

Fall 2019

“Wisdom on Wednesday”: September 4 – December 4

Wisdom School Classes: Monday, September 9 – December 2

Wisdom on Wednesdays

Why Religion?

“What matters to me more than whether we participate in institutions or leave them is how we engage the imagination — in dreams, art, poetry, music — since what each of us needs, and what we can engage, obviously differs and changes throughout our lifetime. What fascinates me most are the experiences that shape, shatter, and transform those who initiate or engage them — experiences that precipitate us into new relationships with ourselves and with others. For that, and for you, I offer this writing.” — Elaine Pagels

Join us as we practice a shared, contemplative reading of **Why Religion?**. We welcome **ALL** to bring stories, experiences, art, music, poetry, dreams in weekly responsive sharing based on the week's reading.

Required Text: Through contemplating her own experiences that have shaped, shattered, and transformed her, Pagels brings us a compelling perspective on **Why Religion?** it is the **required text** for this course: (**Why Religion?** by Elaine Pagels, religious historian and Princeton Professor of Religion.)

Class size: There is no limit to the number of class members.

Facilitators: Dr. Brandon L. Beck and Carol Husbands.

Brandon is a teacher. As a teacher, his great passion is learning through listening - joy, imagination, and wonder breathe love in his life. Brandon's own experiences have led him to service in mental health, recovery, and LGBT ministry. His beloved Marcia and their furbabies, Munchkin and Lt Olivia Benson journey with him.

Carol attended the University of Texas at Austin and graduated with a BA in Education (1969). During the 1980's and 90's she was a student, then mentor, in the Education for Ministry extension course from the School of Theology of the University of the South at Sewanee. After completing the Spiritual Director Internship at Incarnate Word University in San Antonio (1995), Carol went on to earn her Masters of Pastoral Ministry with a focus in Spiritual Formation from the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest (2002). One of the founding members of the School of Wisdom, Carol regularly facilitates classes for the School and sings in the chancel choir at St. Mark's.

Circles of Resilience

Circles of Resilience is a new name with a modern take on the ancient practice known as *Lectio Divina* or Divine Reading. Originating in the 3rd century as Scriptural reflection, it was formalized as a monastic practice by St. Benedict.

The weekly contemplative practice follows a routine that opens us to the spiritual work of our daily lives. Each week, we read, contemplate and reflect on a unique metaphor to find its personal meaning in our lives. We practice opening ourselves to a dialogue with the Divine. What is it God wants us to hear? What is it we are called to do? Richard Rohr says we can be transformed by living in the “naked now” and by knowing the “Real Presence.”

Text: There is no text or outside preparation; however, one does need to bring the willingness to practice vulnerability and compassion as we share our spiritual journeys. The Gospel of Thomas will be the main resource for readings.

Class size limited to 16 participants.

Facilitators: Lee Williams and Carol Husbands

Lee is a cradle Episcopalian and has benefitted from many educational offerings in the church such as Education for Ministry, Godly Play, Jungian studies, School of Wisdom, spiritual direction and dream work. Lee has a BS in education from Texas State University and has worked in community education for 25+ years teaching adults, coordinating programs and providing professional development.

Carol attended the University of Texas at Austin and graduated with a BA in Education (1969). During the 1980s and 90s she was a student, then mentor, in the Education for Ministry extension course from the School of Theology of the University of the South at Sewanee. After completing the Spiritual Director Internship at Incarnate Word University in San Antonio (1995), Carol went on to earn her Masters of Pastoral Ministry with a focus in Spiritual Formation from the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest (2002). One of the founding members of the School of Wisdom, Carol regularly facilitates classes for the School and sings in the chancel choir at St. Mark's.

Death, Dying and the Afterlife: Lessons from World Cultures

Death and dying is a fact of human life. Not only will we all die; no exceptions, but everyone we know and love will die. Yet we avoid thinking and talking about it as if that might somehow cause it to happen. But the choices we make are shaped in countless ways by how we think about death, what we believe happens after death, and by what death — and life — ultimately mean. Thinking about death brings us face-to-face with questions of meaning in the face of finitude and loss. In what ways might death threaten the meaningfulness of our lives? And in what ways might death make a meaningful life possible? How have human beings in different cultures and historical periods come to terms with death?”

Questions considered: How do human beings think and feel about death?, How do human beings experience death?, How do the world's religious traditions understand and approach death (and the afterlife)?, When is it justified to take life?, How important is death to our understanding of what it means to be human?, What has science learned about death and dying through the study of near-death experiences?

A few selected lecture titles follow: Death's Place in Our Lives, Is It Rational to Fear Death?; Understanding and Coping with Grief, Approaches to Dying Well, Death and Hope in Christianity, Near-Death Experiences, The Pursuit of Immortality, The Value of Death.

Class size: There is no limit to the number of class members.

Facilitator: The Rev. Gary Gooch.

Gary is an Episcopal Priest (ordained in 1974), former Chemical Engineer and former Air Force weather officer. After "retiring" in 1996, he and his family moved to San Marcos. He continues his ministry through Partners in Ministry, is an active member of St Mark's Episcopal Church and a regular facilitator with the School of Wisdom.

Celebrate Earth! Living with Wisdom and Love on Our Island Home

(This course begins on September 23rd because the facilitators will be celebrating Earth in Yellowstone NP and points west until that time.)

Celebrate Earth! is a new program that the Kimmels and Father Ben Nelson have developed over the past three years. It is an adult spiritual formation process that helps us develop a heart-level relationship with Earth, our island home. It builds on the concept that Knowledge + Love = Wisdom. In the course, Knowledge of Earth is based on ecological concepts related to water. Love is expressed as a tangible relationship developed via "The Way of Love," and Wisdom is defined as the ability to live sustainably within Creation (Proverbs 8:22-36).

Celebrate Earth! is positive and optimistic and draws on scripture and tradition, science, and contemplation/meditation to help us recognize our island home as God's creation and that we are its stewards, not its owners.

Classes will consist of guided discussions of the material plus *lectio divina*-style meditation/contemplation, The *Celebrate Earth!* book will be provided at no charge. Please visit the *Celebrate Earth!* website for more information.

<https://www.celebrateearth.org/>

Class size: There is no limit to the number of class members.

Facilitators: Dr. Jim and Jerry Kimmel

Jim was educated as a cultural ecologist with degrees in biology, ecology, and geography from Baylor, Yale, and UT-Austin. He also studied at the Yale Divinity School and the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest.

Jerry has degrees in biology and art from Baylor and Texas State and is a certified yoga teacher.

The Kimmels studied Celtic spirituality in multiple seminars with Rev. Dr. John Philip Newell and studied at the Oblate School of Theology. With Rev. Dr. Ben Nelson they are developing an environmental education program that relates science and spirituality, funded by a grant from The Episcopal Church.

Wake Up! Spirituality for Today

When we consider Jesus' life and teaching, it becomes apparent that the underlying message was to awaken His listeners to the new life that was in their midst. Through parables, symbolic actions, and teachings, Jesus constantly startled people out of their preconceived notions of religion. "Wake up!" was his message. It was a challenging message then, and now.

Using videos, weekly readings, discussion and spiritual exercises based on the spiritual direction of Fr Tony De Mello, join us as we awaken to a deeper understanding of Jesus' teachings and the presence of God in our midst. Enlightenment cannot be experienced second hand. "In the land of the spirit, you cannot walk by the light of someone else's lamp," De Mello suggests. "You want to borrow mine. I'd rather teach you how to make your own." Join us and see where Spirit leads!

The course will require some light reading weekly. Participants will benefit the most from the course if they also set aside time each week for personal reflection and practice of exercises at home.

Required Text: *Awareness...the Perils and Opportunities of Reality*, by Anthony de Mello.
<https://www.amazon.com/Awareness-Opportunities-Reality-Anthony-Mello/dp/0385249373>

Registration: There is no limit to the number of class members. Class closes to new members on September 30. This is a one semester class.

Facilitator: Diana Beardsley.

Diana has a passion for understanding and study of inter-religious dialogue and world religions. Academically, she studied world religions at undergrad and graduate levels and attended seminary for a while. She has made pilgrimage to sacred sites of Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, and indigenous traditions during travels in the US and overseas. Prior to retirement, she spent over two decades in program management and logistics with the federal government and a decade as a vocational counselor with the State of Texas. She joined St Mark's after studying in the School of Wisdom and has developed and facilitated classes for the School. She is a member of the Adult Spiritual Formation Team.