



## **Planning for Change in the Modern Church Online DC 981Z**

Instructor: Stephen D. Lowe, Ph. D.  
Email: [slowe@erskine.edu](mailto:slowe@erskine.edu)  
Phone: 864-379.8748 (o)  
Fax: 864.379.8887  
Address: P. O. Drawer 668, Erskine Theological Seminary,  
Due West, South Carolina 29639  
Website: <http://www.erskineseminary.org/Academics/Faculty/SLowe.html>  
Credit: *Three hours*

### **Introduction**

Welcome to the course, **Planning for Change in the Modern Church**. Although I can't give you a personal welcome, as I might do in my on-campus course, I do want to welcome you warmly to this vital learning experience. I want this course to be a significant and vital part of your seminary education. You are one of many students taking advantage of the alternative delivery of high quality theological education through our EDEN distance learning enterprise. I am available when you need me because we aren't limited by office hours or distance. You can also access course materials and other pertinent information through the EDEN web site located on the seminary web page. I look forward to getting to know you better as we progress through the course materials. Anytime you have trouble or have a question about course content or course requirements, please use one of the communication means identified below to reach me. You can also stop by my office in Reid Hall. I pray God's wisdom as you expose yourself to the study of his Word.

*Dr. Steve Lowe*

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary is to educate persons for service in the Christian Church.

### **Course Description**

Assuming a time of great change, this course examines the nature of the relationship between churches and their wider community using basic demographic analysis and current research in the field of congregational studies. The course emphasizes developing a biblical theology of the church's work and equipping pastors with tools to lead congregations in planning and implementing that work.



## Course Objectives

1. Students will be able to articulate a clear theology of the church in relation to a missional understanding of the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
2. Students will be able to identify critical elements of the change process.
3. Students will be able to assess a church congregation or other faith community to determine its readiness for change.
4. Students will be able to propose a planned change for a church congregation or other faith community.

## Course Resources

### REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

Students continue to be responsible for securing their own required textbooks. As a convenience, there is a bookstore on the seminary's home page. To access this site and its information, locate textbooks, and compare prices, go to <http://www.erskineseminary.org/bookstore.html>

The online bookstore will be a portal with links to Amazon, CBD, Barnes & Noble, the Erskine Campus Bookstore, and perhaps others. A limited number of copies of each textbook may be available from the Erskine Campus Bookstore, and copies may be ordered through that Bookstore.

*Dancing With Change: A Spiritual Response to Changes in the Church*, Richard J. McCorry. iUniverse, 2004.

*The Innovative Church: Seven Steps to Positive Change in Your Congregation*, Merton P. Strommen. Augsburg, 1997.

*Leading Change in the Congregation*, Gil Rendle. Alban Institute, 1997.

*Transforming the Mainline Church: Lessons in Change from Pittsburgh's Cathedral of Hope*, Robert A. Chestnut. Westminster, 2000.

Read these texts as indicated in the modules below. Not only are you expected to read these texts but you are expected to use them to complete the modules. I expect you to weave the content of the texts into your written assignments for each of the modules.

### RECOMMENDED TEXTS

- *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, Fifth edition.
- *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing)



## Course Assignments FAQs

1. **Submit all assignments via e-mail attachment (unless otherwise notified).**
2. Please use Microsoft Word when submitting assignments electronically.
3. All assignments should be clearly marked on the e-mail subject line with the student's last name and assignment number.

## COURSE PLATFORM

Erskine Seminary is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). According to the ATS Standard 10.3.4.3, "Institutions shall ensure that distance education programs provide appropriate opportunity for collaboration, personal development, interaction among peers within a community of learning, and supervised field or internship opportunities when appropriate to the degree program." It is with this stipulation that EDEN has implemented a web-based learning platform which will serve to provide a number of collaborative learning experiences. The learning platform is Moodle and according to their website, "Moodle is a course management system designed to help educators who want to create quality online courses . . . and create effective online learning communities." You will be provided with additional information concerning Moodle tutorials, site information, and the peer mentoring program. In order to meet the online discussion component of this course, you will need:

- A computer (or access to a computer)
- High-speed access to the Internet

Courses taken through Erskine's Distance Education Network are self-directed and self-paced within the parameters of the semester in which you enroll for the course. The time constraints of this course are self-imposed to a large degree. However, keep in mind that if you are working toward degree completion you may be bound by a time frame imposed by Seminary policy. Consult your catalog for specific time frames in your degree program. Some variation in time required to complete an assignment is to be expected due to a variety of factors, not the least of which is your own self-discipline.

## Course Grading Scale and Criteria

Students always need to know what the professor expects of them in any course. This is especially true in distance learning courses.

The following grading scale, from the Seminary catalog is used to assign a numeric value to each completed assignment. All scores are weighted equally. Your final grade is the average of each grade received. A letter grade will be computed on the basis of your average raw score using the following grade scale recently adopted by the Seminary faculty:



- A Level Work = Exemplary ability to differentiate constituent parts; assess and critique theories, thoughts, ideas, concepts, proposals, and relevant literature; and the ability to reason in a logical and compelling manner.
- B Level Work = Reflects above average grasp of the subject matter; displays a superior ability to use new knowledge in a creative manner; and can demonstrate an above average ability to discriminate among alternative viewpoints.
- C Level Work = Adequate but not exceptional ability to think cogently and clearly; sufficient ability to understand and comprehend subject matter; and a satisfactory ability to integrate and organize course concepts in a logical and coherent manner.

**Grade Scale**

|    |        |    |       |
|----|--------|----|-------|
| A  | 95-100 | B- | 86-87 |
| A- | 93-94  | C+ | 84-85 |
| B+ | 91-92  | C  | 80-83 |
| B  | 88-90  |    |       |

**Course Requirements**

The purpose and objectives of this course will be achieved through four learning modules. See the information listed below for more information.

**Interactive Component**

In addition to the course requirements set out in the four modules below, each student is required to interact with the professor and other students via the **Going Deeper** Forum in each module. A different forum is located in each of the four modules in the online classroom for this course. One question is posed for each forum and each student is expected to give a thoughtful response to the question in light of course readings and lectures. Each student posts at least one response to another student’s post or a post from the professor. This means that each student makes at least two posts per module over the length of the course. Your posts receive assessment on the basis of depth of analysis, mastery of course concepts, and general cohesion (does it hold together and make sense?).

**Module One**

- Based upon your reading of the initial lecture, summarize the essential elements of your understanding of the Mission of the Church in 3-5 pages double-spaced. Your summary should reflect both Old Testament and New Testament influences. Your concept of the Mission of the Church should explicate what the church is, what it should do, and how it should do it. This articulation of your understanding of the church’s mission will form the

baseline by which you will be able to conduct church evaluation, plan for needed changes, and implement those changes. In the process of preparing this assignment, consult *The Innovative Church* by Strommen to find out what he has to say about the relationship between mission and change in the church. Also consult *Dancing with Change* where he discusses some of the biblical and theological concepts of change. Send me an email attachment of the paper and upload\* another copy of your paper to the Mission of the Church Summary Depot in the online classroom.

- As a part of this assignment you are to read and react to at least one other student's Mission of the Church summary in the Mission of the Church Summary Depot discussion forum. Your response must be made sometime during the first full month of the course. No postings accepted beyond the stated time frame.

**Due:** last day of first month of the course.

\*Steps to upload your assignment:

1. Find the "Depot" discussion forum in the online classroom.
2. Click on that link and you will find assignment listed there.
3. Click on "Add a new discussion topic" and this will take you to the upload area
4. Type in your name and reaction paper title (i.e. Joe Smith's paper) in the subject line.
5. Type a BRIEF explanation in the message section (i.e. Summary)
6. Click on the "browse" feature at the bottom of that paper and find your paper on your desktop.
7. Double-click on your document and select "post to forum" shown at the bottom of the screen.

Steps to download (or read) others' assignment:

1. Find the "Depot" discussion forum in the online classroom.
2. Click on that link and you will find student postings listed there.
3. Click on the title of the student posting listed under Discussion.
4. Click on the Word document in that posting.
5. Select "open" to read the document instantly or "save" to save the document to your desktop folder.
6. Post your comments related to the paper by hitting "reply" on the discussion board. Enter your comments in message section. Hit "post to forum" when finished.

## Module Two

- In preparation for completing this module, read those portions of *The Innovative Church* by Strommen that address your church's "Readiness for Change." Visit the [Congregational Resource Guide](#) web site and take the readiness for change inventory with your church congregation in mind. Use "The Eight Stages of Changes" in *Leading Change in the Congregation* by Rendle to determine where your church is in the change process and what that means for your proposed ministry change. After you have conducted the assessment, write up the results along with your own analysis of your findings in 3-5 pages double-spaced. Post your document to the Readiness for Change Assessment Depot in the online classroom (see *posting instructions above*) and send one copy to the professor via email attachment.



- As a part of this assignment you are to read and react to at least one other student's assessment in the Readiness for Change Assessment Depot discussion forum. Your response must be made sometime during the first full month of the course. No postings accepted beyond the stated time frame.

**Due:** Last day of second month of the course.

### **Module Three**

- In preparation for completing Module 3, consult all of the required texts for the course. I want you to scour these books looking for methods and strategies that will help you to implement your proposed ministry change. Based upon your general exposure to the planning process developed in these books and any other resources you wish to consult, ***select those strategies and methods*** that you think will best facilitate the implementation of the changes you have identified from your congregational assessment and that are consistent with the intended outcomes of your mission analysis in Module #1 above (see *The Innovative Church*, Chapter Six, "Tie Innovations to Mission and Values"). Post your written report of 3-5 pages double-spaced to the Methods and Strategies Depot in the online classroom and send one copy via email attachment to the professor.
- As a part of this assignment you are to read and react to at least one other student's paper in the Methods and Strategies Depot discussion forum. Your response must be made sometime during the first full month of the course. No postings accepted beyond the stated time frame.

**Due:** Last day of third month of the course.

### **Module Four**

- In preparation for completing Module 4, review all of the above resources and any others you wish to consult, culling out those references to visioning and vision casting. Based upon this review and all of your work up to this point in the course, develop a new vision for your church grounded in your biblical theology of mission, based upon your assessment of your congregation's readiness for change, and considering the prospective strategies outlined in your previous assignment. How will you share this vision and what steps will you take to enlist the support of your leaders and congregation to adopt this vision? Post this document of between 7-10 pages to the Church Vision Depot in the online classroom and send an email attachment to the professor.
- As a part of this assignment you are to read and react to at least one other student's paper in the Church Vision Depot discussion forum. Your response must be made sometime during the first full month of the course. No postings accepted beyond the stated time frame.

**Due:** Last day of finals.

Relevant Institutional and Class Policies

[http://seminary.erskine.edu/content\\_policies/SeminaryPoliciesforETSSStudents.pdf](http://seminary.erskine.edu/content_policies/SeminaryPoliciesforETSSStudents.pdf)