

The STM in Rural Ministry and Community Development: Investing in Mission

“God so loved the world” Jesus says in John 3:16. Our mission is into that world, making disciples and helping our communities become places that reflect the reign of God, and are infused by the life shared by Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The STM in Rural Ministry and Community Development is intended to equip your pastor with additional tools for stimulating the mission of your congregation in your community. This degree has a particular, though not exclusive, focus on churches located in smaller centres where social networks are complex and overlapping.

Your pastor will be working with other clergy in a cohort over 3 years to identify areas for enhancement of their ministry and vitalization your congregation. He or she may do a single large project (thesis) in which they investigate some element of your congregation and its context, or may elect to do several smaller projects as part of their course assignments.

In addition to theological and pastoral resources, we will draw on the skills of the emerging community development network in Alberta (Augustana and Roger Epp have been instrumental in this), the new centre for Public Centre at the University of Saskatchewan and other centres in Canada and the U.S.

This STM is a new venture for our seminary and the Saskatoon Theological Union. We hope that you will consider joining us. We are willing to invest our own time in support, teaching and gathering of resources. We are asking you to invest some of your pastor’s time. It will require three 5-day periods each year plus a reduced load on either side of those periods. Before each course some reading needs to be done (about 20 hours) and afterward there will be an assignment which may be done over a couple of months but should involve about forty hours in total. It may be that this time can be fit into time that your pastor is already using for reading and professional growth, but likely there will need to be some adjustment of responsibilities during those times.

One of your pastor’s responsibilities is to share their work with you—talk about what they are learning, what possibilities it might have for your work and ministry. Your pastor may invite you to participate directly in their research. This degree is not intended to be private learning but rather a public strengthening of the ministry in your context. Because this is graduate work some aspects of your ministry will be “cutting-edge”—work that others haven’t done in the same way or context. We hope that you will become a congregation willing to share the resulting experience and expertise with other churches.

Out of this we hope to have a western Canadian church with strong pastors, equipped to lead our church “in mission for others” –which is our ELCIC focus for the next few years.

Cam Harder
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