***Personal Retreat Outline***

***Prophetic Christian Spirituality 2016***

***Some Thoughts On Taking This Retreat***

In Schneider’s *How The Light Gets In*, she makes the comparison between writing and praying that they are both about “an openness to the presence of mystery.” Both writing and praying put out the “bait of desire” into that water of mystery and waiting for “a tug of something at the end of the line.” During this retreat, I hope for all of you that your desire includes more deeply engaging your prophetic Christian spirit. I hope that you will do this through some practices of prayer and writing during this retreat.

You need to complete this 24- hour personal retreat by the end of Week Seven (Sunday, February 21). We will discuss your experience and insights about prophetic Christian spirituality from the retreat during our Google Hangout in Week 8.

A retreat is about opening up space to listen, to ourselves and our divine source. I can’t tell you exactly what to do to achieve this listening. In my experience, it is about quiet and focus.

I am giving you these guidelines to aide you in having a retreat that is focused on the course content. This is a retreat, a spiritual practice for you, to spend time with the notion of being a Christian prophet. It bears mentioning, however, that I do not expect you to do everything that I have written here. This is a guide. This is *your* retreat. I am trying to give you enough guidance without giving you too much.

Some of you have a lot of individual retreat experience. You have a sense of pace and what it is like to be alone for an intentional time of spiritual reflection. I encourage you to do and be what you need to do and be, in your way. That being said, I do have expectations that you will spend time focusing and reflecting on what it means to develop/have a prophetic Christian spiritual life. *The focus of this retreat is on the spiritual practice dimension as it relates to developing, being and sustaining the prophetic Christian life.*

You are intended to go on this retreat alone and to be in solitude and reflection for 24 hours (more if you like). I recommend that you find a place to retreat that is not in your home or other places where you normally operate. If you cannot figure out a place to stay outside of your home overnight, that is understandable. But as far as you can make it happen, you need to be by yourself for at least a 24-hour period.

***Outline***

The following is a basic, flexible outline for the retreat for you to follow. If you have been on your own personal retreat before, then you already may have a sense of what you need/what to bring to facilitate your settling into a period of quiet and reflection.

***What To Bring***

Some items that may assist you in creating an atmosphere of focus are:

* Altar items including candles, religious icons
* A Bible
* Pens, markers, other art supplies
* Music

If at all possible, don’t bring your computer. Or if you bring it, don’t connect it to the internet. This is a retreat. The word retreat refers to the act of withdrawing.

Obviously, if you are away from home you need to account for food and water.

Bring your daily journal from the course, including the Guiding Questions for Christian Prophets worksheet. Bring Thurman’s *Disciplines of the Spirit* and Schneider’s *How the Light Gets In*.

***Start Your Retreat***

I recommend that you start your retreat by building an altar of some kind, a focal point, and by simply taking an hour or so to check in with yourself. Sit and breathe. Let yourself settle. Journal about life itself and get some of your thoughts out on a page. Try to move your thinking and reflecting towards what you are hoping this time of retreat will be about for you.

At some point, you ask for guidance that your Spirit might be open to receiving what you need to receive and what you are intended to receive during this time. More breathing, waiting, listening.

Then do some reading and/or reflecting on the following parts of Thurman and Schneider.

Howard Thurman, *Disciplines of the Spirit*

* Ch. 2 “Growing in Wisdom and Stature.”
* Ch. 4 “Prayer”

Pat Schneider. *How the Light Gets In*.

* Reread Chapters 1-2, and read chapters 11-17.

***With regards to the Thurman reading, consider the following:***

What are the disciplines of my spirit? What do I understand to be prayer? How is my prayer life? Is prayer the core of my life? Do my spiritual practices, including prayer, cause me to grow in wisdom and stature as Thurman describes it? What might this mean for being a prophet? What does it mean for the practice of being a prophet to learn how to wait, to live in the “tension between the impulse to move forward and the impulse to stay put”? In terms of the prophetic spiritual life, what might it mean and how does it feel to stand alone, to belong to oneself? How do we deal with failure spiritually? How do we deal with our need for results? Do I have reverence for the prophetic task? How do my spiritual disciplines, including my prayer, reveal my hunger for justice?

***With regards to the Schneider reading, consider the following:***

With regards to the prophetic spiritual life, how do we deal with “the shadow that falls between our intention and our act” (173) without being overwhelmed by our inadequacy? In prayer, in writing, in the prophetic life, how do we “stay there” in the difficult moments? How can you use your writing as a part of your toolkit for social justice? How do we make our writing a public (and perhaps prophetic) act? How can our Christian tradition hold new and alive prophetic forms? How do we embrace the strangeness and the estrangement of the prophetic life? Do we allow ourselves to be surprised? How do we learn to trust our own voices, the divine? Does/how does our faith community nurture/not nurture our prophetic life? How free are we to be who we desire to be, spiritually, prophetically, in Christian community? When and how and how often do we experience joy in prayer, in writing, in prophetic life and work, in the faith community?

Read. Underline. Ponder. Ask yourself the question/s that resonate most with your spirit, however that resonance manifests itself (sometimes begin agitated about a question or thought can be the Spirit’s prodding, as well as something that beckons you in a more peaceful, flowing kind of way). You can ask a question in your mind, out loud, or in your journal. Ask yourself or ask God. Pause and listen. Try to stay in the moment. This is the key. As Schneider suggests in writing and in prayer, try to pause, try to listen, and see what comes, what flows. When you are moved to do so, write in your journal. Or draw. Create. Respond.

In general terms, if you simply want to pray and write reflectively upon where you are in the course and what is really speaking to you right now, that is also good. What are you feeling and thinking about this matter of being a prophet? How are you are with your spiritual life and regular spiritual practices? Do these practices assist and support you in becoming more prophetic in your life and work, and in what way? Do you feel any movement of the Spirit beckoning you to new action or new spiritual practices in relation to being a prophetic Christian? The Guiding Questions for Christian Prophets may also be a useful tool.

Give yourself breaks. Eat. Take a walk. Nap. Have a glass of water, or a cup of tea or coffee. Go back to the materials.

**Throw out your bait of desire.**

**Prophetic.**

**Christian.**

**Spirituality.**

**Read.**

**Listen.**

**Pray.**

**Pause.**

**Wait.**

**Reflect.**

**Respond.**

**Wait.**

**Accept what Comes.**

**Allow for the Element of Surprise.**

**Write.**

**Draw.**

**Create.**