

Ministry and Spirituality- SP 2513 Spring 2007

Instructor: Bruce H. Lescher, Ph.D.

Office: Room 224, Jesuit School of Theology, 1735 LeRoy

Phone: 510-549-5055

E-mail: blescher@jstb.edu

Office Hours: I am at JSTB 9-5 Mon, Weds, and Thurs; 1-5 on Tues; please call for appointment.

Class meets: 2:10 - 5:00, Thursday, CDSP 116

Course Description

This seminar will explore the relationship between the minister's spirituality and his/her ministry. How does ministerial engagement affect one's spiritual practice? How, in turn, does spiritual practice affect one's ministry? What comprises a truly ministerial spirituality? Students will be invited to reflect on their past experiences of ministry and to imagine their future. If they wish, they may also use this class to explore new ministerial experiences.

Texts

Bass, Dorothy, ed., *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997).

Craven, Margaret, *I Heard the Owl Call My Name* (New York: Dell [A Laurel Book], 1973).

Palmer, Parker J., *The Active Life: A Spirituality of Work, Creativity, and Caring* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990).

Wicks, Robert J., ed., *Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers, Vol. 1* (New York: Paulist, 1995).

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course the student will be able to:

- \$ Discuss and analyze, orally and in writing, current thinking on the role of "practice" within the study of spirituality.
- \$ Describe and analyze, orally and in writing, some of the traditional spiritual practices which have engaged ministers, including prayer, spiritual direction, and discernment.
- \$ Identify, describe, and analyze, those spiritual practices which nurture her or him.
- \$ Identify, describe, and analyze, both orally and in writing, the relationship between action and contemplation as articulated by Parker Palmer.
- \$ Formulate his/her own understanding of the relationship between ministry and spirituality.

Accountability

A) For all students, including auditors

1. Attending class and participating in discussions. Please inform the instructor if you have to be absent.
2. Doing the readings listed for each class. The readings are due on the date they are listed.
3. Making one presentation in class. Depending on people's interests, this may be done either individually or in a small group -- dates are May 4, 11, and 18. Presentations can be on some aspect of ministry and spirituality which is of particular interest. Those taking the class for credit will research their topic; those auditing may speak from their experience. More explanation later.

B) For those taking the class for credit

4. Writing three four-page reflection papers; these will be due on Feb. 23, April 6, and May 11.
5. Writing an 8-10 page final paper based on your presentation. Papers due on Friday, May 19.

Important

If you have a learning disability or some other physical condition which requires special arrangements for classroom seating or writing assignments, please inform me early in the semester so that these arrangements can be worked out.

Schedule

Feb 1: Introduction.

- Goals, syllabus
- Introductions
- Reflections on ministry and spirituality

Feb 8: What it means to be minister.

- Reading: *I Heard the Owl Call My Name*
- Reflection questions:
 1. Note aspects of Mark Brian's story that either challenge or affirm your own understanding of ministry.
 2. What lessons about spirituality and ministry would you draw from this novel?

Feb 15: Suggestions for Paper 1 to be distributed.

Exploring spiritual practices.

- Reading: The following chapters in *Practicing Our Faith*
Dykstra and Bass, "Times of Yearning, Practices of Faith," pp. 1-12
Paulsell, "Honoring the Body," 13-27

Pineda, "Hospitality," 29-42
Parks, "Household Economics," 43-58
Copeland, "Saying Yes and Saying No," 59-73

--Reflection questions:

1. What reaction do you have to the list of "practices" found in the table of contents? Would you consider these "spiritual" practices?
2. When you look at your own life, what are some spiritual practices that you have engaged in? What is it about these practices that gives you life?

Feb 22: Paper 1 due.

Exploring spiritual practices.

--Reading: The following chapters in *Practicing Our Faith*

Bass, "Keeping Sabbath," 75-89
Rogers, "Discernment," 105-118
Rasmussen, "Shaping Communities," 119-132
Jones, "Forgiveness," 133-147
Pauw, "Dying Well," 163-177
Bass and Dykstra, "Growing in Practices of Faith," 195-204

--Reflection questions:

1. We are presented here with a variety of practices. Are there one or two of these which particularly appeal to you? We can discuss.
2. Would you include other practices that are not listed either here or last week?

March 1: Traditions of practice for the minister: prayer and journaling

--Reading: The following chapters in *Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers*

Barry, "Teaching Others to Pray," 9-17
Pennington, "Players and Coaches," 18-37
Flood, "A Brief Reflection on Prayer," 38-42
Dorff, "Meditative Writing," 153-173

--Reflection questions:

1. How might you assess your own practice of prayer--what do you think is "going well"? Where might you hope for improvement?
2. If someone were to ask you, "How can I begin to pray," what advice might you give? [Question 3 on next page.]
3. Have you tried journaling? What has been your experience?

March 8: Traditions of practice for the minister: Spiritual Guidance

---Reading: The following chapters in *Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers*

Gratton, "Spiritual Guidance in Today's World," 43-55
McCarty, "Basics of Spiritual Direction," 56-76
Fischer, "Spiritual Direction with Women," 96-114

--Reflection questions:

1. These three articles give present different approaches to spiritual

- direction. Are there areas where you find yourself in agreement?
Areas in which you disagree?
2. Where do you find spiritual guidance in your life? What sources of guidance are meaningful for you?
 3. Would you agree that spiritual direction with women presents its own set of questions?

March 15: Traditions of practice for the minister: Discernment

---Reading: The following chapters in *Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers*
Hauser, "Each Mortal Thing Does One Thing and the Same--Selves:
An Approach to Christian Discernment," 207-227
Aschenbrenner, "A Hidden Self Grown Strong," 228-248

--Reflection questions:

1. These articles deal with the process of discernment. How do you practice discernment in your life? Are there people with whom you consult? Procedures to which you are accountable?
2. Please note anything in these articles which prompts a response in you-- it may be something with which you agree or disagree. We can discuss.
3. What is your opinion of Aschenbrenner's three dimensions: external behavior, inner spontaneity, and core of the soul?

March 22: Suggestions for Paper 2 to be distributed.

Traditions of practice for the minister: Spiritual practice and "work"

---Reading: The following chapters in *Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers*
Skudlarek, "Spirituality and Preaching," 191-203
Wicks, "The Stress of Spiritual Ministry: Practical Suggestions on
Avoiding Unnecessary Distress," 249-258
Rupp, "Rediscovering God in the Midst of Our Work," 259-273
Au, "A Spirituality for Collaborative Ministry," 391-405

--Reflection question: These articles deal with issues of "work" and ministry: preaching, stress, finding God in our work, and collaborating in ministry. Certainly each of us has lots of experience with these topics. Please note areas that you would like to discuss, and we will use these to begin our conversation.

March 29: No class--Spring Break

April 5: Paper 2 due.

Topic for today will be the social justice dimension of ministry and how this relates to one's spiritual practice. Readings will partially be taken from the section of Wicks dealing with specific populations (see pages 447-565). Topics chosen will depend upon the interest of the class.

April 12: Again, the topic for today will be the social justice dimension of ministry and how this relates to one's spiritual practice. Readings will partially be taken from the section of

Wicks dealing with specific populations (see pages 447-565). Topics chosen will depend upon the interest of the class.

April 19: Reflections on an active spirituality

--Reading: Palmer, 1-77

--Reflection questions:

1. In pages 1-34, formulate for yourself what Palmer means by
 - A) action
 - B) contemplation
 - C) how action and contemplation are related
2. Pages 35-53 contain a critique of "professionals." What, in your opinion, is the role of professionalism in ministry? How does being a professional affect your spirituality?
3. Pages 55-77 contain his critique of active ministry under the subheadings of Motives, Skills, the Other, and Results. What's your experience of these four categories in your ministry?

April 26: Further reflections on an active spirituality

--Reading: Palmer, 79-157

--Reflection questions:

1. On pages 79-119 Palmer explores some of "temptations" of active ministry, some of the ways we can be drawn off course. Do any of the suggested temptations relate to your experience? What sort of temptations do you experience in your ministry?
2. What lessons for your own ministry would you draw from the last two chapters on "Loaves and Fishes" and "Threatened with Resurrection"?

May 3: Suggestions for Paper 3 to be distributed
Presentations

May 10: Paper 3 due. Please turn in an envelope with address so paper can be returned.
Presentations.

May 17: Presentations

May 18 (Friday): Final paper due. Can be e-mailed or turned into teacher's mailbox at JSTB.