

ENGAGING THE GLOBAL CHURCH (M.Div. 3 and Diploma in Ministry)

*For students of The Presbyterian College, the intercultural learning experience involves a study tour to Cuba, the cost of which is partially underwritten by student fees. The majority of the cost of the tour, however, is covered through a generous contribution from **Presbyterians Sharing**.*

Each year, students in the Master of Divinity program (Year 3) and the Diploma in Ministry program are required to participate in a study tour that brings them into dialogue and conversation with the global church. Historically this study tour has taken students to Mexico or Cuba for encounter with local congregation members, church leaders, theological students, and community organizations. For the 2018-2019 academic year, some students will participate in the Cuba Study Tour, while others will participate in alternative programming arranged by their college.

This intercultural learning experience is an important part of the ministry of the Montreal School of Theology, both in terms of its educational and transformational potential, but also for the role it plays in connecting the school with global and ecumenical partners. Other Canadian participants from outside the MST context may also participate in the study tour. This diversity of faith perspective and life experience greatly enriches the quality of the learning, reflection, and sharing that take place during the tour.

The primary goal of the study tour is to have students reflect on the nature of the church, and the meaning of mission, outside of their own context – as a basis, also, for reflecting on these *within* their own context.

Objectives of the study tour:

The objectives of the global study tour are:

- To encounter the realities of being the Church in a markedly different global context than our own
- To engage in theological and sociological dialogue with Christian theologians, ministers, lay people and seminarians preparing for and living out ministry in a different global context
- To ground understanding of what it means to be the Church living out God's mission in a practical experience of meeting and talking with those whose contexts substantially differ from our own
- To reflect on how culture and context shapes our understanding of the Church, the Gospel and mission.

As a result of the study trip, students will be able to:

- Compare and contrast their understanding of ministry, the Gospel, and the Church through listening to stories of faith, struggle and celebration in another context and culture
- Discuss what it means for the Church to live out God's mission in the world
- Identify ways in which their own story of faith has been shaped by and interacts with their own culture and context
- Differentiate how the Gospel is understood in different global contexts

- Integrate their reflections and experience with their theology of ministry.

Required Assignment

It will be most helpful, perhaps, to first indicate what this assignment is not. This is not an opportunity to provide general comments about your impressions of the study tour, of the context visited, or of the people encountered; nor is it an opportunity simply to enumerate the many encounters or excursions that constituted the study tour.

As you approach this assignment, you should have the following three broad areas of reflection in mind, or in the back of your mind: (i) The meaning/content of the Gospel, (ii) the nature of Christian mission, and (iii) your own faith and call to Christian ministry. That is, your reflections in this paper should in some way bring you through or back to these foundational questions.

The Paper

The paper should be 5-7 pages in length (not less than 1,300 words).

Select two or three experiences, encounters, or questions that were particularly salient for you during the study tour, and briefly describe each. Do *not* spend more time/space than is absolutely necessary to narrate events. Take the following questions as a guide for how you might reflect personally and theologically on the specific experiences, encounters, or questions you have chosen – of course you are not required to answer all of these questions, and there may be other questions you articulate for yourself.

- During the tour were you personally challenged by some theological, historical, cultural, or ecclesial question? What further reflection might you undertake for deeper understanding or growth in relation to that personal challenge?
- How has your understanding of mission been enriched or challenged? How do your thoughts or insights translate into the Canadian context, and what makes such translation difficult?
- Are there scriptural texts that help illumine your experience, encounter, or question? Is there some text that you might/must now understand differently?
- How do social, political, historical or economic realities affect the shape of Christianity (ministry, gospel, church, worship)?
- Where have you seen evidence of the presence of Christ? How does your own history and context make it difficult to discern the presence of Christ in the encounter or experience you have described? Or does it?
- What is the gospel of Jesus Christ? How has your understanding of the gospel been shaped, or what questions about your understanding have been raised?
- How, or in what way, did you experience the presence of God? How has God surprised you?

This assignment is intended to provide an opportunity for substantial personal, cultural, and theological reflection. It will be submitted to the instructors of the Church and Mission course, and evaluation will be provided in the context of that course.