

**Logsdon Seminary Spiritual Formation Colloquium  
at the South Texas School of Christian Studies  
Student Handbook**

**Welcome!**

Welcome to a new semester of Colloquium. Your degree plan for Logsdon Seminary requires either two (Master of Arts in Family Ministry) or four (Master of Divinity) semesters of Colloquium. But Colloquium is so much more than an academic requirement! Colloquium is. . .

**Spiritual formation:** In class, we often talk ABOUT God, a necessary practice in keeping with our calling, but Colloquium gives us the opportunity to talk TO God as we ask the Spirit to mold us into God-shaped people.

**Community formation:** We at Logsdon/SCS are a community, dedicated to loving God with all our minds. When we worship together, loving God with all our hearts as well, we experience the sense of union that makes us more than a group of individual students and professors.

**Traditional formation:** There are certain acts, habits, practices that help us mark the blessed boundaries that make Logsdon/SCS a unique place. From our liturgical responses in worship to the ringing of Big Ben at meal times, these small steps remind us that we are part of a cloud of witnesses that reaches back through our school's history and reaches ahead to those who have not yet arrived. We receive this institution as a GIFT FROM those who came before and sacrificed to create it, and as a STEWARDSHIP TO those who will come after us and need what Logsdon/SCS has to offer.

**Liturgy**

*“Liturgy is a form of ministerial humility.” – N. T. Wright*

*And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. – Luke 4.17*

Scholars debate the point but it is possible that Jesus did not select the text for his inaugural sermon! He seems, instead, to have submitted to the set schedule of readings used in the ancient synagogue. . .and discovered the passage that pointed most eloquently to his calling. Sometimes we gain the greatest freedom in worship by submission to the pattern of worship.

We acknowledge that Christian congregations worship in many ways, all legitimate expressions of the church's praise to God. In Colloquium, we emphasize liturgical and contemplative worship, and so we ask you to submit yourself to the pattern that is in place. Within a basic framework of Scripture reading, congregational responses, prayer, song and benediction, we pray you will feel a great freedom to respond with voice and body.

## **Scripture Reading**

*He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. – Luke 4.16*

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus' first act in declaring the Kingdom of Heaven is to read the Scriptures aloud in the worshiping assembly. Christians believe the Scriptures contain the authoritative revelation of God. For this reason, we invite each student in turn to enter the earthly ministry of Christ by reading the Bible aloud.

Because this is a moment of divine revelation, and not a mere religious routine, we approach it as a joyous and solemn responsibility. *The Rule of St. Benedict*, Chapter Thirty-Eight, declares that the reader should not be "anyone who happens to take up the book," but one specially designated each week. The *Rule* further states that the reader should "ask all to pray for him that God may keep him from the spirit of pride."

The reading of the Bible is, in some ways, the most important act of worship. In music, we sing words about God. In preaching, we speak words about God's Word. But when we read Scripture, we speak and hear the very words of Our Lord. For this reason we ask that all students read the attached guidelines, "The Public Reading of Scripture." At the most basic level, we ask that you stand upright behind the podium, state the Scripture reading clearly and with no preliminary remarks, and read the passage in a firm and audible voice. Please do not ask the congregation to stand or to find the passage in their own Bibles. It will be printed in the weekly Colloquy and those wishing to do so have ample opportunity to locate it.

Because we believe that the entire worshiping community should recognize the voice of God in the reading of Scripture, our reader will conclude the passage by saying, "The Word of the Lord," and we invite the congregation to reply, "Thanks be to God."

To know when it is your turn to read Scripture, please see the Spring 2013 lectionary below.

## **Sounding the Seasons**

This is a new feature in our Colloquium worship. We will pair the Scripture with a poetic reflection on the week's reading. These poems come from the sonnet collection, *Sounding the Seasons: Poetry for the Christian Year* by Malcolm Guite.

## **Benediction**

We close each Colloquium service with a benediction, a word spoken in faith to express the blessing God promises through Scripture. The benediction takes its message from the week's Bible reading, turned into a statement of the gift of God expressed there. We invite you to stand to receive the blessing. If you wish, you may hold your hands out, palms up, in a gesture of receiving, as an act of faith and prayer that God will indeed impart the blessing named.

## **Kitchen Service**

*“Let the brethren serve one another, and let no one be excused from the kitchen service except by reason of sickness or occupation in some important work. For this service brings increase of reward and of charity.”*  
– *The Rule of St. Benedict*

Jesus served his disciples at the Passover table and beside the Sea of Galilee. Jesus asked to be served in the Upper Room following his resurrection. Christians have long understood that service at table is one of the deepest acts of Christian love. For this reason, we set Colloquium students in service groups. The members of each group rotate between a month of serving the lunch meal, a month of sending emails expressing gratitude to those who provided the meal, and a month of rest.

Because this is an act of Christian service, love, and formation, and not a mere technique for taking care of an unpleasant task, we approach it as a matter of prayer and a matter of community. Chapter Thirty-Five of the *Rule of St. Benedict* prescribes set prayers for those taking up the office of service and those laying it down. At the start of each rotation, the outgoing Serving Group and the incoming Serving Group will come to the platform and pray in the following manner:

Outgoing Group: “Blessed are You, O Lord God, who have helped and consoled me.” (Repeated three times) The remainder of the community replies, “Amen” after the third repetition.

Chaplain: “Be dismissed from your service with God’s blessing.”

Incoming Group: “Incline unto my aid, O God; O Lord, make haste to help me.” (Repeated three times) The remainder of the community replies, “Amen” after the third repetition.

Chaplain: “Take up your service with God’s blessing.”

In order to know when it is your group’s turn to serve, please see the schedule below.

## **Saying “Thank You”**

Jesus expressed joy at a small display of gratitude, and shock at a breach of the same act of courtesy. (Lk 17.17-18) For this reason, we ask our students to take turns saying “Thank you” to those who provide our weekly chapel meals. These meals come from various local churches and individuals who cheerfully offer their time, abilities, and money to bless us. We will provide the email address of the principle contact person where possible. Please take just a moment – preferably on the day of the meal – to say a personal word of gratitude to these wonderful Christian sisters and brothers.

In order to know when it is your group’s turn to say thank-you, please see the schedule below.

## **Table Fellowship**

How we act when we eat together tells the world who Christ is. Our table manners literally proclaim or pervert the Gospel. Though the church at Corinth had many flaws and failures, Paul tells them that it is discourtesy at a meal which disqualifies them from truly observing the Lord's Supper. (1 Cor 11.20-22) For this reason we approach our meal together with a few simple guidelines:

### Assembly in the Refectory

We ask that as soon as the service ends all students move quickly to the refectory in Room 101. If you linger, it takes longer before your fellow-students can begin serving the meal, which means it is longer before they themselves can eat and begin to clean up. Please bear in mind that our servers have class to attend as soon as the Colloquium period ends and that the longer the meal takes, the more likely they are to be late. For this reason, please delay your conversation until you reach the dining room.

### Big Ben

Dr. Ben Lawton was one of the founding professors of the South Texas School of Christian Studies. Dr. Lawton was a career missionary who founded the Baptist Seminary in Italy. One of the gifts he left to the School upon his retirement was a bell which now hangs in Room 101, which we use as our refectory. Students enter the dining room and stand behind their chairs. When all are assembled, President Celelli or the senior faculty member present rings Big Ben. At this point conversation ceases and we have our prayer for the meal. When the prayer concludes, all may be seated and wait to be served.

## **Attendance**

Because Colloquium is a requirement on all degree plans, we take attendance. You will find a roll sheet at the back of the auditorium each week. Please check the appropriate box to mark your presence. *Students must attend a minimum of ten out of the twelve Colloquium services to receive credit for the semester.* Please take note of your absences.

## THE PUBLIC READING OF SCRIPTURE<sup>3</sup>

*“...devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture...” ~ 1 Timothy 4:13b (NIV)*

Thank you for your willingness to read the Scriptures publicly! It is a great privilege and honor to read the Word of God to the people of God and because it is such an important part of the life of our community. We want to help you to do a great job of ministering to your professor and fellow students. Please consider the following instructions as you prepare for the public reading of Scripture.

### I. PREPARATION

The following is adapted from an article by Tim Challies.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Understand**

In order to read a passage well, you first need to understand it. You need to understand the genre, the tone, the purpose for which it was written, and at least have a general comprehension of what the passage means. Is this a triumphant passage proclaiming the glories of God? Is this a poetic, meditative passage reflecting on pain and persecution? Is this God speaking to man or man speaking to God? Is this a story or a letter? What is God seeking to communicate to us in it?

Once you have been assigned a passage, spend at least a few minutes ensuring that you understand it. If this is an unfamiliar passage to you, and you have difficulty understanding it, it may be useful to read the passage in a couple of other translations or to do a little bit of research. If in doubt, ask someone!

#### **Practice**

Once you have a basic understanding of the passage, you will need to practice reading it. As you read you will be trying to understand its flow, to understand any natural divisions and to ensure that you know how to pronounce every word.

Because you will be reading out loud, will need to practice out loud. Read the passage from beginning to end until you are confident that you will be able to capture its flow—at least 5 or 6 times.

As you practice, learn which words or phrases you will need to emphasize, find natural places to pause and look for places where you will need to increase or decrease volume. Practice varying your tone and pace, but be careful that you do not become an actor delivering a dramatic presentation—this is not Shakespeare! Your

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<sup>3</sup> This document is a modified version of one created by Logsdon/SCS student Matthew Singleton.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.challies.com/articles/the-public-reading-of-scripture>

task is to read the Scripture in a way that aids understanding but without drawing attention to yourself. You have succeeded well if people are drawn to the Word of God and take no notice of you!

If you encounter any difficult names, places or other words, you can visit [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) and listen to any passage and in most translations in order to find a specific pronunciation. Make sure you practice those difficult words enough times that you will not hesitate on them during the service.

Know in advance what you will say by way of introduction and conclusion. Generally the task of the Scripture reader is simply to read the Bible and not to editorialize (“It’s a beautiful day, isn’t it?”).

## **Reading**

At the appropriate time in the service, walk to the front without hurrying, turn to face the church and open your Bible to the passage. Stand tall without slouching. Hold your Bible in your hand instead of resting it on the pulpit. Hold it high enough that you can look over it to make eye contact with the people you are reading to. Use your other hand to guide your reading, if necessary. Begin by announcing the passage, including the translation from which you are reading: “Our Scripture reading today comes from John 3.16. I will be reading from the New American Standard translation.” As often as possible, raise your eyes from the Bible to look at the people. Read ahead a little bit so you can make eye contact in those moments that your mouth catches up with your brain. Try to keep a good, natural pace. Your tendency will probably be to read a little bit too quickly. Through it all, remember that you are reading for the benefit of the church, so serve your brothers and sisters by reading God’s Word *to* them.

At the end of the passage pause for a moment before offering the responsory, “The Word of the Lord,” then wait for the people to reply, “Thanks be to God.”

## **Common Mistakes**

Here are a few common mistakes that you should be aware of.

***Too Fast!*** - Do not be surprised if you find yourself a little bit nervous at least the first few times you read. This nervousness typically causes people to go too quickly—to run to the front, to speed read, and to run back to the safety of the chairs. When in doubt, slow down.

***Not Enough Preparation*** - Do all you can to prepare properly. God’s Word deserves our best efforts. If you are halting and stumbling and mispronouncing words, you are not serving your brothers and sisters as well as you could. But, if this happens after much preparation then don’t worry about it. You did your best and that’s what God desires.

**Preacher Voice** - Be careful not to fall prey to that strange habit of sing-songing the passage. Use a projected, but natural voice. Be you. Read to people like you want them to understand, not like you are revving an engine.

**Too Quiet** - The key to good vocal projection is to take a good breath (not gasp!) before your first word and then to use the diaphragm to push the sound forward out of your mouth. Read like you are trying to help the man sitting at the back wall hear you without amplification. As for amplification, it may sound loud to you, but you will need to learn to trust the volume to the sound operators. Speak fully and loudly and confidently.

**Without Feeling** - Do all you can to “feel” the text as you read it. Having prepared so well, you will already understand much of what it says. Let the Truth impact and interact with you as you read it.

**Too Much Feeling** - While you want to “feel” the text as you read it, be careful that you do not become an actor performing a dramatic recital.

**Soft Balloon** - One funny habit some people develop is getting the first third of the sentence well-projected, but trailing off to a near-whisper by the last third. Pace your expiration so that your vocal chords are still moving by the end of the phrase and sentence.

**Lack of Herald** - The reading of God’s Word is to call people to action. You have something to say and you can expect those within earshot to give it attention. This is primarily a frame of mind in the reader, but anything less subtly communicates disinterest.

## II. TRANSLATION

You may read from any translation you choose. Please inform the congregation of the translation you are using: “Our Scripture reading today comes from John 3.16. I will be reading from the New American Standard translation.”

## III. PRESENTATION

Here is a transcript of what this might sound like:

*“The Scripture reading for today comes from Luke chapter 2, verses 8-12. I will be reading from the King James Version.”*

*“Luke, chapter 2, verses 8 -12...”*

*“The Word of the Lord.” (“Thanks be to God.”)*