

Book Study on Personhood, Illness, and Death in America's Multifaith Neighborhoods by Lucinda Mosher, Th.D

Final Project for

Course: Learning in the Presence of Other Faiths

to Dr. Mary Hess

from Judi Tyler

All photos by student. Desert Botanical Gardens, Phoenix, AZ



Things you will need

- Personhood, Illness, and Death in America's Multifaith Neighborhoods by Lucinda Mosher, Th.D. ISBN: 978-1-78592-784-3
- Zoom Access if attending the night session (Call to text me at 602-509-7016 if you have difficulty.)
- Two sessions will be offered. They both last for six consecutive weeks. Please choose one. Night session is on Monday night utilizing Zoom from 6:30 -7:30 pm. The day session is in a lunch and learn format at Children's Rehabilitative Services (CRS) Clinic, 3141 N. 3rd Ave. Phoenix, AZ 85013. It will be from 12:00 to 1:00 pm on Mondays. If you need to go back and forth, please reach out to me. We will start on 9/13/2021.
- An open spirit for learning

Before Week One

- Please read pages 175-187.
- DO NOT worry about remembering every detail. The goal is ONLY to be introduced very briefly to a variety of faith traditions.
- Take Pew quiz for awareness. Do not stress when taking it. It is to see what you know. <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/07/23/what-americans-know-about-religion/>
- Begin to think about your own thoughts about and experiences of personhood, illness and death. In a Christian perspective, personhood might be called soul.

Sunset in Phoenix AZ



Week One: Setting the Stage

Introduction

Welcome



Be present

Breathing exercise
(5min)



- Welcome
- General guidelines of respect
- Introductions: Name, way you serve, faith tradition, favorite holiday tradition (religious or secular) (10 min)
- Zoom Breakout rooms: 2-3 people (or divide upon room) to discuss: When was the first time growing up that you remember someone talking about dying or you experienced someone dying? Thoughts, feelings, messages others gave you. (7 min)
- Return to larger room: Share for self: Did anything surprise you? Any noticing? (7 min)

Diversity...

- Watch “How the Five Major Religions Spread” on Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvFl6UBZLv4>. Be aware these are generalizations.
- Why is this important?
- Maricopa County is diverse religiously. America is diverse.
- While the list is from Stanford, are there any categories that surprise you?

Taken from Foley

STANFORD UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL: CATEGORIES OF “RELIGIOUS PREFERENCES” FOR PATIENTS

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Apostolic | 24. Metropolitan Community Church |
| 2. Armenian | 25. Muslim |
| 3. Assembly of God | 26. Native American |
| 4. Baha’i | 27. Nazarene |
| 5. Baptist | 28. No Religious Preference |
| 6. Bible Churches | 29. Other Religion |
| 7. Buddhist | 30. Patient declines to say |
| 8. Catholic | 31. Pentecostal |
| 9. Christian | 32. Presbyterian |
| 10. Christian Scientist | 33. Protestant |
| 11. Church of Christ | 34. Quaker |
| 12. Church of God | 35. Religious Scientist |
| 13. Church of Scientology | 36. Requests no chaplain visit |
| 14. Episcopal | 37. Russian Orthodox |
| 15. Greek Orthodox | 38. Seventh-day Adventist |
| 16. Hindu | 39. Sikh |
| 17. Jain | 40. Stanford Memorial Church |
| 18. Jehovah’s Witnesses | 41. Unitarian |
| 19. Jewish (Hebrew) | 42. United Church of Christ |
| 20. Latter-day Saints (Mormon) | 43. Unity |
| 21. Lutheran | 44. Unknown |
| 22. Mennonite | 45. Wicca |
| 23. Methodist | |

U.S. Membership Report

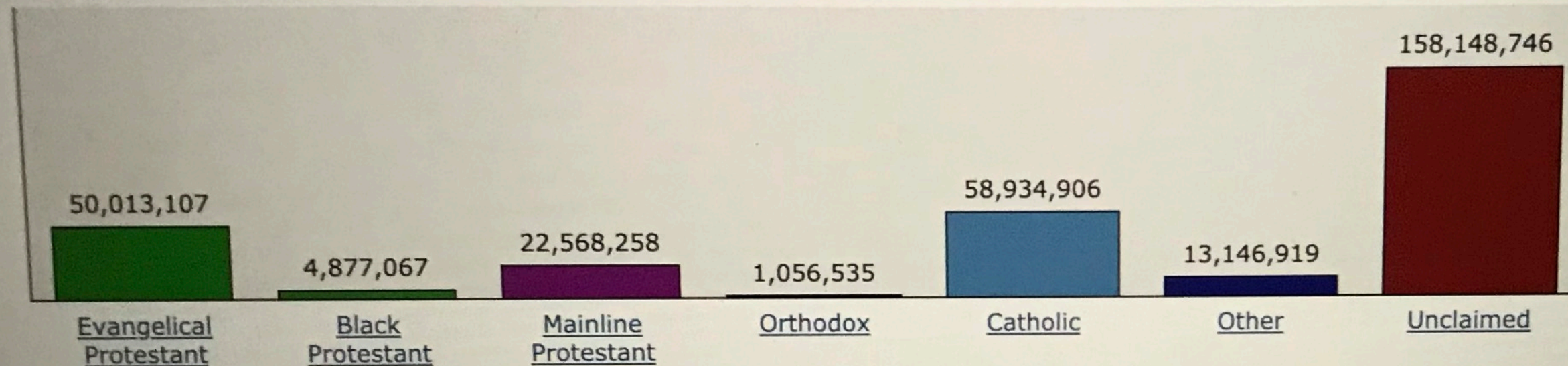
[Maps and Reports](#) > U.S. Report

Search Maps & Reports:

Go!

United States

Religious Traditions, 2010



⚠ Congregational adherents include all full members, their children, and others who regularly attend services. The 2010 reports contain incomplete counts of congregations and adherents belonging to the eight largest historically African-American denominations. These denominations are not included in the 2000 reports and are largely missing from the 1990 and 1980 reports.

[\[More information on the data sources\]](#)

ARDA is the Association Religious Data Archives.

While there are other ways of finding information, here is one way.

<https://www.thearda.com/>

Snapshots of ARDA website searches for Maricopa County and the US accessed on 5/16/2021.

the ARDA

Association of Religion Data Archives

QUALITY DATA ON RELIGION
PROVIDING FREE ACCESS SINCE 1998

Search the ARDA Search terms...

Go! Advanced Search

About the ARDA | Tools | FAQs | Contact Us

DATA ARCHIVE

INTERNATIONAL

US CONGREGATIONAL MEMBERSHIP

RELIGIOUS GROUPS

QUICKSTATS QUICKLISTS

INTERACTIVE TIMELINES

MAPS

County Membership Report

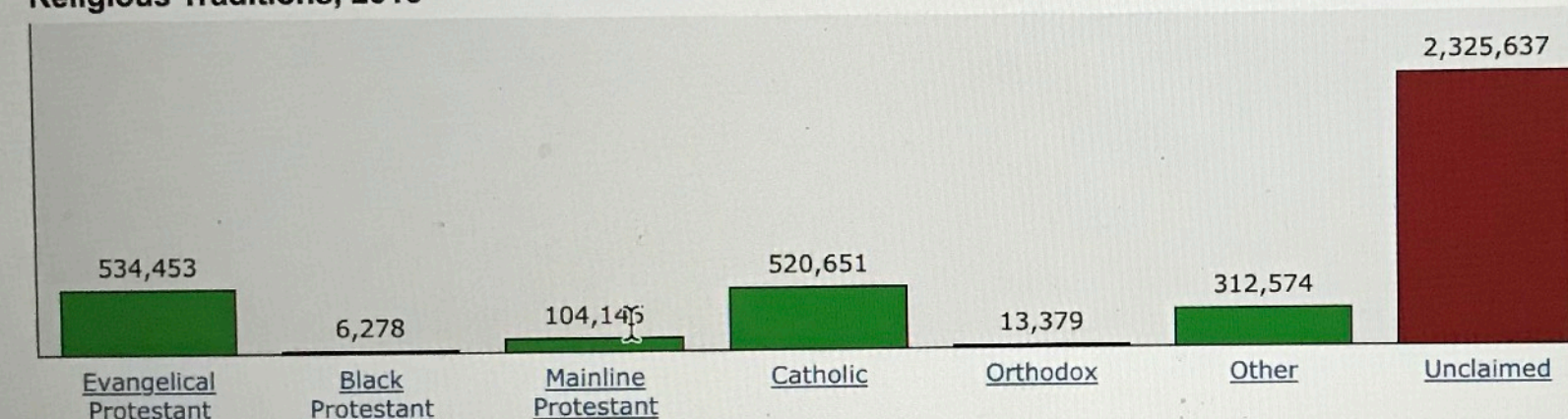
[Maps and Reports](#) > [Select Counties](#) >

Search Maps & Reports:

Go!

Maricopa County (Arizona)

Religious Traditions, 2010



⚠ Congregational adherents include all full members, their children, and others who regularly attend services. The 2010 reports contain incomplete counts of congregations and adherents belonging to the eight largest historically African-American denominations. These denominations are not included in the 2000 reports and are largely missing from the 1990 and 1980 reports.

[\[More information on the data sources\]](#)

Reports

The quiz

- No need to tell your score....
- Large group discussion: Were there things that surprised you?
- Things you would like to learn more about?

Ideas about the book...

- This book is not a handbook of prescribed beliefs.
- It does not concentrate on Christian beliefs.
- Native American focus is on tribes such as the Cherokee, Mohawk and Objive. In Southwest, tribal communities include Navajo, Tohono Oo'dam, White River Apache, San Carlos, Hopi, Gila River, Pima, Pascua Yaqui and others that I may not have mentioned. It can help to find what tribal land you live on at <https://native-land.ca/>.
- Explain Land acknowledgement and give handout for Arizona.

Details... do not fret

The book has many multiple examples. The goal is NOT to learn or remember each detail. The goal is to be present and curious. It is to start to think of what to listen for and what to ask.

Read Introduction and Chapter 1.

As you read...Ponder: What are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? Think about your answers. Listen for what is the same in different religious traditions. Listen for what is different.



Close in Prayer or Quiet

in prayer....

or quiet....



Week Two: Chapter 1: What we are

What we are? Where are we from? Where are we going?

Bean Labyrinth made by Rev. April Boyden

Be present

Roses and thorns

or

Breathing exercise

(5-10 min)



What are we ?

- Mosher starts with Data in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* who in Season 2 Episode 9 "The Measure of a Man" has to defend his personhood.
- Our understanding of who and what we are impacts our religious decisions about illness, death and grieving. Those understandings can be collective and individual.
- They can vary greatly within a faith tradition.

a soul in a body
body-mind continuum
our ancestors
personhood
jiva agents of God
body and soul
atman
part of Great Life

Breakout groups about what we are

- With your small group (2-3) share what descriptions sounded familiar.
- What descriptions sounded different or new?
- Ponder about feelings. Were there beliefs that felt uncomfortable? Were there beliefs that resonated? (7 min)
- Come back to larger group. Open to invitation but not obligation to share. (8 min)

Where are we from?

- ❖ One of the first questions we ask a person is, “Where are you from?”
- ❖ In the chat, type where you are from?
- ❖ This question goes back to the more existential question of creation and the Source or sources of life.
- ❖ Did anything surprise you?

Labyrinth under an umbrella at Eric's House,
a center for healing.



Where are we going?

- Faith Traditions have meaning making answers to this questions.
- Most fall into four categories: 1. Death as a part of circular process (multiple earthly lives). 2. This life ends—> intermediate state—> eventually bodily resurrection —> God's judgement. 3. Death —> to non-material being—> goes to special existence in cosmos. Not re-embodied. 4. Live one life—> nothing afterwards—> memory remains. (Mosher, p. 30)

What is next?

Breakout groups (2-3 people)

Talk about what you think
will happen after you die?

(10 mins) Discuss ways of how to
sit with people who think otherwise?



Large group sharing...

What were some of the ways that you
thought about what is next?

Which of the four ways sounded the most
familiar?

Which ones were new?





Close in Prayer or Quiet

in prayer.....

or in quiet.....



Week Three: Chapter 2: When We're Ailing

Attitudes, Traditional vs. Western, Multiple Faith, Spiritual Caregivers

Be present

Roses and thorns

or

Breathing exercise

(5-10 min)



Think of a time when

...

you have been or someone you love has been ill....

What messages have you been taught about illness?

How did you feel?

What did you need?



View from a hospital bed.

- Breakout rooms of 2-3 people to discuss those questions (10 min).
- Come back to larger group to share if so moved. (5-10 min)
- Listen deeply.
- Be aware to share your story, not someone else's unless permission is granted.

Attitudes Toward Illness

- Sitting with suffering
- What goes around comes around
- It's about balance

Based on your reading...

Do any of these responses sound familiar?

Do any sound different or uncomfortable?

Share in the large group. (5 min)



View outside of a nursing home.

“Traditional” versus “Western”

What has been your experience with Western medicine? With Traditional medicine?

What are some ways you could help incorporate another person's belief systems into their care?

What questions might you ask a patient regarding their needs?

Large group discussion (5 min)

Multiple Faiths in the Hospital

While hospitals may have handbooks and guides, remember that there is great variety in how we as humans live into and express our faith traditions. There is no one checklist. There is variety within the traditions as well.

Below are some areas to discuss...

- Hospital food
- Caring for one's hair
- Who may care for whom
- Reminders of our religion
- Devotional practices

Copy of diets provided at local hospital. I noticed no options for kosher or halal.

Diet Information

Your diet, like your medication, is an important part of your treatment and may speed your recovery. You will receive the diet ordered by your Doctor who may change your diet through your stay.

Consistent Carbohydrate (Diabetic) Diet

Foods that have carbohydrates affect your blood sugars, however they are an important part of your diet. About half of your calories should come from carbohydrate foods. You will be served approximately the same amount of carbohydrates at each meal. Foods that contain carbohydrates include breads, cereals, potatoes, pasta, rice, beans, milk, yogurt, fruit and desserts. Some foods, like Jell-O and Lemonade, will be sugar free.

Carbohydrate count is shown for all foods with 5 or more grams carbohydrate per serving. The meals average 55 g carbohydrate each.



Additional Diets

Regular - There are no diet restrictions.

Cardiac - The cardiac diet is low in salt and fat. Your food will be flavored with herbs and spices instead of salt. You will also be given a low salt flavor packet to season your food. High salt foods such as bacon, luncheon meats, sausage, ham and canned foods will be limited (you will be served lower salt versions or smaller amounts). You will be served fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meats, low fat salad dressings and low fat dairy products.

Renal - The renal diet is low in salt, potassium and phosphorus. You will also be given a low salt flavor packet to season your food. High salt foods include bacon, luncheon meats, sausage, ham and canned foods. High potassium foods include oranges, orange juice, bananas, potatoes, tomatoes, beans and melons. High phosphorus foods include milk, nuts and colas. You may receive small amounts of some of these foods, but they will be limited. Your doctor may also restrict the amount of fluids you can have.

Soft (Low Fiber) - Your doctor may order this diet after surgery or if you have gastrointestinal problems. The diet does not include spicy foods and is low in fiber. High fiber foods like whole grain bread, and most fresh fruits and vegetables will be limited. You will not be served foods that may cause gas, such as broccoli, cauliflower and beans. Please notify your Catering Associate if there are any other foods that cause you discomfort.



What to ask...Practice listening...

Was there something new in the reading that you noticed?

What are some questions we can ask to help patients?

- Is there something that your family can bring to make you more comfortable physically or spiritually?
- Who would you like me to call? Who are the people who care for you and you care for?
- Talk about the challenge of accommodating some needs which may mean not accommodating needs of all.

Need for asking and listening. (10 min)

Spiritual Caregivers

Other names... Chaplain....spiritual friend....

- "Can I meet them in their hurt?" (p.74)
- "One of the things that can happen in the hospital is that people can become known in ways that don't happen in their regular lives" (p.76)

What ways do you meet people where they are at? How do you decrease anxiety when you walk in a room either as a social worker or a chaplain? Large group (10 min)



Banner University Medical Center, Phoenix This is where I will do CPE.



Reflect and Close in Prayer or Quiet

in prayer.....

or in quiet.....



Week Four: Chapter Three: Postponing Death, Extending Life

Life-extending technology, Organ Transplantation, Allowing Death

walking with people....

Be present

Roses and thorns

or

Breathing exercise

(5-10 min)



Medical technology has advanced. While many sacred scriptures do not address these changes in specific detail, Mosher draws that "every religion does provide its adherents with principles on which to draw as they face them." (p. 81)

Life-extending technology and organ transplantation (donating and receiving) are issues Mosher explored.

Remember variance and in small groups, discuss and formulate questions. Feel free to use next slide if they fit. (20 min)

Ask... Listen...

- In what ways can we support patients?
- What about the variance of thoughts about mental health issues?
- What kind of role do you think a chaplain would have on the medical team?
- What questions might you ask about organ donation?



Maya's Story

What did you think of Maya's story? (p. 107)

The doctor said,
“Yes, you're going to die; but we don't know when you are going to die.”

How does that change your living ? (Large group 10 min)



Reflect....

- Have you completed your own Advanced Directives? What are some of your wishes?
- What resources might be helpful?
- What does it sound like to say “Allow Natural Death”? What does it sound like to say “Do Not Resuscitate”?

Large Group (10 min)



Resources

- <https://fivewishes.org/> : a resource for advanced directives with some areas to be able to give your wishes in a thoughtful conversation with your loved ones. Check if available / accepted in your state. Arizona does accept.
- <https://www.azag.gov/seniors/life-care-planning> : a resource created by the Attorney Generals office for advanced directive in Arizona. It is not for seniors only. It is for anyone 18 or over who is able to make decisions.
- Contact regional Area Agency on Aging that are available in every state.
(5 min)



Reflect and Close in Prayer or Quiet

in prayer.....

or in quiet.....



Week Five: Chapter Four: Transition

When death is imminent, Once death has come,

Disposing of the body Death's demands

Be present

Roses and thorns

or

Breathing exercise

(5-10 min)



When death is imminent...

- praying prayers
- creating peace
- being accompanied
- making space
- varying wishes
- asking what is needed

"When you're learning to die, you're also learning how to live. " (p. 113)



Once death has come...

Decisions have to be made. Almost all faith traditions have a ritual washing and anointing of the corpse. Common theme of staying with the body in varying degrees.

- Autopsy
- Donating the body for research
- Disposing of the body by sky burial, burial or cremation.

Ask... listen...

What traditions sound familiar? What stories sound the same?

What traditions sound different? What practices made you wonder?

What might we need to advocate for?

Traditional religions may have grounding traditions. With many people not identifying with organized religion, what might be asked to offer support?

(Large group 20 min)

Artwork by Nick Pegelow
and Danielle Bowen-Weissman for
Faith Lutheran Church in Phoenix



Funerals and memorials...

- In what ways have funeral homes and hospitals adapted?
- What challenges might occur with families who are of mixed faith traditions? Ex. Aunt Susan in the book.
- What are some ways of navigating those challenges?

Large group (10 min)



Your wishes...

Take a few minutes to write down your thoughts. You do not need to share with anyone.

- What would you want for your funeral?
- Have you thought of cremation or burial?
- Who/How would you want to be remembered?



Reflect and Close in Prayer or Quiet

in prayer.....

or in quiet.....



Week Six: Chapter Five: Recovery

Mourning, Mid-stages, Anniversaries, Large crisis

reflections

Be present

Roses and thorns

or

Breathing exercise

(5-10 min)



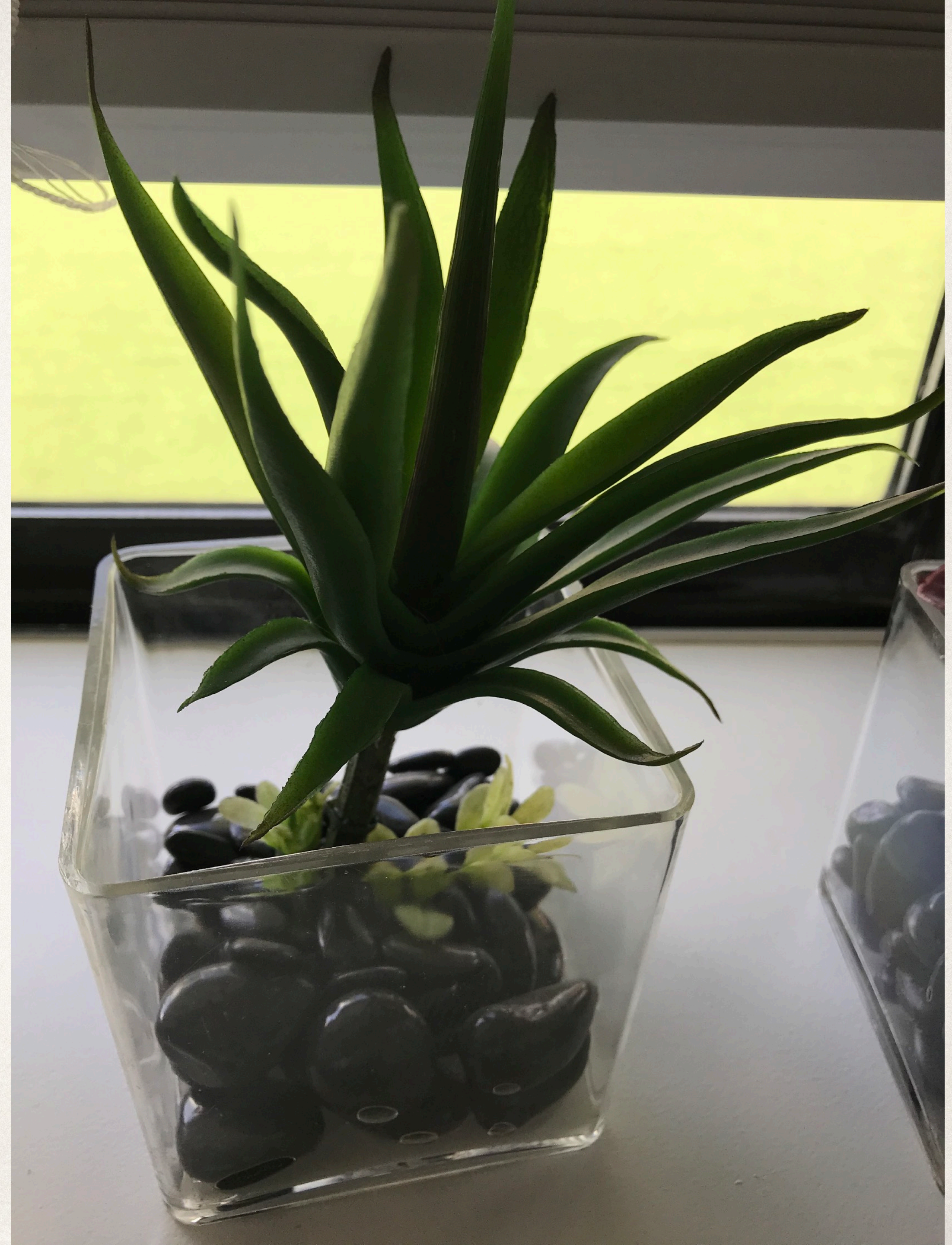
Recovery... grieving... mourning...

Grief is universal, human and painful. How it is expressed varies. Faith traditions can inform that expression.

- length of time and timing
- prayers
- reactions of community (support)
- activities like telling stories, being present, tangible tasks,

Pain and healing...

- Mosher quotes a Jewish psychologist, “you have to do two things at once: you have to feel the pain, and you have to heal from the pain. The key is to interrelate the two effectively.” (p.145)
- What did you think of the length of days that were described for mourning? How has that compared to your experience?
- In what ways might being in a country where your religion is not the dominant religion affect your mourning? Large group (10 min)



Ask... Listen....

- What is the importance of ritual, formula and tradition in your experience ? What sounded similar? What was different?
- Reflect on the importance of telling stories.
- How might one create space for people in grief to tell stories? What awareness does one need to consider those for whom the US culture is not their first culture? Small group (10 min)



Mid-stages of grief and Anniversaries...

- Those who remain grieve. There is no exact timeline.
- How that looks is influenced by our traditions, beliefs, feelings and experiences.
- Anniversaries can be hard.
- From your experience or reading, what sounded helpful? What seemed difficult?



When loss is multi-religious...

I wish Mosher did not have to include this section on tragedy in the book but given the violence in our world and the multiple faiths that we have in the world and in the US, that may be something that we experience.

Mosher quotes a scholar of South Asian religion, “There are moments when one religion needs another to be itself; occasions when difference is needed—not tolerated, not dialogued about, but needed—because our survival depends on it.” (p. 165)

Reflect...

- What is your reaction to the quote on the previous slide? No right answer.
- Hospitality and creating space for telling stories is important.
- National Interfaith Disaster Network <http://www.n-din.org/>



Resources... just a few...

- Grief Watch: <https://griefwatch.com/> - a resource in Portland, OR which produces resources for people who are grieving.
- Tear Soup Book: a beautiful picture book which provides thoughtful and deep comfort for those in grief. It uses the analogy of grieving as making tear soup and give practical guidance in just the right amounts. Available at Grief Watch above.
- MISS Foundation: <https://www.missfoundation.org/> - an organization designed to help families who have experienced the loss of a child.

Resources continued...

- Eric's House: <https://www.ericshouse.org/> - an organization designed to walk with those healing after loss to addiction, suicide or sudden loss. It is a local resource in AZ but they may be able to connect to others or provide support using technology. There is an interfaith minister/ grief companion who may be able to connect to local resources.
- Grief Share: <https://www.griefshare.org/> - a Christian organization that partners with churches to provide grief support following an educational program that they have created. Focuses on group work, videos and individual workbooks. While it may be helpful for Traditional Christians, it would not be appropriate for interfaith communities.
- Often you can reach out to local hospice organizations for grief resources.

Thank you for participating...

Remember to:

- be present
- ask
- listen
- reflect

Thank you for being present.

A survey will be emailed out. Please take time to complete so that I can improve. Thank you!





Reflect and Close in Prayer or Quiet

in prayer.....

or in quiet.....

Works Cited

Foley, Edward. *Theological Reflection across Religious Traditions: the Turn to Reflective Believing*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

Mosher, Lucinda. *Personhood, Illness, and Death in America's Multifaith Neighborhoods: a Practical Guide*. London: Jessica Kingsley, 2018.

“NativeLand.ca.” Native. Accessed May 22, 2021. <https://native-land.ca/>.

“Reports Maricopa County.” The Association of Religion Data Archives | Maps & Reports. Accessed May 22, 2021. <https://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/rcms2010.asp?U=38060&T=metro&Y=2010&S=Name+Maricopa+County>.

“Reports United States.” The Association of Religion Data Archives | Maps & Reports. Accessed May 22, 2021. https://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/r/u/rcms2010_99_US_name_2010.asp.

“Star Trek: The Next Generation The Measure of a Man.” Episode. Season 2, no. Episode 9, February 13, 1989.

“U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey.” Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, May 30, 2020. <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/07/23/what-americans-know-about-religion/>.