Building Bridges for Multigenerational Worship
CMWL-8302
PROFESSIONAL DOCTORAL SEMINAR
Sep 9-11, 2013

Offered (via CIV) in New Orleans and Atlanta,
Division of Church Music Ministries
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NOBTS Mission Statement
The mission of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries.

NOBTS Core Purpose, Core Values, and Curriculum Competencies Addressed
One of the seminary’s core values is *Doctrinal Integrity* and this core value is being highlighted during this academic year: “Knowing that the Bible is the Word of God, we believe it, teach it, proclaim it, and submit to it.” In the context of this course offering, we will strive to exemplify this core value at every possible level; in particular, the course content will emanate from Biblical teachings regarding worship and the church. The purpose of this course is to carry out the mission of NOBTS as is reflected through the following additional core values and core competencies:

**Core Values**
1. Spiritual Vitality-The course will focus on the discipleship of believers of all ages as they are led to magnify Christ through intergenerational worship experiences in the local church.

2. Servant Leadership-The course will encourage students to see their role as servant leaders ministering to all generational cohorts which form a part of Christ’s Church in all her local expressions.

**Core Competencies**
1. Worship Leadership- Students will be challenged in understanding how to help believers of all ages to collectively express authentic worship in an intergenerational corporate worship context.

2. Disciple Making- Students will consider the importance of helping members of the congregation to grow spiritually, both in terms of a deepening awareness of the kind of worship that pleases God as well as the ability to “look not only to [his/her] own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil. 2:4) in corporate worship expression.

3. Servant Leadership-Students will reflect on their role as servant leaders who seek to facilitate corporate worship for the broad generational spectrum of believers in the local congregation.

4. Spiritual and Character Formation-Students will be motivated to examine their own
worship preferences and to think beyond them in the pursuit of building cultural bridges which could enable a broad range of worshipers with differing generational expectations and characteristics to worship together.

Rationale for the Course
We live at a time in U.S. history in which no less than five generational cohorts make up society, including the typical local church body. Seniors (born prior to 1946), Boomers (born 1946-1964), Gen-Xers (born 1965-1983), Millennials (born 1984-2002), and young children (born 2002 or after) collectively make up our culture. Each of these generations shares characteristics which differ from the other cohorts. These differences may be found at every level of daily life, including corporate worship, and often give rise to conflicting preferences in worship practice and expectations. For church leaders, and worship leaders in particular, finding a viable strategy for ministry to all generations can be challenging. In the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, “worship wars” became an all too common reality in many churches—a result of the cultural shift then taking place.

For the past couple of decades, church leaders have approached this reality in various ways. Some have avoided the “transitional” headache by starting new churches from scratch. Others, perhaps intuitively believing that older established churches cannot easily and holistically adapt to a changing culture, have created additional service formats for corporate worship, segregating generational cultures in an attempt to quell the dissent over worship. This approach gave rise to the practice of providing alternative formats within a church body, such as traditional/blended and contemporary services. At the same time, many other established churches have continued to worship, admittedly with some degree of friction, in one single format for all generations.

This seminar investigates possible answers to the following questions: Can five generations in the midst of a major culture shift realistically worship meaningfully together? If so, how can leadership find a way to facilitate such worship experiences while staying true to “the kind of worship that pleases God the Father?” From a cultural perspective, what are some concepts which might guide the work of worship leaders and planners in these contexts? What works regarding worship planning for the various generational cohorts, and what does not? And how might worship “bridges” be constructed across the various generational divides?

Seminar Description
This seminar is designed to investigate the opportunities and challenges of planning for multigenerational corporate worship in the local church. Specific attention will be given to an understanding of the characteristics of five generational cohorts: Seniors, Boomers, Gen-Xers, Millennials, and Children. Specific seminar sessions will examine generational attributes and influences, space for worship (facilities), styles for worship, service structures, songs for worship, and sermon delivery. Attention will also be given to possible resources for expanding the ability of church leaders to develop and implement strategies for multigenerational worship.

Seminar Objectives
1. Students will develop an understanding of generational cohorts and how the characteristics of each generational group contribute to the complexity of worship ministry in a multigenerational context.
2. Students will discover to a greater degree how church leaders can address the worship needs of every age group in order to provide meaningful worship experiences in the corporate environment while staying true to the biblical ideals of worship.
3. Students will be challenged to appreciate the broad range of generational diversity and worship expressions present in the Body of Christ gathered to worship.
4. Through personal interaction with individuals in every generational group, students will learn to shift perspectives by viewing worship experiences through the lens of generations different from their own.
5. Students will be challenged to find ways to facilitate bridge-building between the generations through intentional worship planning.

**Teaching Methodology**

Through individual presentations on assigned topics, students will be encouraged to think critically about the course material. Students will be required to engage in interviews and other research methods and will report their findings to the seminar. Through additional tools of case study, lectures, and group discussion some of the course content will be addressed.

**Required Textbooks**


**Course Assignments: Pre-Seminar (Due at the beginning of the first seminar meeting)**

1) Students will be notified once the Blackboard course shell is available to be accessed. Students should register in Blackboard at that time.

2) **Required textbook reading and focused-discussion leaders.** Each student will read all of the required textbooks and write a *reflection paper* for each text. *(Important note: This paper is not a formal book review. Grading will reflect how well the student addresses the specifics of the assignment as noted here.)* The content of the paper should
focus on several key ideas which the student identifies as useful in framing an intergenerational worship ministry in the local church. Any possible application within the student’s current church fellowship should be addressed in the paper as well. Papers should be written in a formal style according to Turabian format. The length should be approximately 1500 words (for each assigned reading). Assignments should be posted in the assignment folder (these are labeled by title of the book) in the course Blackboard prior to the first meeting of the seminar. The folders will be made available by September 1, 2013.

Students will also be paired with another student in order to prepare a focused discussion of one of the assigned textbooks. The time allotted for the discussion of this text during the seminar will be from 1 to 1.5 hours. Students may request a particular text from the required textbook list. While the professor will make an effort to accommodate the request, there is no guarantee that students will be assigned the requested text. Assignments will be made one month prior to the seminar meetings.

3) **Generational interviews.** Each student will interview three individuals from each generational cohort (Seniors, Boomers, Gen-Xers, and Millennials) about corporate worship perspectives. See below for possible interview questions which may help you discover what is appreciated and what is problematic for the individual related to the following aspects of the corporate worship experience. Feel free to develop your own set of questions. You may report your finding in one of two ways:

(1) Video the interviews and then provide a digital portfolio of video clips arranged by topic which you may then use in your report to the seminar. **Under this option, no written report is needed, only a brief outline of video clips and their content.**

OR,

(2) Collate the responses from the interview questions by topic and prepare a summary report by topic (not by generation) in which the various responses to the same question are condensed. You may use bullet-point outline instead of a narrative formal paper.

Possible categories of questions may include the following, but feel free to create your own categories and/or questions:

1. Space (worship environment)
2. Style (communication, musical, “feel of the service”, dress, etc.)
3. Service Structure (format and organization, elements)
4. Songs for Worship (purpose, type of musical materials, content of musical materials)
5. Sermon Delivery (communication, style, content)

Additional questions might include:

- What part of the worship service do you find meaningful and why?
- Can you tell me about a particular worship service which moved you spiritually?
Name a song sung in worship that is the most meaningful spiritually to you. Why is it meaningful?

What are the meaningful things that help people of your age group to worship that may be lacking in your experience of corporate worship?

Does technology (specific) help you to worship or not? Why or why not?

4) **Two model churches for intergenerational worship.** After reading the required texts and the articles from *Leadership Journal*, each student will research two evangelical churches which embrace a philosophy and practice of intergenerational ministry throughout their church life. (Important note: In selecting the two churches, make sure the approach to worship ministry is truly intergenerational from the standpoint of generations worshiping together in the same room at the same time.)

Combining several available methodologies (such as direct or video observation of a worship gathering, interviews with leaders and/or members, and other means), the student should prepare a report which highlights the following:

1. Intentional strategies which the leaders have adopted to implement intergenerational ministry in general, and worship ministry specifically.
2. Challenges which the church has faced in the process of intergenerational ministry.
3. In what ways do the church leaders see intergenerational ministry (and specifically, worship ministry) as a healthy expression for their church?

Each student will prepare a summary report on each church and present the findings to the seminar. The report should be written in narrative format (Turabian guidelines) and will be made available to each participant in the seminar. During the seminar, the group will work to combine findings to identify any “best practices” which may emerge during the process of looking at the twenty churches in the sample.

**Course Assignments: During Seminar**

1) Attendance and engaged participation during all seminar meetings
2) Seminar presentations. Each student will have the opportunity to lead the seminar with the following presentations:
   1. Individually (or in partnership with another student in the course-depending on number of students in the course), lead focused discussion of an assigned textbook.
   2. Generational interviews report
   3. Report on the two model churches studied

**Course Assignments: Post-Seminar**

1) **Comprehensive Reflection Paper.** Details for this assignment will be provided at the time of the seminar. It is not designed to be done in advance of our seminar meetings.

**Course Evaluation**

Assigned reading of required texts, response papers, and seminar presentation 50%
Generational interviews assignment and seminar presentation 20%
Study of two model churches and seminar presentation 20%
Comprehensive Final reflection paper 10%

Directed Study
The course is available for directed study with permission of the professor. Additional assignments will be made by the professor for those students desiring to take the course under this option.
Selected Bibliography

Books


**Articles**


Harkness, “Intergenerational Education for an Intergenerational Church?” *Religious Education* 93 no.4 (Fall 1998):431-447.


