

LS/SP505 Teaching Retreat: Funerals and End-of-Life Ministry

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Spring Term 2017
Dates: February 17-19, 2017
Location: Bethlehem Retreat Centre, Nanaimo

PURPOSE: In the context of a residential retreat, participants will enter a discipline of corporate prayer throughout the day, observing the offices, becoming conscious of themselves and others in the context of community and of God. In this more contemplative setting, participants will be invited to examine their experience and theology of death in light of the fact that they will often be dealing with people whose understanding and experience of death may be very different than their own. They will be challenged to reflect on and express what they believe about death, afterlife, salvation, and the role of God. They will explore ways of understanding, caring for and supporting people in the face of their loss so they may be able to give meaningful expression to it in the form of the funeral liturgy.

COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES: Participants will have a better sense of the impact and practice of ministry at times of loss; they will be more sensitive to many of the issues people face at time of death. They will identify basic aspects of grief and explore helpful ways of being of service to the dying and their families. They will learn how to approach, plan and conduct a funeral either in the church or in another setting. They will be asked to construct a funeral liturgy for a person.

PREREQUISITES: LS/SP502a - Vocation

FORMAT AND CONTENT:

This is a weekend residential retreat format for one credit in the area of Anglican Formation. It takes place from Friday, Feb 17 to Sunday, Feb 19, 2017 at Bethlehem Retreat Centre in Nanaimo.

COURSE CONTENT:

Reflection and Discussion: What has been your most significant loss? What were some of the aspects of that and what was helpful or unhelpful in dealing with it? How many funerals have you attended? What happens to us at death?

Presentation and Discussion: What is the Purpose of a Christian Funeral?

Christian vs secular understandings – areas of potential difficulty; what are they prepared to promise or guarantee? What certainties can be expressed? Idiosyncratic requests: personally drawing the line. Would you conduct a “non-religious” service?

Ministry to the Dying: Ministry of presence; Listening; Prayer; Anointing; Confession and reconciliation; What to say to the dying person – what do they need? Saying goodbye; “Last Rites;” Ethical issues/questions you may be asked: assisted suicide; DNR; is cremation OK? The moment of death: being there. Time with the body.

Ministry to the Family: the interview; family dynamics; competing visions and religious views

Funeral Director presentation re. procedures and legal requirements, other issues and options relating to care of the body, services, etc. Reflection on things funeral directors wish clergy knew.

Planning funeral services: resources on hand; things to consider: Vigil? Eucharist? Music? Special prayers? Including people; symbols; eulogies/tributes; Whose service is it?

Conducting the Service: personal presence; what to wear? What do you do with your own emotions? Thoughts about funeral homilies. Fees/honoraria.

Pastoral Follow-up The parish as healing community; some helpful components and practices; a grief response team

Conduct a funeral interview with another participant (whose loss in this case may be either imagined or real)

Required Texts: Peace At the Last: Leading Funerals Well; Robert Atwell (Canterbury) – to be available at UBC Bookstore

Book of Alternative Services (Anglican Church of Canada)

Book of Common Prayer (Anglican Church of Canada)

Recommended reading:

A Good Ending: A Compassionate Guide to Funerals, Pastoral Care, and Life Celebrations; David Sparks (United Church Publishing House)

The Grief Recovery Handbook; A Program for Moving Beyond Death, Divorce, and Other Devastating Losses; John W. James and Russell Friedman

Final Gifts: Understanding the Special Awareness Needs and Communications of the Dying; Maggie Callanan and Patricia Kelly (Bantam)

What Dying People Want: Practical Wisdom for the End of Life; David Kuhl (Harper Collins)

Standing in the Circle of Grief: Prayers and Liturgies for Death and Dying – Blair Gilmer Meeks

Lessons from the Dying; Rodney Smith (Wisdom Publ.)

Accompany Them with Singing: The Christian Funeral; Thomas Long (Westminster John Knox Press)

The Good Funeral: Death, Grief, and the Community of Care; Thomas Long and Lynch (Westminster, John Knox Press)

I Don't Know What to Say: How to Help and Support Someone Who is Dying; Robert Buckman (Key Porter Books)

Funeral Liturgies; Flor McCarthy (Dominican Publications)

The Denial of Death; Ernest Becker (Free Press)

COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance for the full retreat and willing participation in class discussion, as well as participation in daily offices in the retreat setting.

Students will bring copies of the Book of Alternative Services and the Book of Common Prayer – none will be supplied

Based on their participation in the retreat, and assigned reading, they will be required to write a 7—8 page paper and to meet with the Instructor for a minimum of one hour to discuss the paper. The paper should reflect what was learned at the retreat and significantly reference the required text.

The paper is to be given to the Instructor before end of classes for Fall Term and the discussion/meeting accomplished before the end of term. Students are to take the initiative in contacting the Instructor to request interview time.

Students will also present to the Instructor at time of presenting their written assignment a funeral order of service that they would like to be used for themselves, including readings, music, prayers, participants, etc. Note: students may meet with the Instructor for help in planning this liturgy.

After the discussion, the Instructor will indicate whether or not approval will be given and credit awarded. If the paper and 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/requests for extensions to be dealt with by the Dean, Dr. Pat Dutcher-Walls