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MS 550 The Congregation as Evangelist

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**SYLLABUS for
THE CONGREGATION AS EVANGELIST**

Dr. Roger K. Swanson, Director of Operation Evangelization for the Florida Conference, UMC, Instructor

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

As the 21st Century opens, it finds American Christianity looking for a relevant and winsome evangelization strategy. Revival times have always been characterized by such a distinct strategy. For Paul it was proclaiming Christ in the synagogues of Asia Minor, and the establishing of congregations. Wesley's methodology was similar. It involved field preaching and the class meeting. On the American frontier the emphasis was on itinerancy of circuit-riding preacher/evangelists, church planting in population centers, campmeeting, and with no resident clergy - the ministry of the laity.

Central to every strategy has been the congregation. Christianity is a congregational-based and congregational-expressed faith movement. There are no shrines for personal devotion in Christianity, only congregations where faith is formed and lived out in ministries of Christ's love.

Congregations are critical to any strategy of proclaiming Christ. This course will explore the nature of the congregation as evangelist, its context in scripture and in culture. Central to the strategy of congregation as evangelist are issues of core values, primary task, mission and vision, hospitality, spiritual leadership of clergy and laity, and systems and strategies that disciple persons.

In a briefer word, it takes a congregation to make a disciple.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES: Students will have

1. A clear understanding of the gospel as the gift of a community of faith experienced and proclaimed in a lived witness before the world.

2. An understanding of the evangelical flow through a congregation by which people are invited and welcomed, related to God, nurtured into discipleship and sent into the world in ministry.
3. An ability to study their own congregation to determine its effectiveness and/or barriers in evangelization. A written case study will be expected at the close of the course.

III. TOPIC LISTINGS AND SEQUENCE

1. Introduction of course theme, *The Congregation as Evangelist*, as contrasted with popular imagery of pastor, evangelist, or laypersons as evangelists. Students will be encouraged to understand the role of the congregation in their own faith development.
Discussion of core requirements, including data, other details and forms for the congregational case study/report required at close of course.
What evangelization is and is not. 2 hours
2. Evangelization in the New Testament Church
Jesus as an evangelist of the kingdom of God
The commissioning of the 70
The "Great" Commission in the Synoptic Gospels and in John
Evangelization strategies in the Apostolic church 3 hour
3. The emergence of Christendom and the new evangelization strategies: martyrdom, monasteries, and Methodist-like movements 3 hours
4. Evangelization in the "mainline" churches:
From process to program 2 hours
5. The shift of Paradigms and the emerging Missionary Congregation
Core values, mission, and vision in missionary congregation 4 hours
6. The Congregation as a system:
How disciples are made 2 hours
7. The Pastor as a leader in evangelization 2 hours
8. Hospitality Evangelism in Scripture and Historic Practice
Hospitality begins at home
Leaving a light on for strangers: the practice of hospitality in missionary congregations

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| Breaking the sound barrier: equipping the laity to defend the hope that is in them | 6 hours |
| 9. Key Evangelization Strategies in missionary congregations:
Service evangelism, equipping the laity for ministry, building a discipleship system | 4 hours |
| 10. Leading a Congregation through Change
Moving from membership to discipleship | 4 hours |

The class would meet for a week, Monday - Thursday from 9 am to 5 pm, and on Friday until Noon for a total of 31 instruction hours.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- A. Attend and participate in class sessions
- B. Bring to first class a brief written spiritual biography, indicating the major influences in the student's coming to faith.
- C. Complete required reading and at least 1200 pages from the collateral readings
- D. Four one-page, single-spaced critiques of required and collateral readings
- E. A case study/ report of a congregation or a ministry within the congregation, preferably the congregation the student leads or attends, which describes and analyses core values and processes that facilitate missionary status or serve as barriers of such. This case study, not less than 8 pages or more than 12, should reflect class discussions and readings. It should include a plan for moving that Congregation or ministry further along the Christendom/Missionary Congregation continuum. State resources, time-line, and desired results. The paper is due no later than the beginning of the Spring semester, Feb. 11.

V. BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Required Reading:

1. The Faith-Sharing Congregation, Roger Swanson & Shirley Clement
2. Either The Celtic Way of Evangelism, or Church for the Unchurched, by George Hunter III

3. Reclaiming the Great Commission, Bishop Claude Payne & Hamilton Beazley

Recommended Reading:

1. The Contagious Witness, Ron Crandall
2. The Logic of Evangelism, William Abraham
3. Evangelism & Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit, Albert Outler
4. Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit, Lovett Weems
5. The Learning Congregation, Thomas Hawkins
6. Leading Change in the Congregation, Gilbert Rendle
7. Congregational MegaTrends, C. Jeff Woods
8. The Once and Future Church, Loren Mead
9. The Equipping Pastor, R. Paul Stevens & Phil Collins
10. Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition, Christine D. Pohl
11. The Soul of the Congregation, Thomas Frank
12. Congregational Evangelism, Maxie Dunnam