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LS/SP501 Teaching Retreat: History, Theology and Practice of Marriage in the Anglican Tradition

Fall Semester 2016 (November 4—6)

PURPOSE:

Marriage today is under considerable pressure to adapt and change and there are now numerous socially acceptable ways of approaching and living in committed relationships. What can and should the Church expect, bless and support? Is there a norm or standard of Christian marriage? Marriage has been seen as a powerful symbol of reconciliation, as a means of living out a vocation to create a loving community and sign of Christ's love, and as one of the pillars of society. How should we see its purpose now? It is important that people who will be conducting marriages on behalf of the Church be clear about what marriage is and how it might be celebrated in the light of the emergence of new understandings about the nature of human sexuality and relationships.

COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES: The objective is for participants to be better informed about the background and evolving meaning of marriage, to think about their own experience of marriage both in their family of origin as well as their own marriages or marriages they have observed. They should develop a sense of how marriage has broadened in scope. They should understand marriage as a sacrament of God's reconciling, unifying love. They will have some new ideas and resources for helping couples to prepare for marriage. They should feel capable of preparing and conducting a wedding ceremony. They should understand better their own place at the heart of a celebration that carries so much

FORMAT: The course is a weekend residential retreat format, part of the Anglican Formation requirements toward their degree. It takes places from Friday, November 4 to Sunday, November 6, 2016 at Bethlehem Retreat Centre in Nanaimo. The weekend will be framed and supported by the experience of living together as a community and by corporate prayer, as we will pray the offices

together throughout each day. A written assignment of 7—8 pages is required, to be presented to the Instructor before the end of classes and discussed with the Instructor before the end of term. It is assigned one credit.

CONTENT: The course will cover the following subjects:

“According to God’s Holy Law.” Biblical models of Marriage: does the Bible hold up one absolute model?

A Brief History of Marriage and the Church: The Church and Sexuality; Is marriage obsolete? Is there any point in maintaining a relationship between church and province?

Marriage and equality: the end of patriarchy in society and in marriage

“In it is symbolized ...” theology and symbolism of a wedding and marriage; Marriage as Sacrament; Marriage as Covenant. The Eucharist and the wedding.

“It is a way of life that all should reverence, and none should lightly undertake.” Preparation with couples: Marriage or wedding? What is your role?

The components and rationale of the wedding ceremony

Choosing readings, music, prayers, criteria for inviting family members and friends to be involved. Whose wedding is it?

“You are the witnesses . . .” the role of the community

“God ... bless, preserve, and keep you ... that you may faithfully live together in this life, and in the age to come have life everlasting.” The role of God and faith.

Conducting a wedding: the basic movements, rationale of a traditional Anglican wedding; acceptable variations on the theme (dance processional; personal vows, alternative symbols, rituals; woman as best man; inter-faith weddings; children from previous marriages);

Dealing with Divorce: explore their views on divorce; Anglican Church policy; dealing gently with those whose marriages have not worked out. Jesus and divorce.

Wedding Nightmares (bedtime stories)

TEXTS:

Nuptial Blessing: A Study of Christian Marriage Rites by Kenneth Stevenson

The Book of Alternative Services (Anglican Church of Canada)

The Book of Common Prayer (Anglican Church of Canada)

The Bible (New Revised Standard Version)

Canon XXI of the Anglican Church of Canada (provided)

Marriage Preparation resource material (provided)

RECOMMENDED READING:

Epiphany: A Christian's Change of Heart & Mind over Same-Sex Marriage;
Michael Coren (Signal)

Sex in History; Reay Tannahill

The Origins of Sex: A History of the First Sexual Revolution; Faramerz
Dabhoiwala (Penguin)

Marrying In The Church: A Pastoral Guide To Canon XXI Of The General Synod
Of The Anglican Church Of Canada Issued Under The Authority Of The Sub-
Committee On Marriage And Related Matters; Graham Cotter; Charles R
Feilding, (Anglican Book Centre)

Illuminating the Heart: Steps Toward a More Spiritual Marriage; Barbara G.
Markway; Gregory P. Markway (Harbinger)

COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance for the entire course, and appropriate participation in discussions.

Reading and assignments: A 7 to 8 page paper that evidences learning from the retreat, and reading from the required text(s). The written assignment is to be discussed with the Instructor and the combination of participation, writing and discussion forms the basis of approval and credit for the course.

Attendance at a wedding, preferably Anglican but it may be of another tradition, and sharing their observations and perceptions with the Instructor.

The assignment is due before the end of classes, and the interview must be accomplished before the end of term. The interview is to be initiated by the student.

After the discussion, the Instructor will indicate whether or not approval is to be given. If the paper and the discussion do not reflect substantial understanding and appreciation of the subject matter, a re-write will be requested.

Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. Late assignments and requests for extensions will be dealt with by the Dean, Dr. Pat Dutcher-Walls.