

GRIEF AND GRATITUDE AMIDST LOSS AND SUFFERING: Wisdom from Judaism, Christianity, and the Social Sciences

Exploring Religious Questions Series (Fall 2021)

DATES: October 11, 18, 25 and November 1

TIME: 7 to 9 p.m.

PLACE: Olin 103, Gustavus Adolphus College Campus

SERIES DESCRIPTION:

We have all experienced various losses and forms of suffering, including during the ongoing pandemic. For over a year now, the global pandemic has brought death, depression, and despair. The pandemic has also exposed racial injustices and ongoing inequalities related to health care, income, and education. At the same time, we have had to pay closer attention to what nourishes us, fosters resilience, and sparks joy and positive change. In this series, faith leaders and specialists in the science of resilience help us reflect on anguish, hope, and the paradoxical capacity to embrace both grief and gratitude amidst loss and suffering.

TITLES OF SESSIONS AND SPEAKERS:

October 11

“Sow in Tears, Reap in Joy: Jewish Perspectives on Grief”

Speaker: Rabbi Michael Latz

Latz has been the Senior Rabbi of Shir Tikvah, a synagogue in Minneapolis, since July 2009. He brings to the congregation boundless energy, heartfelt compassion, and commitment to fostering an authentic and engaging Jewish experience. Previously, he was the founding rabbi of Kol HaNeshamah in West Seattle. A Wexner Fellow during rabbinical school, Rabbi Latz was ordained by Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in 2000. In 2014, Rabbi Latz was named one of America’s Most Inspiring Rabbis by *The Jewish Daily Forward*. He is the former Co-Chair of *T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights*, a network of Jewish communities devoted to protecting human rights, and a Senior Fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute. His reflections on grief and gratitude are informed by his many years of experience as a rabbi, inter-religious leader, and human rights advocate.

October 18

“Beyond Deep Gladness: Coming to Terms with Vocations We Don’t Choose”

Speaker: Dr. Deanna Thompson

Thompson is Director of the Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community; and the Martin E. Marty Regents Chair in Religion and the Academy at St. Olaf College. Thompson has a B.A. from St. Olaf College, a Master of Arts in Religion from Yale Divinity School, and a Ph.D. in Theology from Vanderbilt University. Since her 2008 diagnosis of incurable

cancer, Thompson has published several books related to suffering, grace, and gratitude, including: *Hoping for More: Having Cancer, Talking Faith, and Accepting Grace* (Cascade 2012), a theo-memoir on living with cancer; *The Virtual Body of Christ in a Suffering World* (Abingdon, 2016) on how digital tools can help the church better live its mission of caring for those who suffer; and *Glimpsing Resurrection: Trauma, Cancer, and Ministry* (Westminster John Knox, 2018), a text that uses research on illness-related trauma to explore places in the Christian story for those undone by serious illness and offer glimpses of resurrection.

October 25

“Broken/Whole: The Beautiful, Surprising Paradoxes of Grief”

Speaker: Dr. Maria Sirois

Sirois is a master teacher, facilitator, and author. She is devoted to the science of well-being and the art of crafting a life and a work that embodies health, passion, and success. As a consultant and positive psychologist (with a Psy.D. from the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology), she focuses on the resilience of the human spirit particularly when under chronic stress, during significant transitions, and/or loss. Known for her wisdom, authenticity, and humor, she brings a wealth of perspective from decades of study in the mind/body medicine and resilience disciplines. Sirois is the author of two books: *A Short Course in Happiness After Loss (And Other Dark, Difficult Times)* and *Every Day Counts*. Her home is in the Berkshire Mountains where she attempts on a daily basis to love her children well enough so that they too find a way to embrace the world with a grounded optimism and a sense of their own strengths.

November 1

“Embracing Grief and Gravity: An Embodied Exploration”

Speaker: Professor Michele Rusinko

Rusinko is a teacher, choreographer, dancer, writer, engaged citizen and passionate life-long learner. She has taught at Gustavus Adolphus College, in St. Peter, Minnesota, since 1988, and served as chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance for over half those years. She received her B.A. from St. Olaf College and M.F.A. from Arizona State University. Her current research explores the intersections between her experience teaching dance and somatic science; the psychology of resiliency; and an embodied understanding of human dignity. She holds a certificate in Positive Psychology from the Wholebeing Institute and is currently working on Coaching Certification in Positive Psychology.

The Exploring Religious Questions series is open to the public, held annually in the fall, and co-hosted by Rev. Grady St. Dennis, Director of Church Relations at Gustavus Adolphus College, and Dr. Marcia J. Bunge, Professor of Religion and the Bernhardson Distinguished Chair of Lutheran Studies.

For more information or to register for this or any future series, please contact Jodi Maas, Assistant Director of Church Relations at Gustavus Adolphus College, 800 West College Avenue, St. Peter, MN 56082. Phone: 507-933-7001. Email: church-relations@gustavus.edu. Registration for the public is typically a minimal fee of \$35.