

Lifelong

collaborate

*sustaining excellence
in ministry*



revitalizing
renewing
regaining

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS
PROFESSIONAL FRIENDSHIPS
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES
CREATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING
STIMULATE LEARNING
COLLEGIAL DIVERSITY

INTENTIONAL

*reflection
find camaraderie*

Learning

COLUMBIA
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

Sustaining excellence in ministry is an ongoing challenge. How can you revitalize your ministry and experience the renewing energy of Sabbath? In the hectic pace of everyday life, how do you find time for intellectual stimulation and study? How do you develop your capacity for compassionate service? As life becomes more uncertain and complex, how can you develop the kinds of professional friendships that will sustain you? S³—Sabbath, Study, and Service—provides a unique opportunity for you to address these questions.

WHAT IS THE S³ PROJECT?

S³ is a collaborative, small group, action-learning project that will help sustain excellence in your ministry. You and your peer group develop and implement a year-long learning project focused on an area of Sabbath, Study, or Service.

If selected to participate in the program, you and your peer group will be invited to Columbia's campus for an orientation event. With the help of project support staff, you will complete plans for your

project, participate in a variety of orientation activities, set up a network of support, and help develop effective ways to evaluate this innovative style of learning. Approved peer group projects will receive funding through the grant, which will provide \$500 of support per person per year for the two years of the group's learning project.

Collaborating on a learning project of your own design is an effective way to apply what you have learned directly to your ministry. For busy pastors, this type



SABBATH ENCOMPASSES REST, RECREATION, AND RENEWAL IN ADDITION TO THE RICH TRADITION OF SABBATH-KEEPING IN THE CHURCH'S HISTORY.

STUDY CENTERS ON THE CULTIVATION OF KNOWLEDGE IN A PARTICULAR AREA OF INTEREST.

SERVICE INVOLVES ACTION FOR THE WELLBEING OF OTHERS, BEYOND ONE'S SPHERE OF SELF-INTEREST.

of learning is practical and rewarding. The S³ logo symbolizes the exponential increase in learning that is possible when peer groups of pastors engage collaboratively in a learning project that is focused directly on their ministry.

The S³ Project is a lifelong learning program of Columbia Theological Seminary and is sponsored by the Lilly Endowment as a part of their “Sustaining Pastoral Excellence” initiative. Since 2003, 44 groups and 272 individuals have participated in the S³ project. The project will accept up to six groups (up to 36 individuals) per year.



WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

To participate in the S³ Project an applicant must:

- Serve as an ordained pastor or church professional engaged in ministry and be in good standing with a denomination
- Participate as a member of a peer group of four to six clergy.
- Make a commitment to participate in the program for the length of the project (approx. 18 months from application to completion).
- Agree with the established project policies and guidelines.

WHAT IS A PEER LEARNING GROUP?

A peer learning group consists of four to six individual pastors who agree to engage collaboratively in a year-long intentional learning project of common interest, designed to strengthen their ministry by focusing on aspects of Sabbath, Study, and Service.

HOW CAN I FORM A PEER LEARNING GROUP?

Seek out colleagues with whom you will be able to learn and interact during the project. In forming groups you will want enough diversity to ensure a stimulating learning experience and enough similarity to work together effectively. Think creatively about ways that you could build a group to participate in S³.

WHAT ARE SOME TYPES OF PEER LEARNING PROJECTS?

Design your learning project to meet the needs of your group. Within the framework of Sabbath, Study, and Service, a broad range of topics might be considered. For example, you and your group might want to focus on a specific practice of ministry such as spiritual formation, administration, preaching, new church development, or pastoral care. Or you may be more interested in congregational life, ministry of the laity, education, teaching, or mission and outreach. How you want to learn is as important as what you learn. Your group might want to attend workshops, preaching clinics, conduct discussion sessions based on reading, attend seminars, engage in online learning,

or attend traditional classes together. The proposal for your group's learning project will describe your plan for learning and the goals you will achieve.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS OF PARTICIPATION?

Your biggest cost is the investment in time and energy that you will make to be a part of a peer group. Because this time is an investment, you may want to check with your family or congregation since your participation might affect them.

If your application is accepted, the project will fund the costs of

implementing your group's learning plan by providing annual support of \$500 per person in the group for one year. The project will also cover room and board (double room and on-campus meals) during the annual retreat held at Columbia Seminary.



“LEARNING IS AN ETERNAL CONVERSATION ABOUT THINGS THAT MATTER, CONDUCTED WITH PASSION AND DISCIPLINE.... [IT IS] THE PASSIONATE AND DISCIPLINED PROCESS OF INQUIRY AND DIALOGUE... THE DYNAMIC CONVERSATION OF A COMMUNITY THAT KEEPS TESTING OLD CONCLUSIONS AND COMING INTO NEW ONES.”

— PARKER PALMER, *The Courage to Teach*, 1998, p. 104

WHAT CAN I GAIN AS AN S³ PARTICIPANT?

Although each participant's experience will be different, the following are among the outcomes that you might expect as a result of participation in the project:

- Knowledge and skills which apply to your ministry
- Professional friendships with colleagues in ministry
- Practical assistance in addressing pastoral opportunities and challenges
- Intentional reflection on your call to ministry
- Creative approaches to ministry
- Stimulating learning experiences

- Deeper understanding of practices and skills to sustain effective pastoral ministry in a rapidly changing world
- New collegial relationships with other peer groups from many denominations and regions

WHAT DOES PARTICIPATION IN THE S³ PROJECT INVOLVE?

For most participants, the S³ project involves a number of common experiences:

- Attendance at the annual S³ Retreat at the beginning and end of your project.
- Completion of a Peer Group Learning Project Proposal.
- Participation in a cohort group as outlined in the group's project proposal.

- Submission of group progress reports outlining the activity and reflection of the group.
- A written group evaluation of the cohort's learning experience submitted upon completion of the project.
- Funding by the S³ Project of \$500 for each participant in a peer learning group.



HOW DO I APPLY?

In order to participate in the project, you will need to apply as an individual and as a peer group. Each individual must complete the Individual Application for participation in the project. In addition your potential peer group must also complete a Peer Group Application. If you are already in an existing clergy group, you are eligible to apply as long as you follow the guidelines and policies of the project. The project committee will give preference to peer groups and individuals who have not participated in the S³ project or other Lilly Endowment funded Sustaining Pastoral Excellence-funded projects.

WHEN IS THE APPLICATION DEADLINE?

Deadline for applications to be received to participate in the 2010 cohort is **September 28, 2009**. Successful applicants will be notified by October 16. If your group is selected, you will be required to attend the S³ Project Retreat to be held at Columbia Theological Seminary, **February 2-4, 2010** and then again in **February 2011**. The S³ Project will cover the program costs of the annual retreat (double room and board on campus. Each participant is responsible for incidental expenses including transportation; some assistance with transportation may be available on an as-needed basis. Groups accepted into the project will receive more information about how to apply for assistance following acceptance.

FOR APPLICATION MATERIALS, questions, or further information, please contact:

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S³ PROJECT COORDINATOR

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Serving the church since 1828

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S3 Project Application

S3 Project requirements for peer learning groups:

- ❖ Complete applications for individual and peer group project participation.
- ❖ Develop a structured, intentional peer group learning plan following the project orientation. This plan is created collaboratively with your peer group and in conversation with project staff. Each peer group final learning plan must be approved by the S3 Project Committee prior to receiving grant funding.
- ❖ Implement the learning plan, completing project reports in a timely way.
- ❖ Meet together regularly during the project.
- ❖ Attend the Annual S3 Project Retreat while your group is a part of the project. (The S3 Project covers cost of program, double room and on-campus meals; some assistance with transportation may be available for those accepted into the project). Each participant is responsible for incidental expenses.)
- ❖ Maintain financial records of project expenditures funded by the S3 Project.
- ❖ Complete final written evaluation.

Instructions for completing application

There are two applications forms: an individual application required of all participants and a peer learning group project application required of each group:

- ❖ In the Group Application you are asked to describe your group's learning project. It is expected that descriptions of learning projects made in the initial application may change or expand as the group works on their project plan during the annual retreat.
- ❖ Complete all questions, noting the word limits indicated. Please be concise. Use additional space as needed.
- ❖ Applications should word processed, saved as a Word or RTF file and sent electronically to ericksons@ctsned.edu.
- ❖ Print and sign individual applications. The Group Project application should be signed by the contact person.
- ❖ The original, signed documents must be submitted electronically and postmarked no later than Sept. 28, 2009, to Sarah F. Erickson, S3 Project Coordinator Director of Lifelong Learning Events Columbia Theological Seminary, 701 S. Columbia Drive, P.O. Box 520, Decatur, GA 30031. The S3 Project Committee will review applications. Successful applicants will be notified by Oct. 16, 2009.

S3 Project Peer Group Project Application

Name of proposed project or peer group

a. Who is a part of your peer learning group?

(Four to six participants. Attach completed individual S3 Project Applications for each participant.)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

b. Who is the primary contact person for your group?

c. Has your group functioned as a group before? _____ If yes, for how long? _____

d. Briefly describe your group. (15 words maximum)

e. Describe your group's idea for a collaborative learning project. (75 words maximum)

f. How does your project address the broad themes of the S3 Project: Sabbath, Study, and Service? (75 words maximum)

g. The S3 Project requires peer groups to meet together regularly during their participation in the project. Given variables such as time, distance, resources, and learning goals, how does your group plan to fulfill this requirement? (50 words maximum)

h. What outcomes or results do you expect from your participation in the S3 Project? (50 words maximum)

i. Assuming your application and subsequent learning project proposal are successful, in general, how do you plan to use the funds available to you as a part of this project? (50 words maximum)

j. Why is participation in the S3 project important to your group? (50 words maximum)

k. How might the focus and implementation of your group's peer learning project contribute to other pastors who are seeking to strengthen their ministry? (50 words maximum)

My signature below indicates that the members of the group listed above have reviewed the information provided in this application and share the perspectives voiced in this document.

Signature of group contact person

date

I have talked with my family members about participation in the S3 Project, and they are supportive. Yes _____ No _____ If no, please explain.

I have discussed my participation in the S3 project with the appropriate lay leader of my congregation, and he or she is supportive. Yes _____ No _____ If no, please explain.

I have discussed my participation in the S3 Project with the appropriate judicatory official in my denomination, and he or she is supportive. Yes _____ No _____ If no, please explain.

Signature of applicant date