Ritual Care in Times of Transition and Crisis  
IPC 640 G  
Instructor: Elaine Ramshaw

This course will examine how pastoral concerns can help shape our ritual approach at times of transition and crisis in people’s lives. We’ll look at the traditional Christian rituals occasioned by sickness, marriage and death/bereavement, and also at the developing of rituals for other occasions, such as miscarriage/stillbirth, divorce, marriages that form stepfamilies, adoption, or the move into a nursing home.

Learning Outcomes:
1. See rites of transition (such as weddings or funerals) in the context of the larger ritual process of separation, transition and reincorporation, a process which is spread over time.
2. Be able to identify both theological and pastoral goals shaping our practice of various occasional rituals.
3. Have experience in brainstorming how to develop or adapt ritual approaches to concrete situations.

Weekly Pattern: Each week I will post questions for class discussion on the Discussion Board by 9 a.m. on Monday. You are expected to post your first responses to the questions by Thursday, and to post in response to others’ comments thereafter.

Grading Policies: Students are expected to participate actively in the on-line discussion and to submit two 5-page reflection papers (due Monday, March 9, and Monday, March 30) and a final, research paper (15-20 pages, due Monday, May 18 [May 11 for graduating students]). The discussion participation, the reflection papers and the research paper will each count for 1/3 of the course grade.

Papers: The first reflection paper will be a pastoral analysis of the church-based and family-based ritual dealing with the death of a particular person. The second reflection paper will be a discussion of a situation in your life when ritual care would have been helpful but wasn’t available. What were the needs that might have been met by ritual, and what sort of ritual might have helped? The research paper will deal with ritual care in relation to a particular transition or crisis; you need to choose a topic for this paper by March 18th. See Assignments for further description of these assignments.

Required Texts:

In addition to these three books, there will be an on-line course pack of articles and book excerpts dealing with the various specific ritual occasions.
**Week 1 (January 26-February 1)** Introduction to course and personal sharing
Join the coffee break (Discussion Board)
Share the reasons you chose this course (Discussion Board)
Create a homepage—include description of current and past ministry settings
Explore the site and assignments
reading: Elaine Ramshaw, *Ritual and Pastoral Care*

**Week 2 (February 2-8)** Laying the groundwork
reading: Susan Marie Smith, *Caring Liturgies*

**Week 3 (February 9-15)** Becoming creative ritualizers (or midwives for creative ritualizing by communities, families, individuals)
readings:
- Roy Oswald (with Jean Morris Trumbauer), *Transforming Rituals*
- Janet Peterman, *Speaking to Silence*, pp. 8-9, 167-183

**Week 4 (February 16-22)** Funerals and ritual process
readings:
- Gene Fowler, *Caring through the Funeral*
- my “Funerals and Ritual Process” in Course Documents

**Week 5 (February 23-March 1)** Goals of a Christian funeral (& ritual later on in bereavement)
readings:
- Elaine Ramshaw, “The Personalization of Postmodern Post-mortem Ritual,” *Pastoral Psychology*
- my “Goals of a Christian Funeral” in Course Documents

**Week 6 (March 2-8)** Ritual later on in bereavement
**First Reflection Paper due next week!**
readings:
- my “Grief Goes On” in Course Documents
Week 7 (March 9-15) Ritual for miscarriage or stillbirth
First Reflection Paper due Monday, March 9
readings:
- Ronna Case, “When Birth Is Also a Funeral,” Journal of Pastoral Care 32 (March 1978):6-12
- Janet Peterman, “Remembrance and Commendation of a Stillborn Child or for Use after a Miscarriage,” Transforming Rituals, Appendix A (127-31)
- “A Service of Hope after Loss of Pregnancy” (pp. 623-26) and “A Service of Death and Resurrection for a Stillborn Child” (pp. 170-71) from the United Methodist Book of Worship
- “When a Child Dies Before or At Birth” (pp. 260-66) from Evangelical Lutheran Worship Pastoral Care
- Todd Pitock, “Dreaming of Michaela,” Tikkun 11, n. 6 (Nov/Dec 1996):54

Week 8 (March 16-22) Weddings in church(es) and culture(s)
Proposed Topic for Final Research Paper due Monday, March 16
readings:
- my “Christian Weddings?” in Course Documents

Week 9 (March 23-29) Pastoral issues in weddings in our cultural context
Second Reflection Paper due Monday, March 30 (if you can’t get this done before Easter, that’s OK as long as you let me know beforehand!)
readings:
- my “Weddings, Parties and Ritual Process” in Course Documents
- Peruse several bridal magazines (if you haven’t done this recently!)

Holy Week/Easter break (more or less, Monday March 30-Tuesday April 7)
Week 10 (April 8-12)  Ritual for divorce readings:
- “At the Ending of a Marriage,” Occasional Celebrations (Anglican Church of Canada), pp. 66-72
- my “Ritual Possibilities for the Divorcing” in Course Documents

Week 11 (April 13-19)  Ritual in time of sickness: cultural issues readings:
- my “Culture and Rites of Healing” in Course Documents

Week 12 (April 20-26)  Ritual in time of sickness: pastoral issues readings:
- Elaine Ramshaw, “Liturgy for Healing,” Liturgy: Ritual and Reconciliation (v. 9, n. 4):9-17

Week 13 (April 27-May 3)  Prayer and ritual with sick children readings:
- Daniel Grossoehme, The Pastoral Care of Children (Hayworth, 1999), pp. 67-77, 126-129
- John Hesch, Clinical Pastoral Care for Hospitalized Children and Their Families (Paulist Press, 1987), ch. 6 (pp. 117-144)

Week 14 (May 4-10)  Sharing of research projects

Graduating Students’ Final Research Papers due Monday, May 11 (your grades are due to the registrar Friday, May 15)

Final Research Paper due Monday, May 18