

Pastoral Ministry

Reformed Theological Seminary — Washington, DC
Spring Term, 2025

Instructor: Ryan Laughlin

Email: ryan@mcleanpres.org

Phone:

Dates and Time:

12 Jan: 6:30-8:30pm (Zoom)

January 29 9:00 am-6:00 pm (RTS DC)

January 30 8:30 am-12:00 pm (RTS DC)

12 Feb: 6:30-8:30 pm (Zoom)

26 Feb: 6:30-8:30 pm (Zoom)

19 Mar: 6:30-8:30 pm (Zoom)

26 Mar: 6:30-8:30 pm (Zoom)

9 Apr: 6:30-8:30 pm (Zoom)

Course Description

This course will address the biblical basics of pastoral ministry: Who are we as pastors? How do we faithfully serve our congregations? How do we personally flourish in ministry? Lectures will provide a biblical and theological framework for pastoral ministry and offer practical guidance for the work of the pastor.

Objectives

At the end of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Articulate the biblical and theological foundation for pastoral ministry.
2. Apply the historic Christian practice of “soul care” to the challenges of pastoral ministry in today’s world.
3. Define a personal philosophy of ministry, including a “ministry health” plan to foster physical, emotional, and spiritual health.
4. Develop key pastoral skills through practicing active listening and providing constructive feedback.

Required Reading

1. Barnes, M. Craig. *The Pastor as Minor Poet: Texts and Subtexts in the Ministerial Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009.
2. Schaeffer, Francis A. *The Lord’s Word in the Lord’s Way and No Little People*, Crossway Short Classics
3. Senkbeil, Harold L. *The Care of Souls: Cultivating a Pastor’s Heart*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019.
4. Shitama, Jack. *Anxious Church, Anxious People: How to Lead Change in the Age of Anxiety*, Earleville, MD: Charis Works, 2018.
5. Still, William. *The Work of the Pastor*. Christian Focus, 2010.
6. Tripp, David Paul. *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastoral Ministry*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
7. Witmer, Timothy, *The Shepherd Leader: Achieving Effective Shepherding in Your Church*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2010.

Additional Requirements:

1. “How Culture is Changing and the Future of the Church,” Tim Keller, <https://youtu.be/M1ekh6e5SIg>
2. “Don’t Tell Anyone: The Pastor’s Humanity,” Zack Eswine, https://youtu.be/SOw2g8oBeyc?si=2MhzYVxk_300FWCH.
3. “The Costly Love of Church Discipline Part 1” https://firstpresaugusta.org/messages/how-to-answer-false-accusation/?enmse=1&enmse_sid=4&enmse_mid=350&enmse_av=1. & “The Costly Love of Church Discipline Part 2” https://firstpresaugusta.org/messages/how-to-answer-false-accusation/?enmse=1&enmse_sid=4&enmse_mid=350&enmse_av=1. George Robertson.

Course Requirements

1. **Classroom participation** (10%): You will be expected to arrive to class, both in-person and on-line, prepared to engage your classmates with humility, curiosity, and thoughtfulness. This will require you to complete the assigned readings and to adopt an attitude of mutual respect toward one another.
2. **Reflection Papers** (25%): You will write a *brief* reflection paper (400–450 words each), which demonstrates both reading comprehension and application to pastoral ministry.
3. **Case Study Presentation** (25%): You will make a 8-10 minute presentation to the class on a case study related to a challenging pastoral situation, either from your ministry context or from examples provided by the professor. Following your presentation, you will lead a 20 minute class discussion, in which you will demonstrate active listening skills.
4. **Final Paper** (40%) – The response paper is to be 10-12 pages in length. You are being asked to express the impact of the lectures and readings on your understanding of pastoral ministry and your philosophy of ministry. How has God uniquely equipped you (skills, experiences, passions) to shepherd God’s people? How do you pastor in a way that promotes the flourishing of those in your care? How do/will you assess the effectiveness of your ministry? Please dedicate the final two pages to your *personal ministry health* plan, in which you answer the following questions: What is the relationship between a healthy self-identity and pastoral ministry? What place will self-care have in your ministry? Please offer practical examples of practical steps you will take. This paper must be 12 point font (Times New Roman or similar) and double spaced. All papers must be in **MS Word** or **Pages 6.0** or higher. Email the paper as an attachment to: ryan@mcleanpres.org.

Class Assignments

Date and Time	Location	Topic	Reading Due	Paper Due
Jan 12, 6:30-9:00 pm	Zoom	Introduction to Pastoral Ministry	Senkbeil, <i>The Care of Souls</i>	None

Date and Time	Location	Topic	Reading Due	Paper Due
Jan 29, 8:30-5:00pm & Jan 30, 8:30-11:30am	RTS DC	Knowing God's People	Witmer, <i>The Shepherd Leader</i> ; Barnes, <i>The Pastor as Minor Poet</i>	Barnes Response
Feb 12, 6:30-8:30pm	Zoom	Feeding God's People	Still, <i>Work of Pastor</i> Grimke, <i>Preaching</i>	Grimke Response
Feb 26, 6:30-8:30pm	Zoom	Leading God's People	Schaeffer, <i>The Lord's Work in the Lord's Way</i> Shitama, <i>Anxious Church</i>	Shitama Response
Mar 12, 6:30-8:30pm	Zoom	Protecting God's People	Watch Robertson	None
Mar 26 6:30-8:30 pm	Zoom	Personal Ministry Health	Tripp, <i>Dangerous Calling</i> Watch Eswine	Eswine Response
April 9 6:30-8:30 pm	Zoom	Contemporary Challenges	Watch Keller	Final Paper Due

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Pastoral Ministry
 Professor: Ryan Laughlin
 Campus: Washington DC
 Date: January 12, 2026-April 9, 2026

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong • Moderate • Minimal • None 	
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	The class encourages discussion and requires students to express their opinions in the form of papers and an oral presentation.
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Strong	Significant study in the scriptural paradigm for shepherding.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Reformed tradition mined for resources for today's pastoral ministry.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Strong	Emphasis on personal growth in God's grace throughout the course.
Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Moderate	Includes discussion of ministry in contemporary context, including significant matters in the PCA and broader church and culture.
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Strong	Case studies will include dealing with conflict in the church and reflecting the grace and truth of Jesus in all of ministry.
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians.	Strong	Lectures include discussions on the art and practice of soul care, developing skills as pastor, leading in worship and conducting services, as well as other facets of local church ministry.

