

Portfolio example

Appendix D

Sample Course Learning Narrative Based Upon the Course: Ethics in the Christian Tradition

Course Purpose & Objectives:

To develop the student's ability to summarize, formulate, and evaluate the key facets of Christian morality and examine with sensitivity some of the modern ethical issues of our time.

Topic paragraph:

I was ordained as a deacon in the United Methodist Church in 1969 and as an elder in 1976. In 1974, I was appointed as the associate minister at the Magnolia Park United Methodist Church of Burbank, California, where I served until 1978. From 1978-1990, I served as senior pastor of the St. James United Methodist Church in Pasadena, California. In 1990, I was appointed to the First United Methodist Church of Canoga Park where I have served to the present. I have worked within the community in issues of ethics and moral criteria for organizations and public discussion. I have also been a part of denomination committees in which I served in reviewing ethical concerns of ministerial members.

Learning Narrative: The setting in which this learning took place was as a seminary student from 1968-1974 and as a full-time ordained minister appointed by the area Bishop of the United Methodist Church and under the supervision of the presiding District Superintendent. My three churches from 1974 to 1995 cover the period under which the application of my learning occurred. The qualifications under which my seminary training occurred were through Fuller Theological Seminar of Pasadena, California, and the School of Theology at Claremont, California, which are both accredited seminaries of the Association of Theological Schools, as well as the Senate of the Board of Higher Education of the United Methodist Church. The further area in which context this learning occurred was the actual practice of ministry in which I have been involved the last twenty-one years (Concrete Experience).

Within the twenty-one years I have served full-time as a United Methodist Church minister, I have had the opportunity to integrate my ethical/ theological training into the total fabric of my church ministry. I have counseled and taught Bible studies and teaching programs within the church in the area of ethical responsibility of personal action. I have used the highest possible ethical instruction within counseling as I have directed singles and couples to consider the moral implications of such issues as abortion, sex outside marriage, drug use and addiction, alcoholism, and homosexuality. I am a biblical counselor who believes that moral behavior is dependent upon Scriptural mandates and guidelines. I have used my practical university and seminary courses in ethics and philosophy to present a reasoned, as well as godly, perspective to the ethical decisions of our day. In all of my ministerial duties I was expected to have a firm grasp of biblical ethics, an ability to apply that foundation practically to the church and my congregation, and to not only speak but to live by my statements of ethics and morality. I have also been trained in Active Parenting Today, which has the philosophy of bringing families together for parents of two to twelve year-olds. Through my training in this area, I am licensed to lead Active Parenting Workshops which have the intention to direct

parents to teach, train, and lead their children in making ethical decisions and choices that will develop human potential through the family structure and prepare children to survive and thrive in society. This has been an important tool I have used to work with my parents and children in my present church setting. Through my learning situation within my congregations, I have discovered the importance and necessity of all actions to be handled ethically and morally for the sake of the witness~ of the church and Jesus Christ. This has had an effect of great consequence in the churches where I have served. In twenty-one years, I have had no serious ethical or moral issue arise in any of my churches. I believe that what congregation sees in their leaders is what it will also produce. I did not start my ministry at the same place where I am now. I have grown, developed, and matured in the entirety of my ethical and moral formation and have become convinced that I am far closer to the mind of Christ in my ethical life than I have ever been (Reflective Observation).

In 1987, I was a panelist on a cable television program in Los Angeles on the issue of Homosexuality and the Church. I represented the Biblical understanding and guidelines for proper sexuality and the definition of homosexuality as sin. I approached the subject from the primary source to the rational and sociological implications for our denomination to retain the words of our Discipline of the United Methodist Church which states that homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. It was apparent from this forum that others were arguing for the acceptance of homosexuality outside the delimitations of the Bible and on purely emotional grounds. There is a dearth of solid Biblical exegesis and ethical formation regarding many top moral issues of our day. I believe I have contributed in my area to the greater understanding that social and church decisions must be based on solid hermeneutical principles that bring out the ethical implications of biblical morality within our world.

Col. Ronald Risley appointed me, because of my expertise in this area, in May of 1995, the President of State of California Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, to the post of Chairman of the Ethics Committee for the State of California. I also serve as the State Chaplain of the California State Society of the Sons of the American Revolution to give spiritual direction and an emphasis of God and country within the State Society. In addition, I was appointed in January 1995 to serve as a member of the California State Society of the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution's Task Force for Factual History. In this capacity I have been working nationally with this committee to critically review the changes in national history standards for grade school education. This has required me to analyze and reflect with task force members on the ethical and moral implications of our founding forebears religious principles in light of the continuing moral decay in our nation. These positions have afforded me the opportunity to affect statewide some essential and important moral issues to a wide constituency of persons who are concerned with the erosion of historical and ethical standards in our country (Abstract Conceptualization).

The foundation for my theological expertise began in seminary and was developed through my pastoral ministry. In my many years in the local church, I have been able to fully reflect, articulate, and apply my theological learning into effective ministry and ethical formation. In my work on the California-Pacific Annual Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, I served on the Conference Relations Committee. This is the highest-ranking committee of the Conference and deals with relations of ministers to the Conference; this entails interview and review of ministers in the areas of incompetency, sexual promiscuity, and moral issues. On this committee of twelve other ministers, I served to help to interpret and reflect upon the discipline of the church, the moral teaching of the denomination, and the ethical stance of

Scripture to make decisions regarding ministerial ethical standards. In many difficult situations between colleagues I knew well, I had to direct my vote to reflect first the biblical mandates of ethical standards before either emotional and friendship issues. I was known on the committee as one who always asked biblical questions and expected biblical answers from those who served the church, the Bible, and Christ. I found myself at times at odds with my colleagues who desired me to take a less ethical stand for the sake of expediency or the reputation of well-liked fellow clergy. However, as I told the committee, I asked no less or more from any colleague before the committee than I asked for myself. These experiences have been tremendous growth opportunities for me ethically (Active Experimentation).

As I seek Ethics in the Christian Tradition to be deleted from my core through portfolio learning experience, I feel that my seminary training, parish and denominational experience have given me twenty-one years of focused and reflective theological/ ethical background that covers broadly as well as specifically every aspect of this course. I continue to be an active learner in this area and read extensively in Christian ethics as part of my personal continuing education program.