

McManus' leadership class energizes Golden Gate students

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MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Passion. Creativity. Revolution. Change. This is the vocabulary of Erwin McManus, pastor of Mosaic, an innovative Southern Baptist congregation in Los Angeles.

Ninety students attended a ministry leadership course McManus taught at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary's San Francisco-area Mill Valley campus during the January term, with students traveling in from the seminary's other four campuses throughout the West.



Erwin McManus, pastor of the groundbreaking Mosaic in Los Angeles, shares his leadership principles with students at Golden Gate Theological Seminary.

"This is the biggest class we've ever had at Golden Gate, as far as I can tell," said Wayne Womack, interim registrar at Golden Gate. The course had to be moved from a 50-person classroom to the chapel.

McManus, breezing into class, looking much like a student wearing jeans with coffee in hand, held the seminarians' attention with his energy and storytelling as he brought a fresh perspective to basic leadership principles and cutting-edge methods.

"Spiritual leaders," McManus stated, "are essentially cultural architects who shape their culture."

Ministry leadership is a required course for most GGBTS students, but many chose to enroll in this particular section because they wanted to learn from McManus.

Andrea Coletta, of the Mill Valley campus, became excited after having read McManus' books. "He's a great man to learn from, and I have a lot to learn," Coletta said.

Jay Lee, from the Southern California campus in Brea, was impressed with McManus' passion, how he "brings a different perspective that I don't hear in my Chinese church."

An Arizona campus student, Ryan Smith, categorized McManus as a true innovator in the Christian community, one who isn't afraid "to say what we're all thinking. He sees what we need and he just says it."

Mill Valley student Debbie Porter was afraid that being in such a large class would feel impersonal. "McManus is all about discussion," Porter said. "He had us break up in small groups often to discuss things, and we were all so into it that lots of the groups just kept on talking long after the class was over."

McManus began the course asking the seminarians to share their front-burner questions. One student raised his hand. "Tell us about the future," he inquired. McManus came back with humor, "It's coming!" Then he added, "Think of how you'll invest your life in people now. That'll be your future."

McManus challenged the seminarians to begin searching for the questions behind the questions, never leaving things on the surface level. “Does your theology and the way you express it reflect God accurately?” he asked the class.

McManus spoke of the universal quest to become fully alive, to change an ordinary life into an extraordinary one. “Sometimes you have to lose your income to get to your right place in life,” he said, noting, “No one is obligated to pay you to do what you’re passionate about, what God has put in your heart and imagination. But you are obligated to do that thing.”

Through a special partnership between Golden Gate Seminary and Mosaic, interns at Mosaic can enroll in the Golden Gate’s two-year “protegé program,” which includes courses at the Southern California campus in Brea, personal and group mentoring, and unpaid volunteer ministry at Mosaic. At the end of two years, the interns receive a master of theological studies degree from Golden Gate as well as invaluable ministry experience.

Mosaic’s vision to be a spiritual reference point in Los Angeles and a sending base to the ends of the earth dovetails with Golden Gate’s mission to shape effective Christian leaders who accelerate the fulfillment of the Great Commission in the churches of the West and for mission to the world.

GGBTS President Jeff Iorg said, “This partnership with Mosaic reflects the seminary’s commitment to serve the churches in training people on the front lines of ministry. The interns will not only sharpen their effectiveness through their involvement in the cutting-edge ministry of Mosaic, but from the biblical and theological foundation Golden Gate will build into their lives as well.”

Enthusiasm for the partnership was evident both in McManus and Steve Saccone, the seminary’s educational liaison with Mosaic and teacher’s assistant for the ministry leadership course.

Saccone reported that 13 students currently are enrolled in the protegé program which began last August. McManus added that the program draws the type of people who often don’t want to leave their identification with the secular marketplace. Besides the Golden Gate partnership, Mosaic also offers a doctorate in entrepreneurial leadership in conjunction with Bethel Seminary in Minnesota.

“We want to be a magnet for world-class, high-octane leaders to be trained and deployed to the major cities of the world,” McManus stated. “We’d love it if people who read this article are motivated to become part of our dynamic partnership with Golden Gate.”

McManus, a native of El Salvador who has since lived all over the United States, is an in-demand national speaker. He has authored several books, including “Uprising: A Revolution of the Soul,” “An Unstoppable Force” (a 2002 Gold Medallion winner), “The Barbarian Way,” “Seizing Your Divine Moment” (recently re-released as “Chasing Daylight”) and “Stand Against the Wind” (to be published in mid-February).

McManus appears to have found his niche at Mosaic, where he has ignited the power of dreaming and imagining in his congregation for engaging the postmodern, pluralistic world. Known for its cosmopolitan diversity, Mosaic is a community of followers of Jesus Christ

who embrace a commitment to live by faith, to be known by love and to be a voice of hope. The name Mosaic reflects the diversity of a broken and fragmented humanity, like chips of multi-colored glass transformed into a work of beauty under the artful hands of God as His Light shines through.

Mosaic is not a new church, but has been around for 60 years. The momentum has exploded since McManus, ever the risk-taker and catalyst for change, was called as lead pastor in 1993. Roughly 2,000 people presently meet in three different locations each week throughout Los Angeles. Mosaic owns no property, church building or even office space. There is no “membership”; when people join Mosaic, they become volunteer staff on mission to L.A. and the world. Mosaic currently has about 1,000 such volunteer staff.

About 60 nationalities are represented; 70 to 85 percent of the congregation is single; and the average age is 25. Mosaic especially embraces the creative community, people many thought would never come to faith in Christ but who are finding that they can give their lives to Christ and still be creative.

Due to the vision and entrepreneurial spirit of Mosaic, communities also have been planted in various other locations, including Manhattan, Seattle, Berkeley, Atlanta, Germany and New Zealand.

A graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, McManus went on to study at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife Kim, whom he describes as a top-tier leader and communicator, have two children, Aaron, 17, and Mariah, 13.

Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary is a Cooperative Program ministry of the Southern Baptist Convention and operates five fully accredited campuses in Northern California, Southern California, the Pacific Northwest, Arizona and Colorado.