

# PASTORAL CARE IN THE TOWN AND COUNTRY CONTEXT SYLLABUS

## I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

*Pastors in isolated settings find themselves facing a large number of pastoral care issues, some unique to the context, with less help than their suburban and urban counterparts have available. This course looks at some of the stresses town and country life places on pastors and their families as well as those in the church, and explores ways pastors can keep themselves spiritually, emotionally, and physically healthy and thereby able to offer pastoral care to others.*

## II. COURSE OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE

The student who successfully completes this course will be able:

### In Spirit

1. To hold a spiritual concern for the millions who live in town and country places in the United States and worldwide.
2. To live out the example of Christ as expressed in Matthew 9:35-36.

### In Understanding (Cognitive)

1. To differentiate between pastoral care issues that can be handled in the Town and Country church and those that should be referred.
2. To identify the pastoral issues common among Town and Country residents.
3. To identify issues that may impact the pastor's own health and well being.
4. To understand the effects of isolation and intimacy on the pastor's family in the Town and Country context.
5. To realize the risks of working "solo" and the value of a network of support and accountability.

### In Attitude (Affective)

1. To have a respect for the unique emotional and spiritual challenges of the town and country context.
2. To desire to keep one's self spiritually, emotionally, and physically healthy .

### In Skills (Behavioral)

1. To lead parishioners to develop strategies that properly address the pressures of Town and Country life.
2. To act as a "first responder" in crisis counseling situations in the Town and Country context.
3. To access long-distance support from more highly trained counselors when referral is not an option.
4. To develop and implement strategies for personal and family well being in the Town and Country context.

## III. COURSE TEXTBOOKS

### **A. Required**

- Bierly, Steve R. *How to Thrive as a Small-Church Pastor: A Guide to Spiritual and Emotional Well-Being*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1998. (187 pgs.)
- Killen, James L., Jr. *Pastoral Care in the Small Membership Church*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005. (103 pgs.)
- Keillor, Garrison. *Leaving Home*. New York: Penguin Books, 1997. (258 pgs.)
- A collection of current articles on rural issues, posted on the TACT website, is also required reading.

### **B. Suggested**

- Foltz, Nancy T. *Caring for the Small Church: Insights from Women in Ministry*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1994.
- Richardson, Ronald W. *Becoming a Healthier Pastor: Family Systems Theory and the Pastor's Own*

*Family*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

### **C. Supplementary Bibliography**

A supplementary bibliography may be distributed in class.

## **IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **A. Reading Assignments**

Read all required textbooks and online articles.

### **B. Written Assignments**

Pre-Course

1. In response to *How to Thrive as a Small-Church Pastor*, choose the three chapters that address the greatest tendencies to “small churchihood” in your personal life and write 1-2 pages on how you would overcome each of these tendencies in a town and country congregation. (3-6 page total). [18 hours reading and writing]
2. In response to *Pastoral Care in the Small Membership Church*, write a 3-5 page “action plan” setting out how you would implement the suggestions Killen makes in your first year in a town and country context. [12.5 hours reading and writing]
3. Choose three recurring characters from *Leaving Home*: a teenager, middle-aged married person, and older adult. Write 2-3 pages for each character (6-9 pages total) as if you were their pastor, reflecting on what their pastoral care needs are and how those needs are conditioned by the town and country environment. [26.5 hours reading and writing]
4. In response to the online readings, choose three issues you were surprised to find in the town and country context and write a page about each, explaining why the issues were surprising. [16 hours reading and writing]

Post-Course

1. In a paper of 15-20 pages, research in depth one town and country pastoral care issue you have been introduced to in this class, and propose a means for a town and country congregation to address that issue. Approximately half the paper should be a description and analysis of the issue, and half should describe the means of addressing it, including needed physical, human, and financial resources. [45 hours reading and writing]

### **C. Quizzes and/or Exams**

There are no quizzes or exams in this course.

## **V. COURSE POLICES**

### **A. Weight Given to Course Requirements for Grading**

- 10% for the required reading.
- 10% for each of the Pre-Course written assignments. (total 40%)
- 20% for class participation.
- 30% for the Post-Course assignment.

### **B. Class Participation**

Each student is expected to participate in the class by asking questions, adding anecdotal information to discussion topics, being attentive to the instructor and fellow students, and interacting courteously with informants during cultural immersion and field exercises.

### **C. Late Assignments**

Pre-Course assignments are due at the beginning of the class week. The Post-Course assignment is due

the fourth Friday after the class. Late work will be accepted, but 5% of the possible score will be deducted for each day the work is late, up to five days. No work more than five days late will be accepted. Exceptions may be made by the instructor or Dean of the participating seminary for medical or family emergencies.

#### D. Absences

Due to the “intensive week” format of this course, absences are not allowed. In the event of an emergency, the student should contact the instructor to see if an alternative can be worked out.

#### E. Letter/Numerical Grade Scale

A+	99-100	B+	91-93	C+	83-85	D+	75-77	F	0-69
A	96-98	B	88-90	C	80-82	D	72-74		
A-	94-95	B-	86-87	C-	78-79	D-	70-71		

### VI. COURSE SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

This course will draw heavily on case studies and actual interviews and presentations by town and country residents who will function as informants for the class. While the case studies will strive to shield the identity of persons involved, and the informants are participating voluntarily and with informed consent, students should be sensitive to need for discretion and respect in asking questions and discussing the issues presented.

The TACT Program and its participating seminaries do not discriminate on the basis of disability in the operation of any of its programs and activities. To avoid discrimination the student is responsible for informing the appropriate seminary office and the course instructor of any disabling condition that will require modifications.

### VII. COURSE LECTURES AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00		The Pastor’s Self- Care in the Town and Country Context	Pastoral Care issues in the Town and Country Community	Pastoral Care issues in the Town and Country Community	Congregational Pastoral Care Issues in the Town and Country Church
9:00					
10:00			Agrarian pressures	Family Issues con’t.	
11:00		Personal issues			
12:00	Lunch provided in the classroom	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
1:00	The Pastor’s Self-Care in the Town and Country Context	The Pastoral Care of the Town and Country Pastor’s Family	Pastoral Care issues in the Town and Country Community	Pastoral Care issues in the Town and Country Community	
2:00					
3:00	Adjustment and Career issues		Family Issues	Special Cases	
4:00					
5:00					
6:00	Cultural Immersion Activity TBA*	Cultural Immersion Activity TBA*	Cultural Immersion Activity TBA*	Cultural Immersion Activity TBA*	
7:00					
8:00					

\* Not every slot will be used, but due to scheduling demands, all should be held available by the student.