Participants in this seminar will explore selected issues in contemporary ecclesiology. With Walter Kasper’s ecclesiology as our conversation partner, we will begin by considering the current landscape and contexts in ecclesiology: reviewing Catholic statements on the identity and mission of the church—in response to the identity and mission of the Triune God—from Vatican II to various statements by Pope Francis, followed by landmark statements by the World Council of Churches; and identifying key formulations and issues being debated by Orthodox, Anglican, and Protestant churches, including Pentecostal churches. Against the backdrop of classic and current views of the church’s identity and mission we will consider the following issues:

Church in Ordinary Time. After this overview, we will read an elegant statement by Reformed theologian Amy Plantinga Pauw, *Church in Ordinary Time: A Wisdom Ecclesiology*. We will use this book to initiate a discussion of the theological passions and concerns of seminar participants.

Synodality and Democracy. Synodality is central to Pope Francis’s church reform agenda: cultivating a listening church, implementing sound decentralization, and facing reality and conflict through open free speech in the promotion of discernment on mission, vocation, and disputed issues. The church’s advocacy of democracy in politics and economic life is at the core of Francis’s social reform agenda as addressed to popular movements. Treatments of synodality and democracy among Orthodox, Anglican, and Protestants will also be explored.

Confronting Sin in the Church and in Civil Society. How do personal, social, and structural sins threaten the holiness and integrity of the church and justice and peace in civil society? These questions will be addressed in light of selected writings from John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis, and “cross-confessional” critiques of the church’s role in Empire and Neo-Colonialism.

Sensus Fidelium and Dissensus Fidelium. The theological topic of the *sensus fidelium* has been widely discussed, especially as related to the treatment of synods and synodality. We will explore the theology of the sense of the faithful as articulated by Ormond Rush and by the International Theological Commission, and disputed issues pertaining to the dissent of the faithful.

Decolonial Programs in Ecclesiology. How is the colonial matrix of power manifest in multigenerational poverty, economic injustice, and racism? And how can decolonial resistance and resilience by people of God before these destructive powers be embodied particularly in grass-roots efforts to reclaim the gifted character of precarious ecclesial and civic communities? We will read (or reread) Willie James Jennings’s book *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* and selections from decolonial theorists in order to identify promising ingredients in decolonial programs in Africa, Latin America, and in the United States.

**Assigned Books**