

Dr. Angela L. Hummel

Vancouver School of Theology

Office: I am a summer faculty member who does not have an office at VST. I will happily meet with you in our classroom and/or online in order to help you with any questions that arise during the course at your request.

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**SP535 The Art of Prayer: Creating a Lifelong Practice through Color and Creativity**

**Summer 2026**

**July 20, 2026 – July 24, 2026**

**PURPOSE:** "How do I learn to pray?" "What am I supposed to be doing in prayer?" "How do I know God is listening?" "How can I stay focused in prayer?" "How can I pray without, or beyond words?" This course will explore how to help people of all beliefs, ages, and stages of life develop a prayer life that is dynamic, life giving, and that can hold them up when life becomes difficult. We will look especially at how art can be woven into peoples prayer lives and help them deepen their relationships with the divine.

**PREREQUISITES:** None

**COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES:**

- Students will learn about stages of faith development and how different ways to pray may be utilized and needed in each.
- Students will understand and integrate art based research methods.
- Students will create offerings that will help people to learn to help people learn to pray at whatever stage their faith may be in.

**FORMAT AND CONTENT:**

This course meets asynchronously on campus for five mornings over five days July 20-24, 2026. For both on-campus and online students, work in the course consists of classes including lectures, discussions and small group exercises, some prepared before class. Distance students will participate through Zoom.

**TEXTS and MATERIALS:**

Blythe, Teresa. *50 Ways to Pray: Practices from Many Traditions and Times*. Nashville, Abingdon, 2006.

Brush, Sarah. *The Way Through the Trees: An Introduction to Faith Development*. London: SCM Press, 2025.

Mead, Sir Hirini Moko. *Understanding Maturanga Maori* (A chapter, pages 9-14, within *Conversations on Maturanga Maori*). <https://www2.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Maori/Our-focus-on-Maori/Conversations-Maturanga-Maori.pdf>. Accessed June 29, 2025.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein and Oludamini Ogunnaiké. *The Heart (qalb): St. Andrews Encyclopedia*. <https://www.saet.ac.uk/Islam/Heart> August 29, 2024. Accessed March 2026.

The Way of the Pilgrim - (any version) Chapter 1

The Bhagavad Gita - (any translation) Book 6

**Materials you will need to purchase for this class:**

1. Journal, preferably without lines and/or three ring binder with blank sheets of paper.
2. Your favorite fast color making implement: crayons, pastels, colored pencils, markers, color fill on your computer, fabric, etc.
3. Watercolor paints with as many color options as possibly. (You can use other paints but watercolors dry the fastest).
4. Pad of Mixed Media Art paper.

**COURSE POLICIES**

1. **Attendance** For a weekly course, VST requires at least 80% attendance. For an intensive course, VST requires 100% attendance.
2. **Reading and assignments** Students are expected to read all required assignments before class and to complete all assignments as outlined in the syllabus within the specified dates of the course and term.
3. **Academic honesty** Students are expected to adhere to VST's requirements for academic honesty as published in the Student Handbook.
4. **Inclusive language** In speaking and writing, inclusive language is expected when making reference to humans and a variety of metaphors are anticipated when making reference to God.
5. **Assignments and Course Evaluation**
  - Course evaluations at VST combine a letter grade system (A+ to B-; course failure is "Not Approved") including narrative comments based on the competencies of the course. No number grades or weights of assignments are calculated, nor are final grades given numerical equivalents.

- Individual assignments within a course are given narrative evaluations, that is, APP (Approved) or INC (Incomplete) with narrative comments, based on the competencies and expectations set for that assignment. One re-write is allowed on any assignment that is INC. The re-written assignment is due two weeks after the work is returned. The final evaluation for an assignment can be APP or NAPP after a re-write.
  - For a passing grade in the course, all assignments must be Approved.
- 6. Late assignments**  
Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. All assignments in courses are due on the dates specified in the syllabus. Failure to submit an assignment on time will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment. Repeated failure to submit assignments on time may affect the final grade for the course.
- 7. Limitation on use of social media**  
Ordinarily, the use of electronic devices in the contexts of classrooms or meetings will be to support the learning, formation, or agenda at hand.
- 8. Limitation on use of class material and images**  
No material from Zoom classes, including screen capture pictures of their fellow students, professors, and CTAs can be posted to Facebook or any other social media without the express consent of the affected individuals.
- 9. VST is committed to creating safe space and an inclusive learning environment.** If you have a diagnosed or suspected learning disability, chronic condition, mental health concern, or physical requirement which you anticipate may impact your participation in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs with the instructor and the Dean within the first week of classes.

### **CALENDAR**

#### **Monday July 20 - Stages of Faith Development and Abstract Color Thinking**

**Reading:** Be sure to complete reading *The Way through the Trees* by Sarah Brush before our first day of class and bring the book to class. On day one will also be discussing, *Understanding Mataranga Maori* (A chapter, pages 9-14, within *Conversations on Mataranga Maori*). <https://www2.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/Maori/Our-focus-on-Maori/Conversations-Mataranga-Maori.pdf>. Accessed June 29, 2025.

**Assignments:** 1. Paint color lexicons

2. Discussion of Brush's "Way through the Trees" focusing on pg.'s 144-210.
3. Create colors and lines in order to think through our own prayers at different stages of our lives that we have experienced.
4. Practice active listening skills in class when classmates are presenting.

**Tuesday July 21 - Placing the Mind in the Heart. Reading:** *50 Different Ways to Pray* by Teresa Blythe

*The Way Through the Trees* by Sarah Brush

*The Way of the*

*Pilgrim Bhagavad*

*Gita* chapter 6

*The Heart (qalb)* - St. Andrews Encyclopedia of Theology

**Assignments:** The main assignment for the class will be discussed at length this day: Each student will create a prayer experience and adapt it for three different groups of people in three different stages of development.

1. Discuss Brush pg.'s 46-115
2. Participate and reflect on an example of adapting a prayer for different people at different stages.
3. Discuss placing the mind in the heart and how we help people access the heart.
4. Begin work on the main class assignment - Brainstorm prayer ideas.

**Wednesday July 22 - Teaching prayer to prepare people for different stages of faith development and the seeming absence of God.**

**Reading:** *The Way Through the Trees* by Sarah Brush

**Assignments:**

1. Discuss Brush pages 126-187.
2. Explore creative components to incorporate into prayer that helps people navigate moving through spiritual development styles.
3. Work on Presentation and Prayer Plan.

**Thursday July 23 - Helping people of all ages find and strengthen their heart. Readings:** *The Way Through the Trees* by Sarah Brush

**Assignments:** 1. Final discussion on Brush.  
2. Discuss struggles people are experiencing in creating their presentation.  
3. Explore new questions that have emerged during the course.  
4. Depending on class size begin presentations.

**Friday July 24 - Presentations and final questions**

All students will present their prayer presentation (the paper portion of the assignment does not need to be completed on this day), and gather feedback that will later be

incorporated into their paper.

**Assignment:** 1. Presentations

2. Gather feedback to incorporate into the final paper edits.

**EXPECTATIONS, ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA**

**Class Participation** - My pedagogy is collaborative and therefore your participation is crucial. I know not everyone is able or willing to vocally participate in class discussions and therefore I offer the option of creating a journal as well where you can share your ideas, questions, reflections, and thoughts with me each day. If you prefer the journal option please notify me ahead of time and plan to email or scan those daily entries to me on the Friday of the last day of class. I will evaluate participation through class interaction and/or journals.

**Prayer Plan Presentation** - Each student will present their prayer plan to the class for feedback. The paper does not need to be complete but you should be able to share with the class what prayer you selected, three developmental stages you selected, and how you plan to modify leading the prayer based on each chosen stage of development as well as how you will help your audience prepare for changes in their spiritual development.

**Prayer Plan Paper** - A four to six page paper (1000-1500 words), will be turned in at the end of the course. Within this paper you will select a prayer and create three different plans for teaching this prayer to people in three different stages of development. You select the prayer, you select the three different stages. Each paper should seek to address the needs of different stages of development as well as how to prepare your audience for stages changing. There should be one page for each plan with each group (total of 3 pages), followed by a fourth page where you reflect on the differences and anything that you did not make explicit in the plans.