

PROFESSOR TEACHES ONLINE COURSE RE-THINKING CHURCH

American Protestantism is facing a perfect storm—and the Rev. Dr. Edwin van Driel, Directors' Bicentennial Associate Professor of Theology at Pittsburgh Seminary, has some important ideas about how we should address the crisis. He will present them in *Re-Thinking the Church*, an online, Continuing Education course taking place from Jan. 19-Feb. 13, 2015.

"A couple of years ago," notes Edwin, "I published an article in *Theology Today* about the unity of the church. Many in our culture think about the church as a voluntary organization, but I proposed instead to think about the church as grounded in God's covenant of baptism."

Edwin recognized that the problematic posture of voluntarism with respect to the church has joined growing insecurity about the church's place in secularized Western society, ongoing internal conflicts and debates, and a heritage of individualism to tear the fabric of denominations and local congregations. "But if our unity is not a voluntary one based on our common convictions, rather, one based on our being called together by God in our baptism, how does that new understanding affect the way we deal with disagreements in the church? And as in our baptism we are united with Jesus in his resurrection, could this provide new hope that counters our anxieties about the church's future?" Edwin was so interested in answering these questions that he wrote a manuscript on the subject (see [**The Future of the Church**](#)).



And now he is leading a class on this topic. Rather than offering quick-fix thinking, the four-week course aims at helping pastors and Christian leaders imagine new possibilities for the life of the church in this confusing context. Because the class is offered online, students will be able to participate at their convenience.

A native of the Netherlands and now an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA), Edwin is deeply concerned with the recurring conflicts and schisms in mainline churches. He has responded by providing leadership not only in the academy through his articles, books, and manuscript, but also in the church through projects promoting unity. One such project consists in the PCUSA's new songbook, *Glory to God*, for which he served as primary writer of the songbook committee's Theological Vision Statement and A Statement on Language. And as a professor and mentor of future pastors and Christian leaders representing a wide variety of church traditions at Pittsburgh Seminary, for three years he oversaw the revitalization of our chapel program.

"I am looking forward to interacting with current ministers of the gospel in *Re-Thinking the Church*," says Edwin, "because that process promises not only to support them in their ministries, but also to sharpen my own thinking and approach to the vital issues threatening the church today, so that I will continue serving as an optimally effective teacher of the pastors and Christian leaders of tomorrow—pastors and Christian leaders who nurture a unified Body of Christ called together by God in our baptism."

Interested in the online class *Re-Thinking the Church*? [**Check out the website for more information and to register.**](#)

Additionally, Edwin wrote more on the subject of re-thinking church in the December 2014 issue of *Presbyterians Today*. [**Read the full article.**](#) Used with permission.

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