

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Let me welcome all of you, including four new students and seven graduating students, to the 2023 Fall Term of the Course of Study School of Ohio (COSSO)! We are excited to offer fall term classes in a hybrid format and look forward to meeting you in person on the MTSO campus!

In 1900, 83 percent of the whole Christian population lived in Europe and North America. At present, however, more than two-thirds of all Christians live in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Obviously, during the past century, there was a massive demographic shift in the composition of the Christian church, and Christianity is no longer a Western religion.

Mission used to be from the West to the rest of the world, but now is from everywhere to everywhere. No longer the West is the center of Christianity or missionary sending. Christianity has come to have multiple centers with its mission becoming multidirectional. The countries that used to be a mission field now have become a missionary sending force. For instance, the first Protestant missionary came to Korea in 1884; now, almost one hundred forty years later, South Korea is sending over 30,000 missionaries globally.

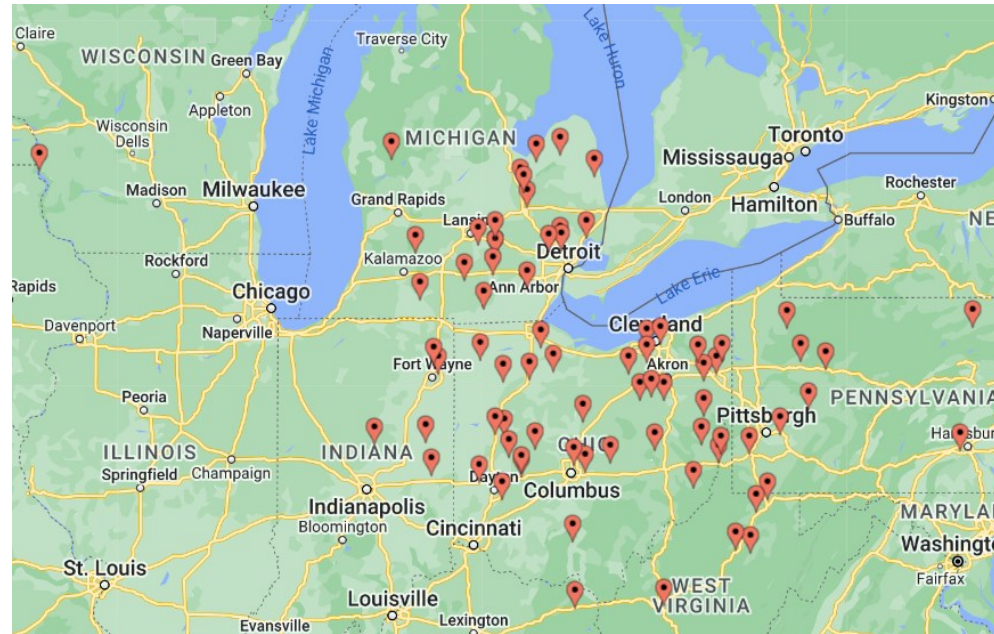
It appears, however, that the churches in North America largely remain unaffected by this massive demographic shift of Christianity. Yet, as the late Wilbert Shenk well put it, “The [crucial] task in the twenty-first century is to conceptualize theology in light of the fact that the Christian faith is global with multiple heartlands” (“Recasting Theology of Mission: Impulses from the Non-Western World,” 105). What is needed on the part of the Western church is humility to be willing to listen to and engage with the voices of the churches in the global South. Resources that “the churches in the West urgently need . . . for responding to the challenge of evangelizing their own culture . . . may well be found outside the West.”

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FROM THE COORDINATOR

COURSE PLANNING NOTES:

- Registration is open for all 2024 classes now. You can find the course planning grid [here](#) to help plan your classes.
- [A draft of the schedule for the 2023 Fall term is posted here](#)
- Students from 9 Annual Conferences are taking classes this term:



Grace Wallace
Coordinator



FROM THE CHOIR ROOM

As the old saying goes, “the one who sings prays twice.” We look forward to singing together soon: the COS choir is still on hiatus as we adjust to returning to meeting in-person.

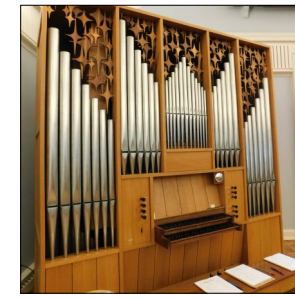


Lori Douglas Weaver, MMEd



COSSO NEWSLETTER

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Course of Study School of Ohio

www.cosohio.org

Term	Class Dates	Registration Deadline	Dorm Availability
2024 Winter	Feb. 16-17 & Mar. 17-18	12/18/23	Online term
2024 Spring	Apr. 12-13 & May 3-4	2/12/24	Online term
2024 Summer	July 12-13 & Aug. 2-3	5/13/24	Online term
2024 Fall	Sept. 13-14 & Oct. 11-12	7/15/24	Available

MEET YOUR INSTRUCTORS



Rev. Dr. Britt Leslie

COS 121 Bible I: Introduction

Dr. Britt Leslie received his Th.M. and Ph.D. from Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. A United Methodist elder, he is currently Adjunct Professor of Biblical Studies at Manchester University in Indiana.

Rev. Dr. Jeff Jaynes

COS 222: Theological Heritage II: Early Church

Dr. Jeff Jaynes received an M.Div. from Fuller Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. from Ohio State University. A Presbyterian elder, he currently teaches Church History at MTSO.



Rev. Dr. Brad Binau

COS 323: Congregational Care

Dr. Brad Binau received his M.Div. from Trinity Lutheran Seminary and his Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary. He is retired Professor of Pastoral Theology at Trinity Lutheran Seminary.

Dr. Sarah Werner

COS 424: Ethics

Dr. Sarah Werner received her M.Div. from Candler School of Theology at Emory University and her Ph.D. from University of Florida. She is Communications/Climate Justice coordinator for Mennonite Church USA and a facilitator in the PATHWAYS Theological Education program.



Dr. Charles (Chuck) Gutenson

COS 522: Theology in the Contemporary Church

Dr. Chuck Gutenson received an M.Div. from Asbury Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. in Philosophical Theology from Southern Methodist University. He is a church consultant, and previously served 10 years at Asbury Seminary, most recently as professor of Theology and Philosophy.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

PRACTICE YOUR SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

"Come to me, all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

"Hey, how are you doing? What's happening in your church?"

How often does that text message show up on your phone? And what's the reply?

"Fine."

Everything is fine - you are fine, the church is fine, everything is fine, even when it is not.

The life of a pastor is rewarding but everything is not always fine. Much of the time the work is isolating and lonely, a time when spiritual practices can be lifesavers.

According to James Finley in *The Contemplative Heart* (Notre Dame: Sorin Books, 2000), a contemplative practice is any spiritual act that awakens us to the holiness of the present moment. Whatever our practice is we must get into the habit of practicing it. The problem is we often make our spiritual practices so cumbersome, so time consuming and rigorous, that we cannot maintain them because there is no time. I have come to believe that we all have a hidden prayer-gene that tells us there is only one way to pray and we are not doing it correctly, not doing enough unless we include scripture, devotional readings, prayer lists, candle lighting, silent meditation, Christian music, and so on. These are all good practices but it would help if we could break out of this mold (all or nothing) and give ourselves permission to "pray as we can, not as we can't" (Teilhard de Chardin). So far, though, most of us cannot free ourselves from this mind set, even though the answer is simple.

As Finley says, whatever your prayer practice is, practice it. Whatever brings you into the presence of the holy, into moments when all other thoughts fall away and you are where you are with no other goal in mind. Your practice does not have to be complicated. It might be some form of meditation, such as sitting in silence or repeating a simple one-word breath prayer, slowly reading scripture, gardening, baking bread, writing or reading poetry/prayers, drawing or painting, sewing, or perhaps running or taking long, slow walks. Your practice may be alone, really alone, without any props or distractions. Or your practice may be spending time with a spiritual friend whose mere presence takes you to a deeper place (see *Anam Cara* by John O'Donohue). It is not so much what your practice is but how it awakens you to God in the present moment, and that is different for each of us.

At any given time, we may have a number of practices but one of them is our path and connects us to the holy. As the months and years go by our spiritual practice may change as our lives change and a new practice may emerge, even one that has been our way of praying for years may become empty. The thing is to be faithful to our practice, one that awakens us to the holy and fits into the limitations of our daily lives. Time is not the key, neither is method, the key is awareness of God in every moment, the sunlight that fills the room, the stars in the sky, the smile that fills our heart with nothing but gratitude. Whatever your spiritual practice is, practice it. It will help lift your burdens and give you rest.

Rev. Dr. Rebeka Maples Spiritual Formation Director



FROM THE DIRECTOR *continued*

I hope that the courses you take at COSSO would help you engage in theological reflection and cultivate missional practices without losing the notion of the global nature of the Christian church and its mission.

All of us on the COSSO staff look forward to journeying with you this term, and pray for God's continued guidance and blessings on you and on your studies and ministry.

Peace,



Dr. Joon-Sik Park

Director of the Course of Study School of Ohio
E. Stanley Jones Professor of World Evangelism
at MTSO



2023 SUMMER 2-WEEK GRADUATE— CONGRATULATIONS!



Melene Wilsey, Michigan Conference