like in the years ahead? How might God be calling us to live and lead as Christian leaders in the world today that enables the communities we serve to share and show the gospel?

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**Competency Objectives:**

- *Learn to articulate* your vocation, your gifts as a leader, the complexities of the contexts to which you are called and the practices of faith to help you lead well in those contexts.
- *Ability to describe* the resources available for critical, contextual, and churchly analysis of the places to which you are called, their limitations and what new gifts you can bring to them.
- *Engage and analyze* spiritual practices in order to enhance call and create a sustainable and Spirit-led lifestyle for leadership of faith communities and agencies in society.

- *Identify and articulate* the changing role of the Church in a post-Christendom North American society, what mission means today and how the church, and its leadership, is being reformed in our context.

**Assigned Texts:**

Barnes, Craig. *The Pastor as Minor Poet: Texts and Subtexts in the Ministerial Life*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Fitch, David. *Seven Practices for the Church on Mission*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2018.

Hunsinger, Debra van Deusen. *Pray without Ceasing: Revitalizing Pastoral Care*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

Kostamo, Leah. *Planted: A story of Creation, Calling and Community*. Eugene: Cascade, 2013.

Lewis, Stephen, Matthew W. Williams and Dori G. Baker. *Another Way: Living & Leading Change on Purpose*. Saint Louis: Chalice, 2020.

Root, Andrew. *The Pastor in a Secular Age: Ministry to People Who No Longer Need a God*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019.

Warren, Tish Harrison. *Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2016.

**Format:**

This class meets weekly for three hours throughout the term. The primary format will be lecture and discussion based on the reading of the assigned texts.

***I. The God who calls***

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**September 17 – Breaking Bread: The Expectation of Revelation**

Reading: Another Way, Chapters 1-4  
The Pastor in a Secular Age, Intro and Chapters 1-3

*(What does it mean to create hospitable space for others? What are the barriers we can build to the experience of hospitality? Why would the CARE model begin with this first step of hospitality?)*

**Spiritual Practice: Hospitality**

**September 24 – Holy Listening, Holy Speaking**

Reading: The Pastor as Minor Poet, Chapters 1-3  
Pray without Ceasing, Chapters 1-4

*(What did Barnes' book help clarify in your growing understanding of Christian ministry? What is one critique of this book? How might something from this book concretely shape your practice of Christian leadership?)*

**Spiritual Practice: Discernment**

## October 1 – P(r)aying Attention

Reading: Pray without Ceasing, Chapters 5-9  
The Pastor in a Secular Age, Chapter 4

*(What new insights emerged for you on the theme of prayer as a result of reading this book? What was the author's main thesis? What would change in your experience of local church if you took the author's argument seriously?)*

**Spiritual Practice: Prayer**

## **II. The God who equips**

## October 8 – Worship: Texts, Subtexts and Context

Reading: Pastor as Minor Poet, Chapters 4-9  
The Pastor in a Secular Age, Chapter 5

*(What does it mean for you to set aside one day a week to "pray and play?" What does the author mean by the poetic community? How would you explain the subtext of Scripture to another person?)*

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**Spiritual Practice: Sabbath**

## October 15 – ~~Spring~~ Soul Cleaning

Reading: Another Way, Chapters 5 – 8  
The Pastor in a Secular Age, Chapter 6

*(What is the role of storytelling in theological reflection? What do the authors mean by "liberating leadership?" What might you need to give up, or set aside in order to take the next, most faithful step in your journey?)*

**Spiritual Practice: Fasting**

## October 22 – The apologetics and politics of apologies

Reading: Liturgy of the Ordinary, Chapters 1 – 6  
The Pastor in a Secular Age, Chapter 7

**\*\*Reflection Paper Due\*\***

*(What is the connection between the author's chapter on baptism and a theological understanding of forgiveness? What insight did you take away from "losing keys" – confession and the truth about ourselves? From Root's chapter 7, what insight did you gain from the description of ministry as chaplaincy for a civil religion?)*

**Spiritual Practice: Forgiveness**

## October 29 – Reading Week

## November 5 – Time, talent, treasure...and terrain.

Reading: Planted, Chapters 1 – 6  
The Pastor in a Secular Age, Chapter 8

*(What insight did the author give you regarding stewardship of the land? What questions did these chapters spark in you regarding the relationship you have with Creation? What is the author hoping will change as a result of this publication?)*

**Spiritual Practice: Stewardship**

### **III. The God who Sends**

## November 12 – Four voices of the Church's Witness

Reading: Seven Practices for the Church on Mission, Chapters 1 – 7  
The Pastor in a Secular Age, Chapter 9.

*(How does the author understand and define mission? What does the author mean by "proclaiming the gospel?" How might being with "the least of these" or children be a profound gift of testimony?)*

**Spiritual Practice: Testimony**

## November 19 – Blessed to be a blessing

**\*\*Quick Ethnographic Study due\*\***

Reading: Planted, Chapters 7 – 12.

The Pastor in a Secular Age, Chapters 10-12

*(What is the author's main thesis and hope for the church? What would you need to change in order to live out your faith according to the author's thesis? What frustrated you about this book?)*

**Spiritual Practice: Service**

## November 26 – Grace and gratitude

Reading: Liturgy of the Ordinary, Chapters 7 – 11.

The Pastor in a Secular Age, Chapters 13-15.

*(What does it mean to the author to be "blessed and sent?" What might be the connection between gratitude and an unhurried expression of faith? How do we best express and receive gratitude in community according to the chapters today?)*

**Spiritual Practice: Gratitude**

## December 3 – Pastoral and Public Leadership Presentations

In advance of the last class (minimum forty-eight hours), students will record and submit via email ([rlockhart@vst.edu](mailto:rlockhart@vst.edu)) a brief five-minute presentation on their key learnings/insights regarding practical theology from PT500 this fall. Each student will do so by answering the following questions:

My understanding of practical theology (pastoral and public leadership) and how it connects to my vocation is . . .

Name a key insight that you gained this term in practical theology, as well as one resource that you found helpful . . .

The most challenging or meaningful spiritual practice we engaged this term was . . .

The most challenging part of pastoral and public leadership today is . . .

**Assignments:**

Please note:

**Audit students will complete:**

- All reading as assigned by instructor
- Class participation

No letter grades will be given for the completion of courses by audit.

**Certificate students will complete:**

- All reading as assigned by instructor
- Class participation and group work
- A 3-credit course requires 9-12 pages; therefore, Certificate students will complete the weekly spiritual practice and the mid-term personal reflection paper *but NOT* complete the Quick Ethnographic Visit assignment nor the final paper.

Written assignments should demonstrate the ability to thoughtfully engage the material and reading for the class while offering a personal reflection on the reading and material covered

Certificate courses will be evaluated on an Approved (APP) /Not Approved (NAPP) system. No letter grades will be given for the completion of certificate courses.

**\*Asynchronous Students** in *Certificate and Basic degree* programs will also be required to submit to Professor Lockhart a 500-word summary after watching the recording providing their top three insights from the class. Please email summary to [rlockhart@vst.edu](mailto:rlockhart@vst.edu) before the next week's class.

**Basic Degree students will complete:**

- All of the assignments below numbered 1 through 5.

**1. Class Participation and Expectations**

Consistent and timely attendance is required according to VST guidelines. This includes the completion of the assigned reading for each class with each student ready to engage in discussion. The discussion questions in the syllabus each week are there to help spark your imagination based on the readings. If a student is unable to attend a class, Professor Lockhart is to be informed by email ([rlockhart@vst.edu](mailto:rlockhart@vst.edu)). Smart Phones can be disruptive to the learning experience of other students. Please set all phones to silent or turn them off during class. Exceptions can always be made for medical or family issues that require being in constant contact. Sending texts and emails will be limited to break time.

**2. Reflection Paper**

Students will submit a personal non-research reflection paper of approximately 1,250 to 1,500 words (Word document – double spaced, emailed to [rlockhart@vst.edu](mailto:rlockhart@vst.edu)) in which they share what they understand ministry leadership (in assembly, agency, agora, academy or the arts) to mean and how they see themselves engaged in a future ministry. While students do not need to cite sources as in a research paper, sacred texts and other relevant documents may be included in their reflections. This paper should include the following areas:

- Tell me about your call to ministry/theological education (1 page)
- Tell me about the God who called you into ministry/theological education (1 page)
- Tell me about where you imagine serving in leadership five years from now (1 page)
- Tell me what you need the most from your theological education (1 page)
- Tell me about your ecclesiology (theology of church – what is it, what is for, etc.) (1 page)

DUE DATE: October 22<sup>nd</sup> at the beginning of class.

### 3. Weekly Spiritual Practice

At the end of each class students will receive (posted on Populi) a spiritual practice to engage and reflect upon for the following week. Students will email a summary of the experience (250 to 500 words) *prior to the next class* in a Word document to our Teaching Assistant Angie Song ([asong@vst.edu](mailto:asong@vst.edu)) and cc'd to Professor Lockhart ([rlockhart@vst.edu](mailto:rlockhart@vst.edu)). Our TA will review your submission to make sure it meets the guidelines above, send a response to your email confirming receipt and provide Professor Lockhart a record at the end of term regarding completion of this weekly assignment.

DUE DATE: Weekly at the beginning of class by email to our Teaching Assistant (TBD) and cc'd to ([rlockhart@vst.edu](mailto:rlockhart@vst.edu)).

### 4. Quick Ethnographic Study of a Christian Worship Service

Using the template provided on Populi, you are invited to select a Christian worship service (or other liturgical gathering according to your tradition) any time during the term to visit. Please note the quick ethnographic worship is asking for your brief, initial impressions, and is in two parts: analysis of the faith community's online presence, as well as analysis of in person experience. The second part uses language of "a church in Vancouver." Please feel free to substitute the community you are living in for "Vancouver" – simply choose a local expression of Christian community to profile. Submit your completed study to me at [rlockhart@vst.edu](mailto:rlockhart@vst.edu) in a Word document.

DUE DATE: November 19<sup>th</sup> at the beginning of class

## 5. Research Paper

To this point in the class, you have explored your role as a practical theologian through the class assignments including weekly theological reflection on spiritual practice, attending to your own reflexivity (personal reflection paper), a participant observation exercise (quick ethnographic study), attending to your own growth and development in practical theology (video for our final class) and now you have the opportunity to explore a practical theologian's work as a researcher by selecting a ministry leader to study by developing your own interview guide.

Here's the assignment: Students will submit an academic research paper of 2,500 words (double spaced, 12-point font, word count does not include footnotes) in a Word document emailed to [rlockhart@vst.edu](mailto:rlockhart@vst.edu) that focuses on a person exercising a public and pastoral leadership role that interests them. (Stop and ask yourself – “who is doing the kind of work that I am interested in/called to?”).

The first third of the paper will include a description of an interview with a leader in a pastoral or public ministry that interests you, based on an interview guide that you will submit as an appendix at the end of the paper, featuring a minimum of five questions. When developing your interview guide ask yourself questions like, “What do I want to learn about this person and the kind of leadership they offer the community? What are their joys and sorrows in the work? What advice would they give to someone wanting to exercise similar leadership?”

Once you have your interview subject confirmed, and the interview guide developed, meet with the leader and conduct an interview (in person or online) using a semi-structured approach that enables you to take the conversation further based on what you hear. Once the interview is complete, review your notes for dominant themes (coding) and make note of those in the paper in the next party (2/3) of the paper, analyzing the interview and integrating learning from class lectures, readings and assignments. Are there connections in the data to the spiritual practices you engaged? Is there an author we read together that connects with a dominant theme or interest in your interview subject's story? Are there gaps of meaning or inconsistencies in what your interview subject offered compared to your growing knowledge in the area of practical theology? Here, for example the theories discussed in class such as Osmer's Four Main Tasks of Practical Theology or Cameron & Watkins' Four Voices of Theology or Fitch's “Three Tables” may help you analyze the ministry context of the person interviewed.

Finally, now that you have completed the descriptive task in the 1/3 (summarizing the interview for the reader with some key extracts), analyzed the data in the 2/3 (reviewed your notes looking for common themes and putting those in dialogue

with your class learnings, now it is time for tentative normative outcomes in the final 3<sup>rd</sup> of your paper. If the descriptive is the “what,” and the analytical is the “so what,” the normative step is the “now what?” In other words, conclude your paper drawing on further course readings and other necessary academic research in books and journals, to make your case for why this matter. So, for example, you might interview a hospital chaplain as you are interested in that work. After describing the interview and key highlights, you may analyze how the chaplain expressed discouragement regarding the role of psycho-spiritual care in health institutions due to government bureaucracy, but also how the chaplain valued spiritual practices, especially prayer (here you connect to your weekly practice and perhaps one or more of the assigned texts). In your final step, you may wish to explore the implications for health care based chaplaincy in your context moving forward, drawing on other studies that report and record the challenges and sustaining practices of chaplains and where you see the profession moving in the next decade.

**DUE DATE:** December 14<sup>th</sup> (Please note that submitting after the last day of Fall term will require the approval of the VST Academic Dean)

**Deadlines:**

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 for each course. 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.