

REFORMED SPIRITUALITY COURSE PRESENTED BY REV. DR. SUSAN DEHOFF AND MARK THOMAS, D. MIN.

STUDENT, GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

March 1 – May 31, 2020

At United Presbyterian Church of Whitinsville (51 Cottage St)

12:00-1:00 PM on dates listed below

Faith is composed of *what* we believe and *how* we experience faith. *Spirituality* has to do with the various ways we experience God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Reformed spirituality has to do with the ways we experience our faith within the beliefs and practices reflected in the theology that forms the foundation of our Presbyterian tradition.

The writings of John Calvin form the foundation of our theological beliefs. Most people are aware of the doctrinal beliefs Calvin espoused, but few are aware that half of his theology has to do with the importance of experiencing the Trinity. Our relationship to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are at least as important to our Presbyterian heritage as is the doctrinal tenets of the faith that we believe.

The course on Reformed Spirituality led by Rev. DeHoff and Mark Thomas is comprised of ten one-hour sessions that explore the way Presbyterians through the ages have experienced their faith and lead us to expand and deepen our own experience of our faith. The content of each session is given in the outline below. Sessions will start at noon and finish at 1:00 PM on the dates given.

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| March 1 | Beginnings: John Calvin and the Reformation |
| March 8 | Calvin: The Importance of Prayer and Union With Christ |
| March 15 | Calvin: Belief in Mystical Experiences, or Direct Experiences of the Trinity |
| March 22 | Calvinism: The Truncated Theology We All Grew Up With |
| April 5 | Jonathan Edwards: Piety and Revival of 1734 in Northampton, MA |
| April 26 | Andrew Murray: Reformed Spirituality in the 19 th and early 20 th centuries |
| May 3 | Reformed Spirituality in the 20 th Century: Continuity and Change |
| May 10 | Reformed Spirituality in the 20 th Century: Beliefs and Practices |
| May 17 | Reformed Spirituality in the 20 th Century: Prayer |
| May 31 | 21 st Century Reformed Spirituality: What Is It Like For Us? |

Each session will tie together historical beliefs and practices with our own beliefs and practices. Opportunity will be given during each session to reflect on our own beliefs and practices and to explore ways to broaden and deepen the way we experience and express our faith. Discussion, small group conversations, and hands-on activities will be included.

For more information contact Rev. DeHoff at sldehoff@verizon.net or Mark Thomas at Bookmen3@msn.com.

Information About Presenters



Rev. Dr. DeHoff received her Master of Divinity from Emory University and her Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology and Religion from Boston University. Her honors thesis for the M.Div. looked at the connection between experiences associated with salvation and those associated with Abraham Maslow's concept of self-actualization.

At Boston University Dr. DeHoff focused on the way in which mystical experiences are valid, authentic ways, grounded in Scripture, that we sometimes experience our relationship with God. Realizing that mental health professionals often view such experiences as signs of mental illness, she began working on how to distinguish authentic mystical religious experiences from psychotic experiences. She continued that work in her book *Psychosis or Mystical Religious Experience: A New Paradigm Grounded in Psychology and Reformed Theology*, published by Palgrave-MacMillan in 2018.

In addition to her role as Transition Pastor at the United Presbyterian Church of Whitinsville, Rev. Dr. DeHoff maintains a private practice in pastoral counseling. She is currently researching thoughts on the spirit dimension of human nature for a paper that develops contours and characteristics of the spirit dimension as a dimension of human nature separate from, yet integrated with, the physical and psychological dimensions of human nature.



Mark Thomas received his Master of Library Science from Indiana University and his Master of Arts in Religion from the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary. He is presently a Doctor of Ministry student at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in the Spiritual Formation cohort. In this cohort Mark has dealt with the concepts of spiritual theology and the use of the Bible, prayer, and reflection in Spiritual Formation. Last year as a member of this cohort he had the opportunity to travel to Italy and visit the churches and other sites associated with two members of our common Christian heritage, Benedict and Francis. Mark's research interest centers on whether the practice of praying the divine hours (the monastic practice of praying seven times daily) will increase a person's regularity in prayer.

Mark is Library Director for the Center of Urban Ministerial Education of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Roxbury. Previously he was the Library Director and later part-time history instructor at Cook Christian Training School in Tempe, Arizona. Cook School was founded in 1911 by Charles Cook, the first Presbyterian missionary to the Pima Indians. Cook believed that there was a need for a school to educate Native Americans to serve their local congregations. In the early 2000's the Board decided to close the residential program and use the money to create a foundation which annually awards monetary grants to Native American organizations.

Mark has served the United Presbyterian Church of Whitinsville as a Trustee and is an inactive Deacon and Ruling Elder. Mark currently serves as Chairman of the church's Pastor Nominating Committee.