

***M373/573INT The Large Church: Praxis, Problems and Promise***

**MEADVILLE LOMBARD THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL  
Summer Intensives 2007**

**Conducted at the First Unitarian Church of Dallas Texas**

**Monday, July 9 to Friday, July 13, 2007: Faculty: Lee Barker, Laurel Hallman,  
Marlin Lavanhar, Donna Zimmerman, Lyssa Jenkins,  
Debbie Bieber and John Tolley**

**Course Description:** Learn to create and lead institutions capable of sustaining the complex ministries and operations of large churches. Students will discover the critical alignments and distinct roles of members, ministers and staff found in healthy institutions. This class is designed to meet the needs of a wide range of participants, from lay leaders and ordained ministers, to seminarians and church staff. It will offer instruction in theology and theory, move into three key elements of church life (worship, education and public witness), and draw on the direct experiences of several large congregations, including one of the most dynamic institutions in the Unitarian Universalist movement today, First Unitarian Church of Dallas.

**Course Goals:**

1. Provide the parameters of a theology of religious leadership, which are defined by integrity (ethical behavior), vision (capacity for enterprise), and devotion (service).
2. Learn skills in building effective leadership and teams out of a theology of religious leadership to support the diverse ministries of large congregations.
3. Give the student an opportunity to explore how a theology of leadership is applied to worship, education and public witness in the large church setting.
4. Acquaint the student with theory of change that leads to “best practices” in church management.
5. Better prepare church professionals and lay leaders to take into the world our Unitarian Universalist vision of justice, equity and compassion through the ministry of our large institutions.
6. Learn in an environment that brings together students, ministers, lay leaders and lay professionals.

## **Requirements:**

### 1. Required Reading:

Collins, Jim. Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't. HarperCollins Publishers: New York, c2001. ISBN: 0-06-662099-6.

Foster, Charles R. Educating Congregations: The Future of Christian Education. Abington Press: Nashville, c1994. ISBN: 0-687-00245-1.

Harris, Maria. Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church. Westminster/John Knox Press: Louisville, c1989. ISBN: 0-664-24052-6.

Johnson, Spencer. Who Moved My Cheese? An Amazing Way to Deal with Change in Your Work and in Your Life. Penguin Putnam, Inc., New York, c1998. ISBN: 0-399-14446-3.

Contents for course reader (provided by school following registration):

Adams, James Luther, The Prophethood of All Believers, Beacon Press, Boston 1986. (Chapter 25: 239-242).

King, Jr., Martin Luther. "Letter From A Birmingham Jail."

Phillips, Roy, "Preaching as a Sacramental Event," in Schulz, William, Transforming Words: Six Essays on Preaching, Skinner House Books, Boston, 1996.

Oliver, Mary. "Poem," in Dream Work, Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, 1986.

Stanley, Andy, Next Generation Leader: Five Essentials For Those Who Will Shape the Future, Multnomah Publishers, Oregon 2003. (Chapter 13-15: 131-159).

West, Cornel The Cornel West Reader, Civitas Books 1999. (Chapter 24: 357-359).

2. Class Attendance and Participation: The class will take place at First Unitarian Church in Dallas, Texas, on Monday, July 9 (beginning at 1:00 p.m.) through Friday, July 13 (ending at noon). Daily sessions will typically run from 8:30 a.m. to noon, and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Since the class will be taught in a seminar-style, class participation and group support will be critically important. Consequently, participants are expected to attend every session.

Session topics and instructors include:

**Theme Presentation: Large Church as an Institution**

**-Laurel Hallman, Senior Minister,  
The Unitarian Church of Dallas**

This keynote presentation will frame the week describing that as the church grows larger, the ministry and leadership must move from tending individual faith and life journeys to tending the church as a wholistic embodiment of our faith. This reality will undergird the theme of our intensive

**Theology and Practices of Leadership in the Large Church**

**-Lee Barker, President, Meadville Lombard,  
Former Senior Minister of a Large Congregation**

Drawing on several of the texts, this session will allow students to bring together theory and practice of religious, institutional leadership that is adaptive in nature; a theology that suggests that successful leadership modes (those that draw on integrity, vision and devotion) are diverse, creative, and geared to the particular situation.

**Leading Change in the Large Church**

**-Lyssa Jenkins, Chief Economist,  
Dallas Chamber of Commerce**

This session examines the process and dynamics of organizational change from three angles: a review of thought leaders in business literature, a panel of participants in the evolution of First Unitarian Church of Dallas and the direct experience of student leadership teams addressing problems commonly encountered in change situations.

**Piety, Prophecy and Pragmatism: Public Witness in the Large Church.**

**-Marlin Lavanhar, Senior Minister,  
All Soul's Unitarian Church, Tulsa**

This segment will look at the foundations of prophetic ministry in liberal religion, the personal qualities essential to prophetic leadership, and the practical aspects of effective public witness in a large church context today.

### **Education in the Large Church:**

**-John Tolley, Associate Professor of Arts in Ministry,  
Meadville Lombard and Former Minister of Religious  
Education in a Large Congregation**

This session, conducted under the philosophy that everything that is done in the church is the curriculum for education, will emphasize leadership teams and their function in the “educating congregation.”

### **Worship in the Large Church:**

**-Laurel Hallman**

This session will focus on the worship life of a large church as the incarnation of the liberal religious spirit in a specific congregation in ritual time and sacred space.

Final Project: Following the week of on-site class work, each student taking the course for credit will design a project with its focus being one of the topics explored during our week together:

- a. As much as possible, base your research on a real situation occurring or one that has occurred in a congregation or institution of which you are aware. The hypothesis should state the challenge to leadership or growth in that particular situation.
- b. Identify the Theological Practices of Leadership that are/were inherent in the situation and if or what best practices of change management were engaged. Make reference to the required texts from this course specifically noting the elements of our three subject areas, one or more of which will be the central focus of your study:
  - i. Worship
  - ii. Education
  - iii. Public Witness
- c. Your conclusion should reflect the theoretical and practical dimensions of the institution’s situation, whether the outcomes were successful or disappointing, as well as the integration of the results into the various ministries of that particular community.
- d. Creative format for the final project is encouraged. A typical research paper of ten-to-fifteen, double-spaced pages, for example, would be acceptable. However, other examples could be a curriculum piece for an adult education offering, a performance piece documented for faculty evaluation or another form of your design approved by the faculty.
- e. During our on-site week, each student taking the course for credit will meet with a faculty member to propose a final project and method for completing it. Preliminary approval will be given at that time. The deadline for completion of the projects will be the end of the autumn quarter at Meadville Lombard, December 15, 2007.