



**BRISBANE COLLEGE OF THEOLOGY
UNIT OUTLINE**

**GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN MINISTRY
GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN MINISTRY**

UNIT TITLE	EXPLORING PARISH CULTURE
UNIT CODES	E74033
UNIT STATUS	Elective
HOST FIELD	E
PREREQUISITE/S	-
INCOMPATIBLES	E52033 is incompatible with E74033
CREDIT POINTS	10cp
REQUIREMENTS	All students do 7 hours per week study over a 13 week semester. The last night of the 13 weeks will be for presentations of research projects. Students do three weeks of field work, nine weeks of 3-hour face-to-face unitwork, and a 3-hour postgraduate seminar.
FREQUENCY OF OFFERING	Annually – Semester 2
PREPARED BY	Revd Dr John Chalmers
UNIT COORDINATOR	Revd Dr John Chalmers
TEACHING STAFF	Revd Dr John Chalmers
DATE PREPARED	9 February 2004

Rationale

Equipped with a degree in theology and ministry (and perhaps ordination), people set out to minister in local parishes. Before long, ministers encounter the uniqueness of a parish. Each parish has its own way of doing things – and newcomers often discover this elusive uniqueness only when they find they have broken unnamed taboos. This unit provides a means for respectfully accessing the concrete specificity of the local congregation within which one seeks to actively and faithfully pursue the mission of the church. This unit helps students intentionally ‘ground’ the theology they have studied within other units, relating espoused theory/theology to pastoral practice. Moving beyond a merely technical understanding of how culture operates within congregations, this unit, in identifying key elements in a particular congregation’s culture, imbues students with a respectful and enquiring stance towards the congregation, its history, and its future.

Relation to Course

Both the undergraduate and the postgraduate courses in ministry provide students with a mutually-supportive learning community within which, through rigorous reflection, they may develop competence in the practice of ministry.

The Graduate Certificate offers students an opportunity to gain a basic knowledge in the practice of ministry. The Graduate Diploma develops the student's competence in the practice of ministry. This particular unit, which is clearly located within a field-based setting, assists participants to ground their learning respectfully within the confines and inherent opportunities of a particular congregational setting.

Aims

This unit aims to develop each student's appreciation and sensitivity to the history, norms, and values which might underpin a parish or organisation's life (its culture), and to enhance their competence in ministerial practice and leadership through developing the practical skills required for undertaking a cultural audit.

For postgraduate students, this aim is sharpened by seeking to equip these students to be able to help parishioners understand the concept of culture and to lead them through the steps of undertaking a culture audit.

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit students will be able to:

1. conduct a culture audit of a specific parish, demonstrating an understanding of culture frameworks
2. extrapolate possible openings for ministry from the aforementioned audit
3. demonstrate a capacity to lead parishioners in undertaking a culture audit.

Content

Session 1	Introduction and ways of looking at culture
Session 2	Looking at looking at culture, ethical issues
Session 3	Fieldwork in a particular parish
Session 4	Fieldwork in a particular parish
Session 5	Checking in with fieldwork already undertaken: setting the next steps.
Session 6	Fieldwork in a particular parish
Session 7	Postgraduate Seminar: leading parishioners in conducting a culture audit
Session 8	Organisational and literary frameworks for understanding parish culture
Session 9	Ecclesial frameworks for understanding parish culture
Session 10	Harnessing one's imagination for exploring a parish's culture
Session 11	Postgraduates mentor undergraduate students in firming up their culture audit
Session 12	Possible openings for ministry
Session 13	Presentations by students.

Organisation and Teaching Strategies

Teaching will be face-to-face, a combination of interactive teaching strategies, lectures, fieldwork and group work.

More specifically:

1. The first two sessions will equip students with the rationale and a range of tools for accessing key components of culture.
2. The third and fourth weeks comprise fieldwork, where students undertake a culture audit within a specific parish setting.
3. The fifth session provides an opportunity to present the results of their initial fieldwork and receive detailed feedback from the lecturer and other students, prior to returning for further fieldwork tasks.
4. While *undergraduate* students complete their field work in week seven, *postgraduate* students meet with the lecturer in seminar format, on leading a culture audit.
5. *Undergraduate* and *postgraduate* students workshop interpretive frameworks together during sessions eight to ten.
6. At session eleven, *postgraduate* students demonstrate and develop their skills for leading others in undertaking a culture audit by mentoring undergraduate students with the attentive support of the lecturer.

7. While *undergraduate* students present the results of their culture audit in session thirteen, *postgraduate* students, after presenting the results of their culture audit, meet with the lecturer to present a dot-point plan for leading a culture audit project.

Assessment

Students are required to initiate a research project within a specific context, attentive to ethical issues. At least the following elements are to be addressed:

1. A basic description of the context including anchor institutions and relevant geographic elements (perhaps a stylised mud-map) as well as the parish's "footprints" within the broader context.
 2. A succinct listing of the parish's programs followed by an analysis of the major threads or emphases that run through these programs.
 3. A succinct summary of the key formative moments or events in the history of the parish.
 4. A succinct description of the processes that manage the life of the parish.
 5. The choice and succinct description of two models for interpreting the information gathered in the parish being studied, with an indication of why the chosen models are appropriate for this setting.
 6. An analysis of the information gathered with the help of the two frameworks chosen.
 7. A proposed image or metaphor that emerges naturally out of the local context that may be tapped for offering possible openings for the practice of ministry in the particular setting, openings that build on the strengths and/or address the limitations of the parish under consideration.
1. Each student will demonstrate his/her having grappled with and explored the required reading by the quality of participation in the class discussions. This tests Objective 1. (20%)
 2. Each student will present a paper (1,000-1,500 words) which gives clear evidence of having absorbed the insights of the required reading, of having done the prescribed fieldwork, and of having begun relating the frameworks to their parish/setting-under-study. This assessment item tests Objective 2 (40%) and is due at session 9. It is a work-in-progress, on which the student will receive comprehensive feedback from the lecturer, thereby guiding students in the development of their final paper.
 3. Each student will present a final (3,000-3,500 word) paper which extends assessment item two above, a paper which presents the learnings and insights gained in applying theoretical frameworks to their parish/setting-under-study. This assessment item, testing Objective 3 (40%), is due one week after session 13. Students will receive feedback from peers and the lecturer at the session 13 presentation which they may wish to incorporate into their final paper.

A Paper of 3,000 words that details the steps s/he would take in leading parishioners in undertaking a culture audit.

The paper will include at least the following elements:

1. Succinct, discrete comments that address the following issues (250 words each):
 - i. what is culture?
 - ii. how does it help a parish to know about its culture?
 - iii. what ethical issues need to be addressed?
 - iv. who needs to be included?
2. A basic step-by-step outline of how you would lead a culture audit in a parish. (1,500 words)
3. Key convictions you would want to convey to participants, learnings from your own experience of doing a culture audit (if assessment item 1) you would want to share. (250 words).

Postgraduate students will use sessions 7, 11 and 13 to resource themselves for this assessment item which tests Objective 3.

Generic Attributes

- The ability to evaluate opinions, make decisions and reflect critically on the justifications for decisions.
- The ability to generate ideas and adapt innovatively to changing environments.
- The ability to identify problems, create solutions, innovate and improve current practices.
- A knowledge and respect of ethics and moral values in relation to Christian ministry and mission.
- Appreciation of differences in gender, culture and customs.
- The ability to retrieve, evaluate and use relevant information.
- The ability to interact effectively with others in order to work towards a common outcome, whether in the role of team member or of leader.
- The ability to adapt to an unfamiliar culture and operate in a socially and culturally diverse environment.
- Development of high order skills in analysis, critical evaluation, and synthesis.
- Development of skills underpinning scholarly discourse in ministry.
- Development of skills needed to undertake significant graduate-level research in ministry.

Textbooks

Required

The primary “text” for this unit is the setting in which each student grounds her/his study.

Augmenting this “text” is a book of readings comprising **resource** (optional) and **required** texts for each facet of the unit. These texts include:

Bennison, C (1999) *In Praise of Congregations*. Boston: Cowley Publications (chapter six)

Carroll J, Dudley C, McKinney W, (1986) ‘Studying Congregations’ in *Handbook for Congregational Studies*. Nashville: Abingdon (chapter one)

Crossan, J (1988) *The Dark Interval*. Sonoma: Polebridge Press (chapter two)

Dudley C, Johnson S, (1988) ‘Using Church Images for Commitment, Conflict and Renewal’ in *Congregations*. Atlanta: John Know Press

Dudley C, Johnson S, (1991) ‘Congregational Self-Images for Social Ministry’ in *Carriers of Faith*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press

Dudley C, Johnson S, (1993) *Energizing the Congregation*. Louisville: Westminster: John Knox Press (chapter one)

Dulles, A (1987) *Models of the Church* New York: Doubleday (chapter one)

Egan, G (1993) *Adding Value*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass (chapter six)

Frank, T (2000) *The Soul of the Congregation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press

Grierson, D (1984) *Transforming a People of God*. Melbourne: J.B.C.E. (chapters one and two)

Grierson, D (1984) *Transforming a People of God*. Melbourne: J.B.C.E. (chapters three, four and five)

Grierson, D (1984) *Transforming a People of God*. Melbourne: J.B.C.E. (chapters seven, eight, nine)

Grierson, D (1984) *Transforming a People of God*. Melbourne: J.B.C.E. (chapter ten)

Hopewell, J (1987) *Congregation: Stories and Structures*. Philadelphia: Fortress (chapters ten, eleven, thirteen)

Lane B, ‘Language, Metaphor and Pastoral Theology’ in *Theology Today* Vol XLIII.4, 487-502

Lyon, B (2000) ‘What is the Relevance of Congregational Studies for Pastoral Theology?’ in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*. Oxford: Blackwell

McLean, S (1986) ‘Basic Sources and New Possibilities: H Richard Niebuhr’s Influence on Faith Development Theory’ in *Faith Development and Fowler*. Birmingham: Religious Education Press

Resources for exploring parish context, program, processes and identity: adapted from Carroll, J et al (1986) *Handbook for Congregational Studies*. Nashville: Abingdon

Rozen D, McKinney W, Carroll J, (eds) (1988) ‘Religious Presence: A Congregational Perspective’ in *Varieties of Religious Experience*. NY: Pilgrim Press (chapter two)

Saarinen, M (1988) *The Lifecycle of a Congregation*. Washington: The Alban Institute

- Schein, E (1987) *Organisational Culture and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass (chapter one)
- Schreiter, R (1998) 'Theology in the Congregation: Discovering and Doing' in *Studying Congregations*. Nashville: Abingdon
- Walsh, J (1984) *Evangelisation and Justice*. Maryknoll: Orbis (chapter one)
- Wimberly, E (1997) *Recalling Our Own Stories*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass (chapter two)

Recommended

- Hopewell, J (1987) *Congregations: Stories and Structures* available online at www.religion-online.org/cgi-bin/research.dll

Academic and General Resource Requirements

Undergraduate References – Books

- Ammerman, N (1997) *Congregation and Community*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press
- Ammerman N, Carroll J, Dudley C, & McKinney W, (1998) *Studying Congregations*. Nashville: Abingdon Press
- Becker, P (1997) "*The Way We do Things Here*": *Culture and Conflict in Local Congregations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Bolman, L and Deal, T (1984) *Modern Approaches to Understanding and Managing Organisations*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass
- Deal, T and Kennedy, A (1982) *Corporate Cultures*. Reading: Addison-Wesley
- Dudley C, Carroll J and Wind J, (1991) *carriers of Faith*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox
- Grundy, M (1988) *Understanding Congregations*. London: Mobray
- Leas, S and Parsons, G (1993) *Understanding Your Congregation as a System*. Washington: Alban Institute
- Morgan, G (1998) *Images of Organisations*. San Francisco: Berrett-Kochler Publishers

Postgraduate References – Books

- Egan, G (1993) *Adding Value*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass
- Furr J, Borem M, Herrington J, (2000) *Leading Congregational Change Workbook*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass
- Schein, E (1985) *Organisational Culture and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass
- Sedmak, C (2000) *Doing Local Theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books
- Wuthnow, R (1994) *Producing the Sacred*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press

References – Online and other IT Resources

- <http://ncss.hartsem.edu/>
- <http://pewforum.org/>
- <http://www.uscongregations.org/>
- <http://www.citireach.org/>
- <http://www.resourcingchristianity.org/database2.asp?cluster=20>
- <http://www.christianleaders.org/>