"The mission of Tyndale Seminary is to provide Christ-centred graduate theological education for leaders in the church and society whose lives are marked by intellectual maturity, spiritual vigour and moral integrity, and whose witness will faithfully engage culture with the Gospel."

Semester, Year	WINTER, 2027
Course Title	**BUILDING THE CHURCH THROUGH SMALL GROUPS**
Course Code	CHED 0663 NP / PAST 0644 NP / SPIR 0644 NP
Date **Time** **Delivery Format**	January 4 – 8, 2027 **MONDAY – FRIDAY** From 9:00 am to 4:00 pm IN-PERSON ONLY
Class information	The classes will be in-person from Monday to Friday from 9:00am to 4:00pm each day.
Instructor	**W. DEAN BURSEY, EdD** Email: dbursey@tyndale.ca **URIAH POND, EdD** Email: upond@tyndale.ca
Office Hours	By appointment only.
Course Materials	Access course material at classes.tyndale.ca or other services at Tyndale One. Course emails will be sent to your @MyTyndale.ca e-mail account only.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the basic principles for building and understanding the dynamics and problems of small groups. Specific attention will focus on leadership.

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Examine the importance of small groups and of small group leaders to building community within the congregation, including how small groups align with one's philosophy of ministry, in a reflective paper.
2. Assess the role of small groups and small group leaders in the following, through in-class discussions and reflection:

    - Biblical literacy,
    - Spiritual formation,
    - Pastoral care, and
    - Integration of diverse ministries within a congregation
3. Identify and critique the creation and use of small groups, and the development of lay leadership in the local congregation, through readings and discussion.
4. Co-create a training program for small group leaders.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. REQUIRED READING

Atkinson, Harley T. *The Power of Small Groups in Christian Formation*. Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2018. ISBN 978-1-5326-3463-5

Donahue, Bill and Russ Robinson. *Building a Life-Changing Small Group Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. ISBN 0-310-20595-6

Hartwig, Ryan T., Courtney W. Davis, and Jason A. Sniff. *Leading Small Groups that Thrive: Five Shifts to Take Your Group to the Next Level*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020. ISBN 978-0-310-10670-8

Webb, Heather. *Small Group Leadership as Spiritual Direction: Practical Ways to Blend an Ancient Art into your Contemporary Community*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005. ISBN 0-310-25952-5

B. SUPPLEMENTARY / RECOMMENDED READING AND TOOLS

Tyndale recommends STEPBible – a free and reputable online resource developed by Tyndale House (Cambridge, England) – for word searches of original-language texts, as well as for topical searches, interlinear texts, dictionaries, etc. Refer to the library for other online resources for Biblical Studies.

C. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

1. Critical Book Review: 30%

Read the four required textbooks, and provide a one-page critique of each, focusing particularly on one critical issue as it relates to small groups. This assignment is related to Outcome #3.

Basis of grade: This grade will reflect engagement with the textbooks and scholarly critique of an issue discussed in each book. The paper should demonstrate understanding of the issue. It should

argue a position clearly and concisely. Simply repeating textbook content without critical debate will lower this grade.

Due: February 12, 2027

2. Reflective Paper: 20%

Write a 3-page paper on your philosophy of ministry and how small groups fit within your philosophy. This assignment is related to Outcome #1.

Basis of grade: This grade will reflect the integration of small groups into the student's approach to ministry. The paper should clearly and concisely articulate a philosophy of ministry and illustrate how small groups may be integrated. It should demonstrate an understanding of the course content. Simply making general comments about ministry and small groups without any contextual integration will lower this grade.

Due: February 19, 2027

3. Major Project – Leadership Training: 50%

With your class 'small group', complete **one** section of 'Leadership Training for Small Group Leaders', reflecting careful thinking and the scholarly literature you have examined. Your group will contribute one section to the leadership training program, which is to be designed in such a manner that it could be used as a training workshop without further development. You are encouraged to collaborate with other groups on the overall design of the training to reflect good instructional pedagogy, and to be creative and complete in the training content. This assignment is related to Outcome #4.
(Further details and a training outline will be provided in class.)

Basis of grade: This grade will reflect engagement with course materials and other scholarly literature to contribute to the leadership training. The paper should demonstrate understanding of the course materials and other scholarly literature. It should show evidence that all individuals in your 'small group' have contributed to your section, and that the small groups have collaborated to make the leadership training cohesive and complete. Simply repeating course or other content without critical adaptation to context will lower this grade.

Due: March 05,2027

Penalty for late submission:

Late Papers and Extensions Policy from the Academic Calendar will be applied.
Since Assignment #3 (Major Project) is a group assignment, no extensions will be granted for this assignment.

Grading rubric will be posted on classes.tyndale.ca.

D. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation is based upon the completion of the following assignments:

Assignment	Due Date	%
Required Reading and Book Review	Feb 12, 2027	30 %
Reflective Paper	Feb 19, 2027	20 %
Major Project – Leadership Training	Mar 05, 2027	50 %
Total Grade		**100 %**

IV. COURSE SCHEDULE, CONTENT AND REQUIRED READINGS

The tentative course schedule is provided below. However, adjustments may be made to accommodate in-class discussions and activities.

Day 1

- Purpose of small groups, including their role in discipleship through Christian education, pastoral care, and building community
- Design and administration of a small group ministry within a congregation

Day 2

- Curriculum for small group ministry, including worship, prayer, teaching, pastoral care, and service

Day 3

- The nature of groups, including life-cycle, group dynamics, etc.
- Discipleship and evangelism through small groups

Day 4

- Facilitating small group meetings, including conflict resolution

Day 5

- Small group leader training
- Coaching

V. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, Holly Catterton, and Christine Lawton Ross. *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012.

Arnold, Jeffrey. *The Big Book on Small Groups*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004.

Arrow, Holly, Joseph E. McGrath, and Jennifer L. Berdhal. *Small Groups as Complex Systems: Formation, Coordination, Development, and Adaptation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000.

Astley, Jeff. *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening and Learning in Theology*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Atkinson, Harley T. *The Power of Small Groups in Christian Formation*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018.
Bennett, Diana C. *Renewing your Church through Healthy Small Groups*. Lexington: LTI Publications, 2016.
Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community*. New York: HarperCollins, 1978.
Cloud, Henry and John Townsend. *Making Small Groups Work: What Every Small Group Leader Needs to Know*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.
Creech, R. Robert. *Family Systems and Congregational Life: A Map for Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019.
Donahue, Bill and Russ Robinson. *Building a Life-Changing Small Group Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.
Donahue, Bill. *Leading Life-Changing Small Groups*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.
Donahue, Bill and Greg Bowman. *Coaching Life-Changing Small Group Leaders*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2012.
Estep, James R. and Jonathan H. Kim. *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010.
Everist, Norma Cook. *The Church as Learning Community: A Comprehensive Guide to Christian Education*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002.
Fisher, Roger and William Ury. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In*, 2nd ed. Toronto: Penguin Books, 1991.
Ford, David G., Joshua L Mann and Peter M. Phillips. *The Bible and Digital Millennials*. London: Routledge, 2019.
Gangel, Kenneth O., and James C. Wilhoit, eds. *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Spiritual Formation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994.
Gladen, Steve. *Leading Small Groups with Purpose: Everything You Need to Lead a Healthy Group*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012.
George, Carl F. *Nine Keys to Effective Small Group Leadership*. Mansfield: Kingdom Publishing, 1997.
Hartwig, Ryan T., Courtney W. Davis, and Jason A. Sniff. *Leading Small Groups that Thrive: Five Shifts to Take Your Group to the Next Level*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020.
Hellerman, Joseph H. *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Christian Community*. Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2009.
Illeris, Knud. *How We Learn: Learning and Non-learning in School and Beyond*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2017.
McAlpine, Bill, Joel Thiessen, Keith Walker, and Arch Chee Keen Wong. *Signs of Life: Catholic, Mainline, and Conservative Protestant Congregations in Canada*. Toronto: Tyndale Academic Press, 2021.
Ogden, Greg. *Transforming Discipleship: Making Disciples a Few at a Time*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2016.

Oliver, Eddie. *Inspiring Connection: Small Groups where Everyone Matters*. Life-Giving Conversations Press, 2019.
Ott, Craig. *Teaching and Learning Across Cultures: A Guide to Theory and Practice*. Grand Rapids: MI: Baker Academic, 2021.
Search, Bill. *The Essential Guide for Small Group Leaders*. Carol Stream: Christianity Today, 2017.
Stone, Douglas, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen. *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*. Toronto: Viking, 1999.
Webb, Heather. *Small Group Leadership as Spiritual Direction: Practical Ways to Blend an Ancient Art into your Contemporary Community*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.
Werntz, Myles. *From Isolation to Community: A Renewed Vision for Christian Life Together*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022.
White, Allen. *Leading Healthy Groups: A Guide for Small Group Leaders*. Allen White Consulting, Inc, 2018.
White, Allen. *Leading Online Small Groups: Embracing the Church's Digital Future*. Allen White Consulting, Inc, 2020.

VI. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL COURSES

A. EQUITY OF ACCESS

Students with permanent or temporary disabilities who need academic accommodations must contact the Accessibility Services at the Centre for Academic Excellence to register and discuss their specific needs. *New students* must self-identify and register with the Accessibility Office at the beginning of the semester or as early as possible to access appropriate services. *Current students* must renew their plans as early as possible to have active accommodations in place.

B. REQUIREMENTS FOR LIVESTREAM INTERACTION (*SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE COURSE ONLY*)

- Livestream attendance for the entire duration of the class at announced times
- Headphones (preferred), built-in microphone, and web-camera
- Well-lit and quiet room
- Stable high-speed internet connection, preferably using an Ethernet cable over Wi-Fi
- Full name displayed on Zoom and Microsoft Teams for attendance purposes*
- A commitment to having the camera on to foster community building*

**exceptions with permission from professor*

C. GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTIONS

Tyndale University prides itself in being a trans-denominational community. We anticipate our students to have varied viewpoints which will enrich the discussions in our learning community. Therefore, we ask our students to be charitable and respectful in their interactions with each other, and to remain focused on the topic of discussion, out of respect to others who have committed to being a part of this learning community. Please refer to "Guidelines for Interactions" on your course resource page at classes.tyndale.ca.

D. GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

Grading Rubric

Please consult the rubric provided for each assignment on your course resource page at classes.tyndale.ca.

Academic Integrity

Integrity in academic work is required of all our students. Academic dishonesty is any breach of this integrity and includes such practices as cheating (the use of unauthorized material on tests and examinations), submitting the same work for different classes without permission of the instructors; using false information (including false references to secondary sources) in an assignment; improper or unacknowledged collaboration with other students, and plagiarism (including improper use of artificial intelligence programs). Tyndale University takes seriously its responsibility to uphold academic integrity, and to penalize academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Academic Integrity website for further details.

For proper citation style, consult Citation Guides for different styles. Students are encouraged to consult Writing Services.

Students should also consult the current Academic Calendar for polices and expectations on Attendance and Classroom Expectations, Academic Honesty, Gender Inclusive Language in Written Assignments, Late Papers and Extensions, Return of Assignments, and Grading System.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Tyndale Seminary's Academic Calendar provides a definition and broad descriptions of types of Academic Dishonesty using AI.

Academic dishonesty includes the submission of work for which previous credit was given, the submission of work under one's own name that is largely the result of another person's efforts, aiding another's dishonesty, cheating on exams and giving false information for the purpose of gaining admission, credits, etc. … Academic dishonesty also includes submitting academic work which has been written, rewritten, or substantially edited by an artificial intelligence program. (Seminary Academic Calendar, 2026/7, p. 173.)

AI programs are not adequate information sources for academic writing. Students should not use AI in academic writing without explicit permission from their course instructor. Given the tendency of AI programs to give inaccurate information and even falsify citations, students are cautioned against using AI prompts to begin researching or summarizing a topic. Instructors may deduct points from [or give a failing grade to] assignments for the improper use of AI sources. (Seminary Academic Calendar, 2026/7, p. 174.)

Students *may* use AI as an enhanced search engine, provided they are extremely careful about checking its sources. That means personally verifying texts and claims *every time* by clicking through to the source link or independently searching. This also means public information sources like Wikipedia are not satisfactory sources. We recommend using sites like Google Scholar or the variety of journal and research databases available with a Tyndale student ID.

Students *may* use AI to transcribe interviews, videos, or dictations of their own ideas when preparing for assignments. But they must read through the transcripts themselves and *manually* verify accuracy, make selections to quote, or edit for concision and clarity. This use of AI is reserved only for ideas that students have created themselves. Students may not submit course lectures, videos, or other course material to AI or any other software to transcribe, synthesize, annotate, or otherwise summarize course content.

Students *may not* use AI in any aspect of the planning and writing process for class assignments, including but not limited to early planning, ideas, outlining, argumentation, grammar, syntax, or phrasing. Struggling with all this is fundamental part of human learning. This struggle is precisely what develops writing ability and is essential to developing critical thinking and communication skills. If further clarification is required, students should ask their professors, not an AI assistant.

Students *may not* use Grammarly or similar AI copyediting programs, including Copilot in Microsoft Word. Tyndale students are expected to write with sophistication in English. Use of a LLM to edit/re-write/re-phrase/alter student work will be viewed as a breach of the Tyndale AI policy. Students should also be aware that many of these programs can/will change student ideas without permission or notification and should be careful to turn off any generative AI features in any software they use for course assignments.

Special Note:
Students should carefully discern and justify any use of AI tools. Convenience, efficiency, academic pressure, lack of time or even health issues are not sufficient reasons to rely on AI. If personal or external difficulties affect your work, you should first speak with your instructor before using AI assistance. Your personal formation, theological reflection, and authentic engagement with the course remain the priority in completing assignments.

Some course professors may allow AI use for specific projects within specific limits. All Seminary syllabi (or course pages on Moodle) will contain guidelines for permitted uses of AI. When using AI for any professor-approved application in assignments, students should save all rough work and earlier versions of their assignments before editing. Students may be required to produce these versions on request. The name of the AI software used must be noted (Claude, ChatGPT, etc.) including the specific version number and model of that software, and the specific text of all prompts employed to get the results must be reported in the submitted assignment.

TURNITIN Text-Matching Software

Tyndale has a subscription to Turnitin, a text-matching software that ensures the originality of academic writing and verifies the proper citation of all sources. The instructor for this course will use Turnitin for assignments submitted through your course resource page at classes.tyndale.ca. Upon submission, you will receive a summary that includes your submitted files along with a similarity report generated by Turnitin. Please be aware that Turnitin can also detect AI-generated content from tools like Grammarly, so students should be mindful of when using such software. It's advisable to confirm with your instructor before using any AI tools into your assignments. Below are some useful resources:

- Student Guides for Turnitin via classes.tyndale.ca course resource page
- Interpreting Similarity (Guide, Video, Spectrum)

Research Ethics

All course-based assignments involving human participants requires ethical review and may require approval by the Tyndale Research Ethics Board (REB). Check with the Seminary Dean's Office (seminaryoffice@tyndale.ca) before proceeding.

Late Papers and Extensions Policy

All papers and course assignments must be submitted by the due dates indicated in the course syllabus. Unless the instructor already has a policy on grading late papers in the course syllabus, grades for papers submitted late without an approved extension will be lowered at the rate of two-thirds of a grade per week or part thereof (e.g., from "A+" to "A-," from "B" to "C+"). Please note that some programs, such as cohort-based or intensive courses, may follow a different policy due to the nature of the program.

Faculty may not grant an extension beyond the last day of exams for the semester. Requests for extensions beyond this date must be addressed in writing to the Registrar by filling out the Extension Request Form. The application will be considered only in cases such as a death in the family, medical emergency, hospitalization of oneself or immediate family member or prolonged illness requiring treatment by a physician. Factors such as assignments for other courses, holidays, and technology-related difficulties are insufficient grounds for requesting an extension.

A temporary grade of incomplete ("I") may be granted by the Registrar. Once an extension is granted, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor and make satisfactory arrangements to complete the outstanding work. A grade of "F" will be recorded for students who do not complete the outstanding work by the deadline.

E. COURSE EVALUATION

Tyndale Seminary values quality in the courses it offers its students. End-of-course evaluations provide valuable student feedback and are one of the ways that Tyndale Seminary works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student's learning experience. Student involvement in this process is critical to enhance the general quality of teaching and learning.

Before the end of the course, students will receive a MyTyndale email with a link to the online course evaluation. The link can also be found in the left column on the course page. The evaluation period is 2 weeks; after the evaluation period has ended, it cannot be reopened.

Course Evaluation results will not be disclosed to the instructor before final grades in the course have been submitted and processed. Student names will be kept confidential, and the instructor will only see the aggregated results of the class.

F. LIBRARY RESOURCES

Tyndale Library supports courses with e-journals, e-books, and the mail delivery of books and circulating materials. See the Library FAQ page.

G. GRADING SYSTEM & SCALE

For each course's grading rubric, please refer to your course syllabus or classes.tyndale.ca. For general grading guidelines, refer to Seminary Grading System & Scale.