CE 825 Ministry with Families and Children in the Faith Community

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Ministry with Families and Children in the Faith Community
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This Doctor of Ministry course explores biblical and theological understandings of the child's spirituality and place in the faith community. These understandings will be integrated with insights from child development studies to formulate principles pastors can use to mold their personal ministry with children and in leading their congregations and families to become communities in which the faith of children grows.

Required Reading


Additional reading:
Invest 10 hours in reading selections of your choice on the pastoral care of children dealing with divorce, grief, abuse, giftedness, handicapping conditions, or other challenges.

Recommended Resource:
Stewart, Sonja M. and Jerome W. Berryman. *Young Children and Worship*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989). Does not need to be read prior to the course, but is recommended as a resource to use following the course.

Assignments

Pre-class Assignments
Complete all reading prior to class sessions.

Invest up to 4 hours in a study of children in the Bible. Make notes on your findings. What does the Bible teach about children, their place in the family and the faith community, and how to most effectively teach and nurture them? Be prepared to share your findings in class discussion.

Prepare a 20-30 minute presentation, sharing from your reading on how to give the pastoral care needed by children going through a particular crisis or with a particular special need. You may select from the following topics:
  - Grief
    - Dealing with the death of a parent.
    - Dealing with the death of a sibling.
Dealing with the death of another relative or friend.
Divorce
The chronically ill child
The terminally ill child
Abuse
Handicaps
   Mental or physical
Giftedness
Learning disabilities
Emotional disturbance
Other concerns.

As you prepare for this course, be alert to observe and converse with children. Observe them in Sunday school or a mid-week church activity, in the worship service, relating to adults, and at play.

Talk with at least two children. Have them draw a picture of what they like best about church and tell you about their picture. Ask them to draw a picture of God for you and let them tell you about it. Also, have them draw a picture of their favorite Bible story. Again, have them tell you about their picture. Ask: why is that story special for you? Make notes on your observations and conversation to bring to class along with the pictures.

Identify a child in need of pastoral care. Write up a description of that child. What are the symptoms that indicate the need for pastoral care? What are the circumstances of the child's life? This is the beginning of a case study to be completed following the class sessions.

**Post-class Assignments**
A. Design a plan for enhancing your ministry with children, pilot test at least a portion of the plan and assess the results. Write a paper describing the intended ministry, the reason (theory) behind the design, and your assessment of the pilot test.
   1. Briefly describe your church’s current ministry with children and how you are involved in ministry with children
   2. In the light of what you have learned in this course, evaluate your children’s ministry indicating the strengths of the ministry, areas where it could be improved, and needs that are not being met.
   3. Develop a plan to enhance your church’s ministry with children, using insights from the course in shaping the plan.
   4. Begin implementing at least one aspect of the plan and in the paper report the beginning results of that implementation.

B. Develop a pastoral care plan for the child in the case study begun earlier.
   1. Describe the child and the situation that creates the need for special pastoral care.
   2. Analyze the situation identifying the issues--the needs--that should be addressed in the pastoral care.
3. Discuss insights from your reading, research, and class notes which explain the dynamics of what the child may be experiencing and what the child needs from the pastor, or caring Christian adult.

4. Develop a pastoral care plan which implements the insights discussed in section 3 to meet the needs of the child.

**Working Outline**

Children in the Bible.
- Children in the Old Testament faith community.
- Jesus on children and their faith.

The faith development of children.
- Insights from child development.
- Insights from faith development studies.
- Children on the "Way of Salvation."
  - a Wesleyan perspective.
  - other theological perspectives represented in the class.

Ministry implications.
- The power of story.
- The power of belonging.
- Intergenerational worship.
  - Involving children.
  - The children's sermon
- Children and the sacraments.
- Children's worship.
  - Principles and options.
  - Transition to adult worship.

The pastoral care of children in crisis.