Each of us has been, or someday could be, Lazarus. Each one of us could be a person who emerges from the tomb of our own serious illness, life crisis, or other catastrophe. When, sometime in our lives, we hear the command, “Lazarus, come forth!” we will understand that the person being spoken to is none other than ourselves. In their journey home, not everybody will follow in Lazarus’ footsteps. But everyone will recognize the terrain – the steep cliffs, the sharp stones, the dense thickets, and all the other features that indicate we are feeling our way through the landscape of healing. – Lewis Richmond, *Healing Lazarus: A Buddhist’s Journey from Near Death to New Life* (2004)
Course Description: ILLNESS, HEALTH & HEALING is a two-semester on-line class (1.5 units each semester). The class invites students to listen for the voices of the ill, even when those voices are tinged with pain and confusion or have long been ignored. It invites students to engage with scriptures and stories from a variety of religious traditions that address the timeless themes of illness and healing. Finally, the class invites students to develop practices that promote health and healing in their own lives and ministries.

Fall semester will focus on illness memoirs and the use of writing, prayer, contemplation and other expressive arts in healing. Spring semester will focus more broadly on approaches to illness, health and healing in different spiritual traditions and ways of promoting healthy congregations and communities. Both semesters will rely on experiential, multi-faith learning and practice.

Course Requirements:

• Students are expected to participate on-line in class weekly.

• They will need to read or watch the texts related to that week’s theme.

• They will discuss the texts through on-line posts and/or off-line conversations with classmates via skype, cell phones or in person.

• They will be asked to do one practice exercise per week and comment on a classmate’s practice post. They will also be asked to post a weekly check-in about their own health and practice.

• Finally, students will read three recommended books and/or watch four recommended films and post a short reflection on each of them. Other books or films may be substituted with the instructor’s approval.
Course Objectives: By the end of the fall semester students should be able to:

(1) Reflect on what they have learned by listening for the voices of those who are ill and cite some examples.

(2) Discuss some of the similarities and differences in the ways religious traditions approach illness, health and healing;

(3) Contribute 2-3 pieces of poetry, writing, photography or art work to the class’ on-line anthology.

(4) Share some of the joys, lessons, and struggles involved in caring for their own health and well-being.

Course Instructor: The class will be taught by Rev. Christine Fry, an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister and cancer survivor. Rev. Fry has been teaching at Starr King School for the Ministry for over ten years offering classes on Forgiveness, Spiritual Practices for These Times, Health & Healing, and Poetry, Illness & Pastoral Care. She facilitated writing groups for health and healing for more than twenty years in a variety of settings including hospitals, jails, recovery programs and churches. She lives in Davis, California with her husband, Isao Fujimoto, a UC Davis professor and long-time community activist. Their daughter – Esumi – was born during Chris’ second year at Starr King School for the Ministry and is now a senior at New York University.
Fall 2014 Calendar

Please Note: Students only need to read three of the books or watch four of the films listed here!

September 2: The Wounded Storyteller


Suggested Book: Jean Shinoda Bolen, Close to the Bone: Life-Threatening Illness as a Soul Journey (2007)

Suggested Film: The Diving Bell and the Butterfly

September 9: Poetic Medicine


Suggested Book: Christian Wiman, My Bright Abyss: Meditation of a Modern Believer (2014)

Suggested Film: Healing Words: Poetry & Medicine

September 15: When Religious Leaders Fall Ill


Suggested Film: Ram Dass: Fierce Grace
**September 22: Speak the Language of Healing**


Suggested Book: Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals*

Suggested Film: *Five*

**September 29: Art & Healing**


Suggested Film: *What Remains: The Life and Work of Sally Mann*

**October 6: Healing Lazarus**


Suggested Film: *This Emotional Life*
October 13: Contemplative Healing


Suggested Film: *Father Thomas Keating: The Contemplative Life*

October 20: Reading Week

October 27: The Reason I Jump


Suggested Film: *Autism: The Musical*

November 3: Care Givers & Soul Friends


Suggested Film: *A Beautiful Mind*
November 10: A Bi-Polar Life


Suggested Book: Charlotte Pierce-Baker, *This Fragile Life: A Mother’s Story of a Bi-Polar Son*

Suggested Film: *Bi-Polar and Living*

November 17: In the Age of AIDS


Suggested Film: *United in Anger: A History of ACT UP*

November 24: Counting Blessings


Suggested Film: *Sacred Blessings: Best Nature Music Videos*
December 1: Oliver Sacks: The “Poet Laureate of Medicine”


Suggested Film: *Awakenings*

December 8: What We Have Learned So Far