

**Starr King School for the Ministry**

**FAMILIES & SPIRITUAL PRACTICE**

**Spring 2017**



*My Family Painting*  
*expressivearts.com*

**Course Description:** In her book *The Shelter of Each Other* Mary Pipher identifies the challenges facing American families today. These range from poverty to racism, addictions to technology, too little time to consumerism, gun violence to xenophobia. Pipher suggests two of the most important things we can do to protect and nurture families is to slow down and have real conversations with each other. She calls for rebuilding families by creating a renewed sense of community or what the Sioux call a “tiospaye.”

This three-unit online class will explore ways of strengthening and supporting families at home, in congregations, and in the community through spiritual practice. The class will be

experiential and draw from a variety of sacred traditions as well as psychology, family memoirs, poetry and art. The spiritual practices to be explored will include: Hospitality, Sabbath, Being Present, Devotion, Play, Wonder, Joy, Enthusiasm, Openness, Kindness, Justice, Peace, and Hope.

### **Course Requirements:**

- I. Students are expected to participate in class weekly.
  - This will involve reading/watching class texts, doing a spiritual practice exercise, and posting responses.
  - Students will submit at minimum 4 posts per week: one on a class text and one on a spiritual practice exercise; plus, two posts in response to classmates' posts.
  - As an alternative, students may arrange to discuss class texts with classmates off-line via phone, skype, in person, and/or an online chat group. A short log of the conversation must be completed by a designated person and posted on Moodle.
  - Students are asked to notify the instructor when they are going to be absent. Students may miss ONE week of class without having to make up the weekly assignments. All other missed classes will require students to make up their work as soon as possible.

- II. Students will also be asked to do a project related to one or more spiritual practices during the semester. Examples of projects that can be done include: creating a family album or journal of their spiritual practice(s) during the semester; interviewing religious leaders about family ministry; hosting a family (or couples') film series; developing a family ritual; unplugging and/or keeping a weekly sabbath; doing research on specific topics such as interfaith families, children with special needs or transgender youth; preaching a sermon or leading a worship service related to the class, etc.

Students' project topics must be approved by the instructor by February 27, 2017.

**Course Objectives:** By the end of spring semester students should be able to:

- (1) Discuss in depth how spiritual practices can strengthen and support families in these times.
- (2) Share some of the joys, struggles and learning they experienced in doing the spiritual practice exercises.
- (3) Demonstrate a deeper understanding of a particular aspect of Families and Spiritual Practice through their class project.

**Course Texts:** There are no required books to read for this class. Each week there will be a selection of texts (articles, excerpts, video clips, etc.) for students to read/watch and discuss with classmates.

**Course Instructor:** The class will be taught by Rev. Christine Fry, Visiting Assistant Professor for Spiritual Practice & Care at Starr King School for the Ministry. Chris has been teaching at Starr King for the Ministry for over twelve years. Her courses include: Forgiveness & Moral Repair, Spiritual Practices for These Times, and Illness, Health & Healing.

Chris lives in Davis, California with her husband, Isao Fujimoto, a retired UC Davis professor and community activist. Their daughter – Esumi – was born during Chris’ second year as a student at SKSM. She is now an RN on the Labor & Delivery floor at New York University Medical Center.

**Virtual Office Hours:** Chris is available via skype, phone, and occasionally in person on Tuesday afternoons or Friday mornings by advance appointment. She is also available through email at revcfry@aol.com.

## **Spring 2017 Calendar**

January 30: **HOSPITALITY**

February 6: **SABBATH**

February 13: **BEING PRESENT**

February 20: **DEVOTION**

February 27: **PLAY**

March 5: **WONDER**

March 13: **JOY**

March 20: **ENTHUSIASM**

March 27: **READING WEEK**

April 3: **OPENNESS**

April 10: **KINDNESS**

April 17: **JUSTICE**

April 24: **PEACE**

May 1: **HOPE**

May 8: **CLOSING REFLECTIONS**

*A bibliography listing books, films and children's books for each spiritual practice will be made available by January 27, 2017.*