



Doctor of Ministry Praxis Thesis Guidelines

December 2013

The Doctor of Ministry degree is distinctive in that it begins and ends with the consideration of the practices of ministry. It culminates in a praxis thesis which should be original in the sense of advancing the way people think about and practice ministry.

Although much of the work at this stage of the DMin process is done independently, it is initiated by classes designed to facilitate the writing of a praxis thesis. Also at periodic check-points, students' progress toward degree completion is evaluated. This guide details the thesis stage of the DMin process step by step and offers suggestions about writing the proposal and the thesis. Each DMin student has his or her own Praxis Thesis Committee consisting of two faculty members, one of whom has usually served as his or her advisor throughout his or her studies. When in doubt about the process of degree completion, the chair of the Praxis Thesis Committee is the best person to consult. The Director of the DMin Program and Registrar are also good resources. They can be reached respectively at patricia.jung@spst.edu and brenda.barrows@spst.edu.

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PART ONE

SEQUENTIAL STEPS: COURSES AND EVENTS

Pre-Praxis Thesis Evaluation and Assessment

(No credit hours are attached to this program requirement.)

After the completion of sixteen credit hours in the program, but well before the beginning of the Praxis Thesis Seminar, the lead faculty in the student's track (or the Faculty Advisor in the General Track) should initiate this process. The Pre-Praxis Thesis Evaluation and Assessment form can be found on the SPST webpage, under the Registrar's tab, under DMin forms <http://www.spst.edu/DMIN-Forms>. Faculty will distill the basic information provided in the student's academic file and assess general academic progress as well as progress regarding the DMin Program's Student Learning Outcomes. Students are encouraged to complete a copy of this form as a pre-evaluation worksheet for self-assessment purposes, and bring it to this discussion. (NB: The student's self-assessment does not become part of an academic file.) Faculty will discuss their file review with the student. Following this discussion, the faculty and student will complete and sign the form and then faculty will submit it to the Assessment and Compliance Coordinator, who will provide a digital copy for the student and forward the original to the Registrar for placement in the student's permanent academic file. Thus, copies should be given to the student and the Registrar. If the lead faculty (or the Faculty Advisor, for those in the General Track) have serious reservations about the student's ability to complete the program successfully, a copy of the form is also submitted to either the VPAAD (for those in specific track cohorts based in the Greater Kansas City metro area and for all students the General Track) or to the Academic Dean of SPST@ OKC (for those in specific track cohorts based in the OKC metro area). They will investigate the matter further.

DMIN 550 Praxis Thesis Seminar

(1.5 credit hours; graded credit/no credit)

In this course, students learn how to write a praxis thesis proposal and the praxis thesis itself, and to develop a clear timeline for completing the DMin program. The student may also learn how to complete an application for research involving human subjects. (See instructions on human subject research later in this guide.)

Six-year Time Limit and Continuous Registration

Under ordinary circumstances, in order to remain in good standing in the DMin Program students are expected to maintain continuous registration throughout their studies. This means students must be registered for courses or events to which credit is attached (but not necessarily full time) for two semesters every year.

During the course work stage, most students register during the winter and summer semesters. Many students when they enter the Praxis Thesis Stage of the process switch their registration to fall and spring semesters. Students vary in the amount of time they need to draft a praxis thesis proposal. A few students may take DMIN 550 early in the summer and then successfully complete DMIN 552 later that same summer. Most, however, register for DMIN

552 the fall term after completing DMIN 550 in the summer. Still others will fulfill SPST's continuous registration requirement even if they delay registering for DMIN 552 until the following winter semester. The bottom line is this: there is a six-year time limit in which to complete the program and students need to be enrolled for some credit hours for two of the four terms each year in the program (or else apply for a leave of absence). There is one exception to this policy. If all the work on a praxis thesis has been completed and **DMin 555 Praxis Thesis Readiness for Conference Form A** has been filed with the registrar, it is not necessary for the student to register for DMIN 556 in order to remain in good standing while awaiting the conference itself.

Praxis Thesis Committee

This committee is usually composed of the two lead faculty in the student's specific track. For those in the General Track, the committee is composed of the student's Faculty Advisor and an additional faculty member with expertise relevant to the praxis thesis. The student in the General Track and the Faculty Advisor should discuss together the selection of this second faculty member. The Faculty Advisor is the chair of the Praxis Thesis Committee, but both faculty members guide and advise the student in the development of the praxis thesis, and both participate in the Proposal and Praxis Thesis Conferences.

DMIN 552 Praxis Thesis Proposal Conference

(0.5 credit hours; graded credit/no credit)

DMIN 550 Praxis Thesis Seminar is the final "classroom" course in the program. Normally students enroll in DMIN 552 Praxis Thesis Proposal Conference the semester immediately following successful completion of DMIN 550 Praxis Thesis Seminar, and the student proceeds to refine a Praxis Thesis Proposal in consultation with his/her Praxis Thesis Committee. DMIN 552 serves two purposes: to evaluate the student's ability to engage in a theologically informed and contextually grounded investigation of a practice of ministry and to assist the student in preparing to research and write the praxis thesis. At the conclusion of the conference, faculty members of the Praxis Thesis Committee complete the DMIN 552 Form: *Approval of the Praxis Thesis Proposal* and turn it into the Registrar in lieu of a grade narrative form for this course. This form can be found on the SPST webpage, under the Registrar's tab, under DMin forms (<http://www.spst.edu/DMIN-Forms>). Upon successful completion of the Praxis Thesis Proposal Conference, the student becomes a DMin Candidate. If the conference is not completed successfully, the student may register for a second and final attempt to complete DMIN 552.

Writing the Praxis Thesis Proposal

Proposals should be a maximum of ten to fifteen pages in length. The proposal identifies the practice of ministry and the question(s), problem(s) or opportunities that triggered the investigation. It delineates the context for ministry, the student's theological framework and methods, and contributions to the practice of ministry that the student hopes to make. The proposal should identify almost everything central to the actual praxis thesis, but not do the work

of the thesis. For example, if a student plans to use feminist theology to name the dynamics of gender-bias in a particular context, the proposal would name the feminist theologians and methods, explain their relevance, and say a bit about the salient features of this perspective. But, the proposal would not include a complete feminist analysis at this stage.

A Sample Praxis Thesis Proposal Outline

Introduction (approximately two pages)

- ◆ Identify the practice of ministry and the form the investigation will take, explaining the central focus or problem being addressed.
- ◆ Include the thesis statement.
- ◆ Specify the importance of the issue, perhaps with an opening vignette that puts it in context.
- ◆ Give it a working title and name the critical concepts and practitioners to be used in the suggestions for ministry.

Contextual Analysis (approximately one page)

- ◆ Describe the larger context out of which the research question arises.
- ◆ Describe the particular context.
- ◆ Scope – identify what will be included and what will not be included in the research.

Theological and Theoretical Framework (approximately two pages)

- ◆ Identify the primary biblical, theological, prophetic and spiritual traditions, as well as any other theoretical frameworks, relevant to this practice of ministry in general, and to this research project in particular. Explain their relevance.
- ◆ Specify any additional theoretical approaches to be used in your thesis (e.g. psychological, sociological, and/or anthropological methods). Explain why they will be used.
- ◆ In a short narrative, detail the logic of the argument that frames and structures the thesis.

Innovative Practice of Ministry (approximately two pages)

- ◆ The thesis should make a “contribution to both our thinking about and the practice of ministry.” Specify the contribution(s) this thesis will make.
- ◆ Describe the nature of the evidence (i.e., biblical study, data from congregational study, review of literature) that undergirds the proposal for an “innovative practice of ministry.”

Limitations (approximately one page)

- ◆ If the student needs more preparation in certain areas to succeed at the envisioned project, he or she should name them, e.g., in theology, social science, demographics, etc. Indicate how the student will address these problems in the coming months.
- ◆ Set parameters around the investigation. For example, students might note that “in order to fully complete this, I would have to...but for the purposes of this praxis thesis, I will only ...”

Structure of the Outline for the Praxis Thesis (approximately two pages)

- ◆ Create an outline with projected content for each chapter. (One paragraph per chapter. Attached to the primary chapter associated with the field project, if there is one, should be an endnote listing interview questions or other significant details for the sake of the second faculty reader.)

Preliminary Annotated Bibliography (approximately one page)

Work Timetable (approximately one page)

- ◆ Map out a work schedule. Indicate dates for the completion of specific components of the project, including any needed coursework, initial submission of Human Subjects Research application (HSR), chapter drafts, etc.
- ◆ NB: Before the student begins to work on the praxis thesis, approval must be secured for the proposal (and the Human Subjects Research application, if relevant.)

Policy regarding Research with Human Subjects

If the student plans to incorporate insights from a field project involving human subjects, after his or her praxis thesis proposal has been approved it is mandatory to apply for and receive approval from the Human Subjects Research Committee (HSRC) before proceeding. Human Subject Research may include, but is not limited to: participant observation, interviews, oral histories, focus groups, and the completion of questionnaires. Protocol for such research and the relevant application form can be found on the SPST webpage, under the Registrar's tab, at the end of items listed under forms or directly online at <http://www.spst.edu/research-guidelines>.

Steps for Approval of Human Subject Research

1. The student, as principal researcher, completes the SPST form entitled Request for Approval of Human Subjects Research.
http://www.spst.edu/siteresources/data/files/academics/human_subject_research_form_final_version_3.2012.doc
To create a single document, save the application as a PDF file and attach aggregate file of supporting documents.
2. The student sends the completed form to the chair of his or her Praxis Thesis Committee for review and approval. The Praxis Thesis Committee chair will provide the student with initial feedback and review.
3. The Praxis Thesis Committee chair forwards an application he or she has judged satisfactory to the chair of the HSRC for approval.

NB: Although the specific meeting dates vary from year to year, the HSRC generally meets once a month from September through May. (They will not review any applications over the summer.)

4. If the committee requires additional information or clarification, a member of the HSRC selected to serve as a liaison will return the application to the student and to his or her Praxis Thesis Committee chair with comments.
5. Once the student has addressed the concerns raised by the HSRC, the student sends the application back to his or her Praxis Thesis Committee chair for review.
6. If the Praxis Thesis Committee chair judges the revised application acceptable, he or she will forward the revised application to the member of the HSRC who has been assigned to serve as liaison. When approved, the HSRC liaison will notify the student and the Praxis Thesis Committee chair. The student can begin research involving human subjects only after the Research with Human Subjects application is approved by the HSRC. (NB: To continue research beyond the approved time period requires submission of a revised or supplemental application.)
7. The liaison will send a copy of the approved version of the application to the chair of the HSRC and Director of the DMin Program for their records.

Why Is Human Subject Research Committee Review and Approval Important?

Consider the argument for such review provided by the *Belmont Report on Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research*, which is summarized briefly below.

First, it is important to recognize the difference between practice and research.

- a. Standard or accepted practice is oriented primarily to the welfare of the client.
- b. Research is oriented primarily to contribute generalizable knowledge.

Second, it is important to recognize the Basic Ethical Principles relevant to research.

Respect for Persons:

- A person's autonomy should be respected.
- Persons with limited autonomy (e.g., children, prisoners) require special protection.

Beneficence:

- This principle requires *prima facie* that we do no harm.
- This principle requires that we maximize benefits and minimize risks/harms.

Justice:

- This principle requires that we ask:
 - Who ought to bear the burdens of research?
 - Who ought to receive the benefits?
 - How best might the benefits and burdens of research be distributed?
- There are several views of what is "just" in this regard:
 - Equal shares

Individual needs
According to individual effort
According to social contribution
According to merit

The application of these principles has resulted in various common practices or “rules” of thumb which are important to recognize.

Researchers should seek the “informed consent” of their subjects. This involves:

- Providing subjects with all the information a reasonable person would find relevant;
- Verifying the subject’s comprehension of this information; and
- Verifying and documenting the truly voluntary nature of the subject’s participation in the study.

Researchers should assess the risk and benefits associated with their project.

- They should take care of vulnerable populations.
- Information about risks and benefits should be well-publicized (in the informed consent process).

Selection of subjects should be just:

- Some populations – especially institutionalized ones – are already burdened by their infirmities and environments.
- Vulnerable subjects – such as, racial minorities, economically disadvantaged persons, those who are institutionalized – require special protection.

Important Dates to Remember

General Track students and anyone in a track launched from the Greater Kansas City area must submit the penultimate copy of the entire praxis thesis to the Praxis Thesis Committee before February 1, during the year of graduation. (The second reader may have read early chapter drafts, but not the manuscript as a whole.) After both faculty have read the praxis thesis, they determine whether it is appropriate to schedule the Praxis Thesis Conference. If so, they consult with the student about appropriate dates. To graduate, the student must have successfully passed the Praxis Thesis Conference by **March 30** of the graduation year and must also submit to the Registrar a final digital copy and one final paper copy of the praxis thesis by the date graduate grades are due (usually the Monday of graduation week). The paper copy should be printed on acid-free paper, with no holes punched, and should include two signed copies of the signature page (or frontispiece) on acid-free paper. (One signature page will go into the student’s official student file and the other will go with the manuscript to the SPST library.)

Students in a track launched from SPST@OKC must submit the penultimate copy of the entire praxis thesis to the Praxis Thesis Committee before **May 1** during the year of graduation. (The second reader may have read early chapter drafts, but not the manuscript as a whole.) After both faculty have read the praxis thesis, they determine whether it is appropriate to schedule the Praxis Thesis Conference. If so, they consult with the student about appropriate dates. To graduate, the student must have successfully passed the Praxis Thesis Conference by **June 30**

and must also submit a final digital copy and one final paper copy of the praxis thesis by the date graduate grades are due (usually the Monday of graduation week). The paper copy should be printed on acid-free paper, with no holes punched, and should include two signed copies of the signature page (or frontispiece) on acid-free paper. (One signature page will go into the student's official student file and the other will go with the manuscript to the SPST library.)

DMIN 555 Praxis Thesis (DMIN 555A and DMIN 555B)

(two credit hours each; four credit hours total; Graded)

In DMIN 555, the student completes the research for the praxis thesis and the field project, if there is one, and begins to write the thesis. This course is ordinarily taken in two sequential semesters (as DMIN 555A and DMIN 555B, valued at two credit hours each), but may be completed in one term with the approval of the Praxis Thesis Committee chair. In cases where DMIN 555 is completed in one term, it will be valued at four credit hours. However, after the successful completion of the Praxis Thesis Proposal Conference, most students register to take DMIN 555A the following semester. Detailed information about writing the praxis thesis can be found in the next section.

At the end of DMIN 555A, the chair of the Praxis Thesis Committee will assign a grade and give to the student (as well as the Registrar) the grade narrative form detailing the work that remains to be done. If the student is given a grade of B- or better for the course, the student should register to take DMIN 555B during the next semester. (If not, the student may re-register for DMIN 555A or DMIN 555 at the discretion of the Praxis Thesis Committee chair.)

At the conclusion of DMIN 555B, the chair of the Praxis Thesis Committee will assign a grade and give to the student (as well as the Registrar) the grade narrative form detailing the work that remains to be done. If the student is not given a grade of B- or better for his or her course work, the student should register to take DMIN 555 or DMIN 555B during the next semester.

After successfully completing either DMIN 555 or both DMIN 555A and DMIN 555B, the Praxis Thesis Committee chair will submit the **DMin 555 Praxis Thesis Readiness for Conference Form A** to the Registrar. The form can be found on the SPST webpage, under the Registrar's tab, under DMin forms, or accessed online at: <http://www.spst.edu/DMIN-Forms>. At this point, the Praxis Thesis Committee chair may recommend that the student prepare for the Praxis Thesis Conference (next page). If the thesis is judged not ready for conference, the chair will meet with the student to discuss next steps, ordinarily including registration for DMIN 556 Thesis Writing Continuation.

DMIN 556 Thesis Writing Continuation

(1 credit hour – only as needed. Credit/no credit)

If the thesis is not yet ready for conference, students enroll in this course the semester following DMIN555B. As noted earlier, students must stay in continuous registration in order to remain in good standing at SPST. After completing this course, the Praxis Thesis Committee chair will assign the coursework a grade of either credit or no credit and submit the **DMIN 555**

Praxis Thesis Form A: Praxis Thesis Readiness for Conference to the Registrar. The form can be found on the SPST webpage, under the Registrar's tab, under DMin forms, or it can be accessed online at: <http://www.spst.edu/DMIN-Forms>. At this point, the committee may suggest topics for discussion at the upcoming thesis conference, or if the thesis is judged not ready for conference, the Praxis Thesis Committee chair will meet with the student to discuss next steps. Students may repeat this course as often as needed within the six-year time limit for the degree and with the approval of the Praxis Thesis Committee chair.

Praxis Thesis Conference

(No credit; Graded Pass, Fail, or Pass with Distinction.)

This is a three-hour meeting in which the student and his or her Praxis Thesis Committee discuss and evaluate the completed praxis thesis. Successful completion of the conference is a degree requirement (see deadlines for graduation).

Scheduling the Conference:

During the year in which the student plans to graduate, the penultimate copy of the entire praxis thesis must be submitted to the Praxis Thesis Committee chair well ahead – typically no less than six weeks in advance – of a hoped for conference date.

When the chair believes the praxis thesis in its entirety is ready for review by the second faculty member of the Praxis Thesis Committee, he or she will forward it to the other committee member. After both faculty members have read the praxis thesis and determined together that it is appropriate to schedule a Praxis Thesis Conference, they will consult with the student about dates convenient for all. The chair of the Praxis Thesis Committee will set the date, time, and place for the conference, after notifying all parties (including the Registrar) using **DMin 555 Praxis Thesis Form A**, no less than four weeks prior to the conference. With the approval of the Director of the DMin Program and Faculty Chair of the Praxis Thesis Committee, the DMin candidate may invite interested and supportive persons to the Praxis Thesis Conference.

The Conference:

On the conference day, the student should bring either a laptop with a digital copy or a printed copy of his or her praxis thesis, and a printed copy of **DMin 555 Praxis Thesis Form B and DMin 555 Summative Assessment Form**. This form can be found on the SPST webpage, under the Registrar's tab, under DMin forms, or it can be accessed at <http://www.spst.edu/DMIN-Forms>.

Typically, participation is restricted to the student and the Praxis Thesis Committee, but the student may invite a silent peer to offer non-verbal support (e.g., a student currently registered at SPST, not the student's spouse or partner). The student should inform the committee of this invitation in advance. Occasionally, a newly hired faculty member may observe the conference process.

The conference begins with a fifteen-minute private meeting of the Praxis Thesis Committee. During this time, the faculty members finalize their approach to the conference. Shortly thereafter, the student is asked to join the conference.

Most of the conference is devoted to faculty-student dialogue about the praxis thesis. Sometimes students are asked to summarize verbally their research. Questions are diagnostic in nature, but the student may also be asked to discuss future plans regarding this practice of ministry.

At the conclusion of the conference, once again the student is asked to leave the room temporarily and the Praxis Thesis Committee convenes privately to decide if the praxis thesis and conference have been completed satisfactorily, and if so, at what level. The faculty complete **DMin 555 Praxis Thesis Form B** by indicating whether the praxis thesis and the Praxis Thesis Conference together warrant a notation of Fail, Pass or Pass with Distinction. This form is signed and dated by both members of the Praxis Thesis Committee. The student is asked to return to the meeting to receive this evaluation, and sign and date the evaluation form as well. The chair of the Praxis Thesis Committee gives the form to the Registrar. (The title of the thesis is entered onto the student's transcript under DMIN 555 Praxis Thesis. If warranted, a notation of pass with distinction is indicated on the student transcript as well.) At the same time, the Praxis Thesis Committee will complete the **DMin 555 Summative Assessment Form**. After it is discussed, signed and dated, the chair of the Praxis Thesis Committee will give the form to the Assessment and Compliance Coordinator, who will provide the student with a digital copy and forward a copy to the registrar.

Conference Outcomes:

Successful Conference: The equivalent of B- is the minimum passing grade. The student may be required to make modest revisions to the manuscript before presenting final copies to the Registrar.

Recognition of Excellence in the Doctoral Program: For superb academic performance and special contributions to the church, the committee can note that the student's thesis and conference merit the notation of Pass with Distinction. "Praxis Thesis with Distinction" would then be noted on the student's transcript.

Unsuccessful Conference: If the student fails his or her conference, there can be a second, final attempt to schedule a Praxis Thesis Conference. To do this, the student should register for **DMIN 556 Thesis Writing Continuation** the following semester and address the issues raised in the initial conference. NB: A student may not earn a Pass with Distinction during a second Praxis Thesis Conference.

Final Student Obligations:

After making suggested revisions to the manuscript, the student must send electronically to both the Registrar and the Director of the Library one Adobe PDF copy **by the date graduate grades are due** (usually the Monday of graduation week of the campus at which they plan to graduate). The student should provide the Registrar for the official student file with one paper copy each of the title page and signature page, one signed copy of the release form from the Theological Research Exchange Network (TREN), and one initialed and signed copy of the SPST DMin Thesis Copyright and Distribution Consent Form. These forms are available under the registrar's tab on the SPST web page along with other DMin Degree Forms. (Students wishing to have TREN register the copyright of their thesis should contact TREN directly about this matter, following the instructions

on the TREN form.) To graduate, the student must also pay any outstanding financial obligations to the school.

PART TWO

WRITING THE PRAXIS THESIS

The praxis thesis serves three purposes. It investigates a practice of ministry; it analyses that practice of ministry theologically; and it advances the church's thinking about and practice of that ministry.

1. Investigate a Practice of Ministry

The praxis thesis begins with and points toward the renewal of a particular practice of ministry. Though far from an exhaustive list, students could:

- a. Develop and test an administrative policy or polity practice with implications for the larger church;
- b. Identify an unaddressed need in a congregation or denomination, and propose a strategic practice of ministry for meeting that need; or
- c. Analyze an existing liturgical practice or short term mission of the church.

There are many possible ways to investigate the practice of ministry that is the focus of the praxis thesis. For example, one could use human science methods (sociology, ethnography, congregational studies, etc.) or, review the existing literature about a particular practice in order to enhance the church's understanding of that ministry.

2. Interpret and Evaluate Theologically a Practice of Ministry

Students could make biblical, systematic, historical, and/or ethical claims, as appropriate, about the practice of ministry that is the focus of their thesis. This should include critical thinking about and the imaginative construction of new possibilities for that practice. The goal is to link the particular practice to the Christian tradition and current practices of the church in ways that are illuminative and fruitful. For example, a student could critically analyze a tradition in light of contemporary or emergent church practices. Or, a student might constructively argue for the reshaping of current practice in light of fresh biblical interpretations. (Again, these examples are meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive.)

3. Advance the Church's Thinking about and Practice of Ministry

Every thesis should include innovative alternatives to and/or strategic ways of thinking about ministry and explain how these innovations and strategies might transfer to other ministry contexts.

The Praxis Thesis Should Contain:

- A clear and accurate description of the practice of ministry under study;
- A description of the larger context of ministry in which the praxis thesis is developed;

- An analysis of this practice of ministry: a critical and creative engagement of it, informed by authoritative resources, within an explicitly defined theological framework;
- A description of the particular theological framework (its biblical, traditional, etc. components) that informed the above analysis;
- A detailed explanation of the field project, if there is one. This should include:
 - the scope and limitations of the project;
 - a clear description of how the project relates to the overall praxis thesis;
 - a description of the research design for the field project, which may include statistical testing or a variety of other techniques, such as structured interviews, observations, participant response, questionnaires, attitudinal scales, secondary resources, etc.;
 - a description of the actual project, providing sufficient data for the reader to be able to duplicate or adapt the project to another setting; and
 - a clear summary of the project's findings.
 - NB: copies of research instruments and other materials employed by the researcher in the project should be placed in appendices.
- Substantive and integrated insights into the practice of ministry from the theological resources (and field project, if any);
- Innovative recommendations about ways to improve or reconstruct this practice of ministry, within the limits of the study;
- Recommendations for further research into this practice of ministry; and
- A complete bibliography.

Suggested Praxis Thesis Outline

I. Introduction

Introduce the focus and any core concepts important to it. Explain the import of the topic for the church and for the student's specific vocation. Most importantly, introduce the thesis and the question(s), problem(s) and/or opportunities that prompted the study. Identify the major theological and other methodological frameworks within which the investigation takes place. Clarify the theological assumptions and methodological commitments that inform the thesis. NB: The avenues of investigation should directly relate to the central focus of the thesis.

II. Contextual Analysis

Provide the reader with a contextual study of the setting for the particular practice of ministry under investigation. Often this is a congregation, but it may be some other institution or agency. What are the practices, identities, and foundational assumptions of this setting and its members? For example, one might identify the explicit and implicit theological understandings operative within this ministry setting. What are the predominant (and hidden) practices? Where are the points of convergence and divergence between these two? What are the tensions between the self-understandings and practices? Also, provide the reader with a study of the larger context by describing the community or culture(s) that surround it. How does the ministry setting relate to the larger community? What are the issues that predominate in the community and how do they correspond to the student's particular practice of ministry that is the focus of the research?

III. Theological and Other Theoretical Evidence

Constructively engage the specific biblical, systematic, historical, and/or ethical resources that best inform the praxis thesis. The theological literature one uses should be appropriate to the subject and critically reviewed. Its integral role in the argument should be evident. In addition, identify any other resources – from disciplines other than theology, such as, the humanities, the social or physical sciences – that inform the argument. Explain any concepts, themes or theories important to the thesis and state why you are using them.

IV. Proposal for the Practice

Present here a detailed proposal for the way this practice of ministry might be reconstructed. For example, this could include a conceptual description of the model, its major goals and objectives, and the relationship to the problem being addressed.

When the praxis thesis entails the field testing or a trial implementation of this model, consider discussing: the primary strategies embodied by the model; the persons and institutions involved in the testing; and the timeframe and processes involved in this testing. It is often not possible to illustrate all aspects of an innovative model, so the following options are often explored: the thesis could help identify more precisely the roots of the problem being addressed; it could be a feasibility study for the innovative practice of ministry that is needed; or it could implement the first phase of the proposed model, as a kind of illustration.

It is important to indicate what was studied and the procedures employed for this purpose. The research strategies used to achieve these practical goal(s), as well as the methods for evaluating the process and its results, should be delineated in the thesis. The research design may include statistical testing or a variety of other techniques, such as interviews, observations, participant response, questionnaires, attitudinal scales, the review of secondary resources, etc.

Include a step by step description of the process. Usually research instruments and/or summary data should be appended. The student should evaluate what went well and what did not; what was learned from the experience; how the original project plan was modified as the study progressed and why.

V. Implications and Conclusion

This is the section for integrating insights from theological and other theoretical resources with insights gained from the field work. Consider the following questions:

- In light of what has been learned, how might the practice of ministry be modified?
- How has this praxis thesis modified the researcher's theological assumptions, understandings of ministry in general, and the researcher's own call?
- How might ministry in this regard best be improved, expanded or extended?

VI. Bibliography

While it should be complete, this bibliography need not be annotated.

VII. Appendices (if necessary)

Include here documents related to the field project (like questionnaires and consent forms) and charts or illustrations relevant to the central argument.

General Tips for Writing

Develop Your Thesis

- ◆ Though connected to several minor but related ideas, the thesis must concentrate on one central concern. Distinguish what is major from the more minor points. Stay focused.
- ◆ What is the specific practice of ministry under investigation?
- ◆ What is the context?
- ◆ What will be resolved or established? Make a claim about the topic. For example, the topic – “Building a Doghouse” – becomes a thesis when a claim is made: “Building a doghouse is a thorough introduction to the building trades, including architecture and civil engineering.”

Develop an Argumentative Edge

- ◆ Narrow the subject and be clear about what is and is not included in the investigation.
- ◆ Don't say something everyone already knows or is likely to affirm.
- ◆ Take a stand. Make a judgment. Be reasonable but not timid.
- ◆ Acknowledge and refute opposing arguments, by incorporating responses to any legitimate concerns found in them.
- ◆ The introduction should situate the project in its context, build interest, and contain a strong thesis statement.
- ◆ The conclusion should drive the point home, naming the implications, and circling back to the fundamental thesis with a sense of completion.

Helpful Hints

- ◆ Imagine a skeptical reader who asks: “What could possibly lead you to that conclusion?”
- ◆ The hypothesis may need to be revised in light of the research, as the preliminary conclusions may not be proven true. Show that the final version of the thesis is well founded and supported by a congregational study, well-reasoned examples, theological analysis and/or biblical arguments, etc.
- ◆ Use an appropriate tone. Don't be too informal or preachy. Don't shout on paper. Avoid lingo.
- ◆ Proofread! Or hire someone to do it.

Academic Integrity: Policy on Plagiarism

Student Self-Citation

Students are required to submit original work for each course. Students using previous academic work in subsequent courses or degree requirements like the praxis thesis are expected to cite their previous work, as they would cite sources from other authors. This includes actual sentences and paragraphs as well as ideas. Students seeking exceptions to this policy should consult with their Praxis Thesis Committee. (For example, a student wishing to rework a previous paper for a subsequent chapter in the praxis thesis should consult with his or her Praxis Thesis Committee.)

Student Citation of Others

Students are expected to properly document the sources they use in their written work. All words from the source should be quoted and cited, even if it is only one unique word, a phrase, or a model and typology headings. The use of a concept, idea, or fact must also be given recognition. In other words, even a paraphrase would need to be cited, if the idea is taken from a particular source rather than being something that is generally accepted or known. All of these instances would require a reference with a full citation.

Plagiarism

All written work submitted by students is assumed to be their own work prepared for the assignment intended and without unauthorized assistance. Students shall neither give nor receive such assistance. Alexander Lindey defines plagiarism as “the false assumption of authorship: the wrongful act of taking the product of another person’s mind, and presenting [it] as one’s own.” Students are encouraged to consult Joseph Garibaldi, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1995), Section 1.7 on Plagiarism for examples of when citation is necessary, and Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 8th edition, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) for the proper form of citation required at Saint Paul School of Theology.

Any violation of the seminary’s policy on plagiarism will be referred to the Doctor of Ministry Degree Committee and may result in disciplinary action against the student, including, but not limited to, dismissal of the student from the DMin Program.

Form and Style

The primary style guide is Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th edition. Form, spelling, and grammar, as well as content, are taken into account in determining whether a praxis thesis is satisfactory.

Individual Praxis Thesis Committees may provide more specific guidelines on the length they require. The SPST guideline for length is sixty to 100 pages. Appendices and bibliography do not count toward the page limit. A praxis thesis should be organized into several chapters.

Margins: Allow 1 ½ inch margin on the left and 1 inch on the other three sides.

Typeface: Use Times New Roman 12 for text; 10 for footnotes and sometimes for tables.

Set apart quotations should be printed in the same typeface as the text.

Spacing: Double space all text except for block quotations. Single space the table of contents. Single space footnotes and bibliography, but separate the items with a blank line. Indent paragraphs consistently. No extra space between paragraphs.

Pagination:

- ◆ Use lower case roman numerals for the Front Matter.
- ◆ Use Arabic numbers from the first page of the actual text.
- ◆ Place page numbers on each page at the far right of the header or footer.

Front Matter in this order (page numbers are lower case roman numerals)

1. *Frontispiece with signatures:* This is not in the page count. (See sample that follows.)
2. *Title page:* counted as the first page of the front matter, but don't place a number on it. (See sample that follows.)
3. *Copyright page:* counted as the 2nd page of the front matter, but without a number. Simply use this text, filling in your information:
Copyright © 20xx by Your Name
All rights reserved
4. *Dedication:* a student may wish to acknowledge someone important in their life or work by typing: To John, for example. There is no page number, but include this page in the total page count. Place the text one-third of the way down the page, centered, no terminal punctuation (see Turabian p. 379).
5. *Table of Contents:* Do not list anything that precedes it. For all pages that follow the contents page, list only the first page of that element. SPST preference is for sub-headings within the chapters (see the example in Turabian, figure A.4, p. 382).
6. If there are many figures, tables, or illustrations, create a separate contents list for each (see Turabian, pp. 383-385).
7. *Preface* – optional. Used to describe the reason for the study, scope of research or any background. Can also include acknowledgment of the faculty committee.
8. *Acknowledgments* – optional. Used to thank anyone who supported the research or gave special assistance. This is also the place to give acknowledgment for permission to use copyrighted materials.
9. *List of Abbreviations* – optional (see Turabian, pp. 386-87).
10. *Glossary* – optional (see pp. 386 & 388).
11. *Abstract:* maximum of 100 words.

Back Matter in this order (see Turabian, pp. 398-401)

1. Illustrations
2. Appendices
3. Glossary
4. Endnotes (Use endnotes only if your Praxis Thesis Committee prefers this format.)
5. Bibliography

Headings

Headings should be used for chapter divisions (such as, Introduction, Chapter One, or Bibliography). Begin two inches from the top of the paper and center it, using arabic numbers (if needed). The chapter title follows the chapter number after a blank line. Leave two blank lines

between the chapter title and the first line of text (see Figure A.9, Turabian, p. 392). NB: At the conclusion of each chapter, begin the text on a new page.

Subheadings are formal divisions within chapters. One could use multiple levels of headings (first, second, third, etc.). The typography and format should vary between levels, with level one (the highest) most visually prominent (see Figure A. 2.2.4, Turabian, pp. 391-93).

Signature page

**Called to Community:
Building a Community of Clergy**

A Praxis Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Saint Paul School of Theology
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by
Cynthia C. Thompson

Kansas City
March 23, 2010

Dr. Sondra Matthaehi, Chair

Dr. Nancy Howell, Committee

Date

Date

Title Page

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Footnotes and Bibliography

SPST uses the “Notes-Bibliography” format detailed in Turabian chapters 16 and 17 – not the “Author-Date” style. Footnotes are preferred to Endnotes, but consult the DMin Praxis Thesis Committee. Here is a quick online reference tool:

http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html

Footnotes Format

- ◆ Within the text, put the superscript number at the end of the sentence containing the quotation or idea, following punctuation.
- ◆ In the footnote section at the bottom of each page, indent and type the number in regular typeface with a period and a space between the number and the text of the note.
- ◆ The footnote should begin on the same page as the textual reference.
- ◆ Restart each chapter with note 1.
- ◆ If a note includes a citation and a comment, put the citation first and follow it by a separate sentence with a comment (see Turabian, p. 158).
- ◆ After a reference has been cited in full, use a shortened form the next time (see Turabian, pp. 158-61 and consult the DMin Committee).
- ◆ Use *Ibid* when the note immediately following is from the same source (no italics, add a period). List the page number after a comma unless it is the same page.
- ◆ When quoting directly from the Bible, use a parenthetical citation in the text or a footnote (see Turabian, pp. 189-90). Abbreviate the names of the books and include the translation, e.g. “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28, NRSV). (See Turabian, pp. 339-42).
- ◆ In the place of publication, include the abbreviated state or country if the city is not well-known, or if there may be more than one city by that name (see Turabian, p. 175).
- ◆ If there are several publication dates, list the most recent (see Turabian, p. 176).

Bibliographical Content and Format

- ◆ Include every work cited in the text and also works that were useful in stimulating ideas or providing background.
- ◆ Arrange the list alphabetically by the (first) author’s last name. Invert the name (e.g., Smith, John), unless the author is an organization.
- ◆ When listing more than one work by the same person, arrange the entries alphabetically by title (ignoring “the” or “a”). For entries after the first one, use a long dash instead of the author’s name (see Turabian, pp. 151-52).
- ◆ Format each entry as a “hanging indent,” which means the first line is flush-left, but the 2nd and 3rd lines are indented.

Sources that do not need to be listed in a bibliography, but should be footnoted:

- ◆ Well-known dictionaries and encyclopedias;
- ◆ Unpublished personal communications and interviews; blogs and postings; and
- ◆ Live performances.

Listing online sources is tricky. Read Turabian pp. 139-42 & 181-87 & 197-205.

Examples of Proper Footnote Format (see Turabian, chapter 17)

Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Vintage, 2010), 183-84, Kindle.

Arna Bontemps, ed., *Great Slave Narratives* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 35-36.

The United Methodist Church, *Book of Discipline* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 2000), 16.

Francoise Giroud, *Marie Curie: A Life*, trans. Lydia Davis (New York: Holmes Publishers, 1986), 16.

John Bright, *Jeremiah*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 60.

M. Eugene Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck, vol. 8 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 106.

Louis Zukofsky, "Sincerity and Objectification," *Poetry* 37 (February 1931): 269, quoted in Bonnie Costello, *Marianne Moore: Imaginary Possessions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 78.

Charles Wesley, "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing," in *The United Methodist Hymnal: Book of United Methodist Worship* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 57.

It's a Wonderful Life, directed by Frank Capra (RKO, 1946), DVD (Sony Pictures, 2006).

Thijis Booij, "Psalm 141: A Prayer for Discipline and Protection," *Biblica* 86, no. 1 (2005): 100, accessed May 15, 2013, <http://www.bsw.org/?=71861&a=Ani02.html>.

Garry Wills, "The Words That Remade America," *New York Times*, May 7, 2000.

Afrah Daaimah Richmond, "Unmasking the Boston Brahmin: Race and Liberalism in the Long Struggle for Reform at Harvard and Radcliffe, 1945-1990" (PhD diss., New York University, 2011), 211-12, accessed September 25, 2012, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

Young Ho Chun, THL 520 class lecture (Kansas City: Saint Paul School of Theology, March 1, 2013).

Carol Diamond, telephone interview by author, June 27, 2000.

Oxford English Dictionary. 3rd ed., s.v. “mondegreen,” accessed March 1, 2013, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/251801>.

Examples of Proper Bibliographical Citations (see Turabian, chapter 17)

Isabel Wilkerson. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration*. New York: Vintage, 2010. Kindle.

Bontemps, Arna, ed. *Great Slave Narratives*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

United Methodist Church. *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*. Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 2000.

Giroud, Françoise. *Marie Curie: A Life*. Translated by Lydia Davis. New York: Holmes Publishers, 1986.

Bright, John. *Jeremiah*. Anchor Bible. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965.

Boring, M. Eugene. “The Gospel of Matthew.” In *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, edited by Leander E. Keck, vol. 8, 89-505. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994.

Wesley, Charles. “O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing.” *The United Methodist Hymnal: Book of United Methodist Worship*, 57. Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 1989.

It’s a Wonderful Life. Directed by Frank Capra. RKO, 1946. DVD Sony Pictures, 2006.

Booij, Thijs. “Psalm 141: A Prayer for Discipline and Protection.” *Biblica* 86, no. 1 (2005): 90-110. Accessed May 15, 2013, <http://www.bsw.org/?=71861&a=Ani02.html>.

Wills, Garry. “The Words That Remade America.” *New York Times*, May 7, 2000.

Richmond, Afrah Daaimah. “Unmasking the Boston Brahmin: Race and Liberalism in the Long Struggle for Reform at Harvard and Radcliffe, 1945-1990.” PhD diss., New York University, 2011. Accessed September 25, 2012, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

CREDITS

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Sources:

Baker, Sheridan. *The Longman Practical Stylist*. New York: Pearson Education, 2006.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*, 8th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

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<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html>