

**Spiritual Care of the Ministering Person**  
**MS 3XM3/6XM6**  
**Winter Semester 2015**  
**(CS/CW/PS)**

**Instructor: Dr. Lee Beach**  
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**First Class: Jan. 5, 2015**  
**Time: Monday 7:00-9:00 pm**  
**Room #: TBA**

**Specializations**

Christian Worldview  
Counselling and Spiritual Care  
Pastoral Studies

**Course Description**

The aim of this course is to support and encourage participants as they seek to deepen and cultivate their relationship with Christ in the midst of the demands of ministry, family, work and extra-curricular activities. How can we find enough living water to live compassionately? Can we live from a place of centeredness rather than just run from task to task? Can we find meaning in the mundane tasks that are such a large part of life and ministry? Is our leisure spiritual? While the course will address some issues that are unique to professional ministry it will be broad enough in scope to benefit any Christian involved in ministering to others and who desire to explore the landscape of the soul with a goal to further intimacy with Christ. The course is designed to be an opportunity for reflection on one's current spiritual life and a time to broaden our knowledge of future possibilities for growth.

NOTE: Students taking this at the research level (6-unit) will be contacted by the professor before the start of class to discuss additional course requirements.

**Course Objectives**

**KNOWING**

1. Students will gain a broader understanding of Christian spirituality and the disciplines that enable Christian spiritual formation.
2. Students will gain insight into the special challenges of living the spiritual life as a ministering person whether ministry is done professionally or as a layperson.
3. Students will develop an enhanced perspective on how to integrate their spiritual life with the various tasks of Christian ministry.

**BEING**

1. Students will be given opportunity to reflect on their own understanding of and approach to the spiritual life.
2. Through all aspects of the course, students will be given opportunity to listen and respond to the ways God is inviting them to grow spiritually.

## **DOING**

1. Students will begin to consider ways to include new spiritual disciplines and perspectives into their daily lives and the work of ministry.
2. Students will develop a strategy for ongoing spiritual formation for their lives in ministry.

A core value of our class is that it is a “learning community,” designed to be a place where each member of the community can grow through positive affirmation and constructive input. We should all come to the community as people in process, open to be deconstructed and formed through our mutual learning experience.

As professor it is my responsibility to empower each class member as a learner by treating each student with respect and dignity. I come to position myself as a fellow learner in the community and to offer information, reflection, experience and questions for us to reflect on together. Further, it is my responsibility to give good evaluation and feedback to your thinking, both as you offer it to the class and through written work so that your growth through this class can be maximized as a result of our collaboration.

As a responsible member of our learning community you will be expected to commit yourself to the class throughout the semester that we are together. This means that in our class interactions you will endeavor to treat all members of our class with respect and dignity. Your attendance is required as your presence is necessary for our community (that is our class) to function at an optimal level. Assignments should be handed in on time and in good order. All late assignments will be docked at the rate of 2% for each day (including weekends) late. Assignments can be submitted in hard copy on standardized paper or electronically in a word document (pdf's are discouraged).

I am available and would welcome making connections with each of you outside class time. I would love to meet with you at some point if you think that I can be helpful to you in any way. Please feel free to make an appointment with me for a time that works for both of us.

### **Required Texts:**

Gordon T. Smith, *On the Way: A Guide to Christian Spirituality*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001.

Richard Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*. San Francisco: Harpers, 1992.

Henri Nouwen, *Creative Ministry*. Image, New York, 2003.

Eugene Peterson, *The Pastor: A Memoir*. New York: Harper One, 2011.

### **Some topics to be covered:**

Spirituality: What Is It and How Should We Think About It?  
Our Unique Spirituality: Developmental Considerations  
Spirituality and Ministry  
The Disciplines of Christian Spirituality  
A Spirituality for the Routine Stuff of Ministry  
A Spirituality for Handling Criticism and Conflict

A Spirituality for Rest and Leisure  
A Spirituality for Living in Family and Singleness in the Midst of Ministry  
A Spirituality for when God Seems Absent  
Rhythms of the Spiritual life

## **Course Requirements:**

### **Book Reviews and Conversations**

Students will write two book response papers that encompass two books in each response paper. The first paper will engage Richard Foster's *Prayer* and Gordon Smith's *On the Way*. The paper should compare and contrast the two books, identifying the pertinent points of contact between your life and the texts, how the books complement each other, where (if) there are differences and what you want to take away from the books for your own future spiritual development. The second paper will engage Eugene Peterson's *The Pastor* and Henri Nouwen's *Creative Ministry*. The same instructions apply to the second paper as was outlined for the first in the comments above. On the date that each paper is due a class discussion will take place where we will debrief on our reading of the books. The discussion will seek to engage each student and encourage sharing of their own experience of reading the book and any "take away" ideas that they have. The purpose of this assignment is to expose students to a wide range of spiritual insight and practice from some noted practitioners and provide a forum for mutual learning and instruction through class interaction.

**First Book Response (Smith and Foster) will be due at class time Feb. 9, 2015. The paper should be 8-10 pages (double spaced) and will be worth 20% of the course grade.**

**The Second Book Response (Peterson and Nouwen) will be due at class time Mar. 23, 2015. The paper should be 8-10 pages (double spaced) and will be worth 20% of the course grade.**

**\*Due to the fact that we will be discussing the books in class no extensions will be granted for this assignment. Late assignments will gladly be accepted but the 2% per day penalty will be applied.**

### **Spiritual Friendship Triads**

Each student will participate in a "triad" or group of three throughout the semester for the purpose of offering spiritual friendship and support for the journey. These triads will be arranged at the first class meeting and students will have freedom to choose their own group (as much as that is possible given class numbers, etc.). The groups will meet a minimum of seven times throughout the semester, away from regular class time, for interaction around issues of the spiritual life and the realities of developing our walk with Christ in light of the many challenges that life in this world presents to us (a basic structure for the group meetings will be provided at the first class). Each student will keep a journal based on each of the group meetings with thoughts, insights, reflections and places of transformation. Length of journal entries may vary, but will be evaluated on the depth of insight and reflection offered. Share only what you are comfortable sharing. This journal, as well as a final reflection on the experience of being engaged in intentional spiritual friendship will be submitted to the instructor at the end of the

semester. The final reflection should offer your overall response to the group experience, where you found it helpful, what you did not like, how such an experience could be helpful in the future, etc. The journal can be submitted in typewritten/electronic OR longhand form (i.e. a paper journal is fine), the reflection should be submitted in typewritten/electronic format and should be 2-3 pages in length. The purpose of the assignment is to introduce (or reinforce) the potential value of intentional spiritual friendship in the development of our spiritual lives.

**This assignment is due on Apr. 3, 2015 (\*this is not a class meeting date, electronic submission or early submission is fine) and will constitute 20% of the course grade.**

### **Personal Retreat and Half-Day of Prayer**

Each student will engage in a personal retreat/ half-day of prayer at some point in the semester. The exact time will be determined by the student. A class session will occur within the first third of the semester where instruction will be given and a hand-out will be provided that offers help with how to approach this time of retreat and prayer (however if you want to proceed with your retreat before this class and you are unsure of how to go about it please consult with the instructor who will be happy to give you some guidance). After the retreat has been completed a brief reflection paper will be written that offers personal insight into what the experience was like for you; how you approached it, how it felt, what worked, what did not work, how might this practice inform your spirituality in the years to come? etc. The purpose of the assignment is to allow students to practice the discipline of retreat and extended prayer with a view to reinforcing or establishing it as a discipline for ongoing growth.

**The reflection paper is due Mar. 30, 2015, it should be 2-3 pages in length (double spaced) and will be worth 10% of the final course grade.** (students are encouraged to hand the assignment in sooner than Mar. 30 if they complete their retreat at some point earlier in the semester)

### **Research and Reflection Paper**

Reflect upon your approach to spirituality and spiritual practices to date, and in light of course material and further research articulate your ongoing hopes and plans for your spiritual life and spiritual formation. Students are expected to interact deeply with the required texts and at least 6 other sources for this assignment.

Questions to aid your reflection:

- How would you describe your approach to the spiritual life to date?
- Reflect upon how your spiritual and personality type as well as developmental considerations and context have shaped your approach to spirituality.
- What do you see as being the strengths of your approach to spirituality? The weaknesses?
- Reflect upon your spiritual practices to date. What have been your dominant practices?
- In what ways have they served to draw you closer to God?
- In what ways have they served to distance you from God?
- Where do you sense God leading you next in your ongoing spiritual development?
- What practices will be key to your ongoing growth?

This assignment is not meant to encourage students to articulate a theoretically ideal vision of the spiritual life. Instead this assignment is meant to give students an opportunity to graciously and honestly reflect upon the nuances of their current approach to spirituality and to listen attentively how God is leading them on from here. The purpose of this assignment is to invite you to consider a variety of perspectives on spiritual health and growth, evaluate your own practices in light of them and reflect on the way forward.

**This paper is due Apr. 6, 2015 (\*this is not a class meeting date, electronic submission or early submission is fine) it should be 10-12 pages (double spaced) in length and will constitute 30% of the course grade.**

### **Additional Notes**

#### **A. Textbook Purchase**

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Other book services may also carry the texts.

#### **B. Academic Honesty**

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

#### **C. Gender Inclusive Language**

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

#### **D. Style**

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/MDCStyleGuide.pdf>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

**Disclaimer**

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.