

University of Dubuque Theological Seminary
MN630 STARTING MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES
2 Credits | Letter Grade

Instructor: Dr. Christopher B. James
Email: cjames@dbq.edu

Course Description

In our changing contexts, today's Christian leaders need, more than ever, to be able to cultivate new communities that can discern and join in the Spirit's initiatives. This course explores models of church planting and innovation and equips students with the missional imagination and habits needed to develop and lead new Christian communities that are contextually-rooted, spiritually-vibrant, and theologically-robust.



Course Objectives: As a result of this course, successful students will:

- Imagine faithful fresh expressions of church as communities joining in the *missio dei*
- Cultivate habits of missional life and spiritual discernment in context
- Develop skills for forming new ventures in Christian community and mission

MDiv Curricular Goals

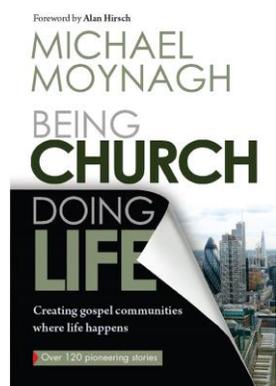
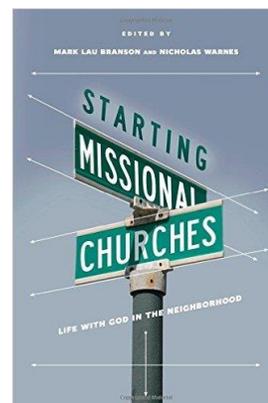
- Evangelize the world with faithfulness and contextual sensitivity
- Lead & nurture congregations to promote peace and justice in the public arena & encourage the witness and service of the church in mission to the world
- Nurture habits & disciplines of study that increase love of God & neighbor & shape personal & professional lives
- Integrate theology & practice in all areas of life and ministry

MAMD Curricular Goals

- Develop, implement, & assess strategies for missional living in a specific cultural context
- Articulate and reflect critically & constructively on the biblical and theological foundations of God's mission to the world
- Adopt spiritual practices that nurture their personal lives as faithful disciples & witnesses
- Develop skills & capacities for faithful & competent Christian witness

Required Texts

- Branson & Warnes, *Starting Missional Churches: Life with God in the Neighborhood* (2014)



- Moynagh, *Being Church*, *Doing Life: Creating Gospel Communities Where Life Happens* (2014)
- *Additional articles and videos posted to Moodle*

Important Note

An important part of this class is developing skills in four areas of missional practice: presence, conversation, hospitality and discernment. As we seek to practice incarnational presence, you will need to identify a place or community in which to plant yourself and cultivate new friendships. Ideally, you'll choose either a physical location or relational group that is available at least *once a week* and in which it can be fairly natural to make new friends, even if this will require you to take more social initiative in forming new relationships than you typically do. There are endless possibilities for what you might choose as a presence context, but here are several to stir your thinking: a running club, a fitness class, a coffee shop or pub, a library activity group, dancing class, a meetup.com group for dinner or those new to town (join or start one), a busy playground, a community choir, a student group, a soup kitchen or tutoring club, a cause-based or political group, a co-working office, a Monday night football group, or a hobby group. Introverts are especially encouraged to choose an activity group rather than, say, a coffee shop. You are encouraged to begin your discernment by considering any contexts that are already part of your life rhythms in some way that you could engage with more intentionality for the semester (and perhaps beyond).