**323 Congregational Care**
2027 January Session

Instructor: Rev. Dr. April Johnson Bristow
ajbristow@smu.edu
214-768-6924

## Course Objectives

This course introduces students to practices of congregational care and the pastor's responsibility in caregiving. Students will be able to:

1. Implement and oversee appropriate types of care in varieties of settings, including prisons, hospitals, nursing facilities, and homes.

2. Organize caring ministries within the congregation.

3. Discern and implement appropriate boundaries, knowing when and to whom to refer people, and when and when not to share information.

4. Reflect on and practice skills of sensitive caregiving, using role play and analysis case studies.

5. Prioritize self-care, recognizing its importance in sustaining long-term effectiveness and emotional resilience in ministry.

**Required Readings:**
*Sacred Self-Care: Daily Practices for Nurturing Our Whole Selves* by Chanequa Walker Barnes

*Dave Test: A Raw Look at Real Faith in Hard Times* by Frederick Schmidt

*Crisis Counseling in the Congregation* by Larry Webb

*Pastoral Care: Telling the Story of Our Lives* by Karen Scheib

*"On Visiting the Sick"* by John Wesley:
https://www.biblesnet.com/john-wesley-on-visiting-the-sick.pdf

**Supplemental Texts:**
*African American Pastoral Care and Counseling: Oppression and Empowerment* by Ed Wimberly

*Practicing Care in Rural Congregations and Communities* Jeanne Hoeft, Shannon Jung, Joretta Marshall

*Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling* by Howard Clinebell

# Pre-Class Assignments

Pre-Class Assignments – Due January 15, 2027 11:59pm via Canvas. All assignments are in paragraph/essay form, except for the Resource Sheet which can be a spreadsheet or whatever format you prefer.

1. Read John Wesley's Sermon *On Visiting the Sick*. Write a one-page paper identify three key points that Wesley highlights and discuss their implications for the ministry of pastoral care.
2. Read Frederick Schmidt's *The Dave Test: A Raw Look at Real Faith in Hard Times*. Each chapter poses a question. Choose three chapters to write a one page response to each of the three chosen questions. Describe how the chapter either informed your pastoral care or challenged your thinking. This assignment should total three pages.
3. Prepare a Resource Sheet identifying 10 professional resources that are appropriate to your geographic area to whom you may need to refer a parishioner presently or in the future. (List can include, but not limited to: physicians, first responders, mental health professionals, support groups, homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters). For each entry include: name of the agency, contact person, address and contact information; range of services offered; referral requirements; fees, if appropriate.

   Establish contact with at least five of the resources. On the Resource Sheet annotate an entry with notes from your encounter (call, visit, email). This assignment can be a spreadsheet or whatever format you prefer.

4. Local Hospital **OR** Funeral Home Tour Assignment. Choose either the Local Hospital Tour Assignment **OR** the Funeral Home Tour Assignment (see attached) to complete a 1-2 page reflection paper.
5. Complete the "Listening to Your Life" Wheel Exercise – Part One (see attached). Complete the instructions to fill out the wheel. Submit the Observation questions and your BeSMART goal. (1 page).

   ***Please give yourself at least four weeks to complete Part Two of this assignment. You will be setting a goal and working toward your goal during the weeks of the class.

6. Listen to Julian Treasure's TED Talk "5 Ways to Listen Better" https://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_5_ways_to_listen_better?language =en#t-3333 (Links to an external site.) In his talk, Treasure mentions five ways to improve listening. Over four weeks practice all five ways of the suggestions for better listening at least twice. Take notes or journal your experiences or your observations. There is no written paper due for this assignment. You need four weeks to complete this assignment.

7. Read *Sacred Self Care: Daily Practices to Nurture Our Whole Selves* by Chanequa Walker Barnes. This is a book of daily devotions and it takes 49 days to complete all of the devotions. Your experience with the spiritual disciplines will be a final assignment. For the Pre-Class Assignment - commit to dedicating 49 days to follow Walker-Barnes proposed daily practices. You will reflect on five specific days where the practice particularly challenged you or revealed new meanings or deeper insights. There is no written pre-class assignment.

8. Read *Pastoral Care: Telling the Stories of Our Lives*. Karen Scheib sets forth instructions on how to be a story companion in chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8. Use close listening and close reading skills to engage in a pastoral conversation with a member of your ministry setting who has suffered a loss or is experiencing a challenge. Using the information from these chapters, reflect on the conversation and where you noticed at least three concepts that Scheib discusses. Concepts include (but not limited to): observations of power, boundaries, confidentiality, narrative environments, story-o-typing, restorying, narrative foreclosure, or any other concept that Scheib highlights. (This list is given as an example of possible reflection points. You do not need to write about all of these. You can write about any of Scheib's concepts not mentioned in this list.)

   Write a three-page paper reflecting on at least three ways that Scheib's concepts gave pastoral care insight into in this conversation. Please do not do a verbatim of the conversation or interview the person for the paper, the goal of this assignment is to use your listening skills and close reading skills to write your pastoral reflection on the concepts presented in the book in a way that is organic and natural to the person's concern.

   **This paper should be no more than three pages in length.**
   Ensure your reflections are concise, thoughtful, and well-organized.
   Submit your paper by January 15, 2027 at 11:59PM via Canvas.

9. Read Crisis Counseling in the Congregation by Larry Webb. Select a topic that you would like to create a pastoral care intervention for a Course Integration Presentation. Submit the topic you will work on for approval. Email topic to ajbristow@smu.edu no later than January 15, 2027 at 11:59PM via Canvas.

# Final Assignments – Due February 25, 2027 11:59pm via Canvas

**Final Assignment #1 – Listening to Your Life Part Two and Foundations of Self-Care and Biblical/Theological Framework (two pages total).**

Listening to My Life SMART Goal Progress (1 page): Write a reflection paper about the self-care goal that you worked on during class. How did it go? What did you learn about yourself?

Write a one-page paper discussing your biblical, theological and practical foundations for the importance of self-care? Why does self-care in life and ministry even matter? (1 page).

**Final Assignment #2 - Sacred Self-Care Assignment (two pages total)**

Sacred Self-Care: Daily Practices for Nurturing Our Whole Selves by Chanequa Walker-Barnes

Objective: This assignment invites you to engage deeply with Chanequa Walker-Barnes' Sacred Self-Care by dedicating 49 days during the semester to follow her proposed daily practices. You will reflect on five specific days where the practice particularly challenged you or revealed new meanings or deeper insights.

**Instructions**
Daily Practice Commitment:

Commit to practicing the daily self-care suggestions from Sacred Self-Care: Daily Practices for Nurturing Our Whole Selves for 49 days during the semester. You must start this assignment no later than January 7, 2027 to finish on time.

Selection of Reflection Days:

Choose five specific days from your 49-day practice that stood out because the activity was either particularly challenging or provided new insights or meanings.

Reflection Paper:

Write a reflection paper that covers the following for each of the five selected days:
Date and Practiced: Briefly state the date and the specific practice you followed that day.
Experience: Describe your experience with the practice on that day.
Challenges or New Insights: Reflect on what made this practice challenging or what new meaning or insight you gleaned from the activity.

**The paper should be no more than two pages in length.**

Ensure your reflections are concise, thoughtful, and well-organized.

Submit your paper by February 25, 2027 11:59PM via Canvas.

**Final Assignment #3 - Course Integration Presentation**

Using an idea from Crisis Counseling in the Congregation, identify a contemporary issue in your church or community to organize a caring pastoral intervention. You can also use a topic that Webb does not mention.

In your presentation, identify the topic and why it is important for your ministry setting. Discuss the biblical, theological, and community/societal concerns. Be sure your presentation answers the questions: What is a pastoral response that can address the concern? Your pastoral response should be biblically and theologically grounded and should have practical application in your ministry setting. What are some opportunities for you to take action around this issue? How will you engage laity in the pastoral response? What community partners or resources can you use to address this concern?

Presentations will be held during class time. The class size will determine how long the presentations will be and when they will be held.

**Grading Distribution**

- Attendance, Class Participation and Role Play: **10%**
- Self-Care Assignments: **30%**
- Reports and Reflection Papers: **25%**
- Class Integration Presentation: **20%**
- Resource and Collaboration Building Assignments: **15%**

**Grading Policy**

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|---|---|---|
| ***A*** *= 95-100* | ***B-*** *= 80-82* | ***D+*** *= 67-69* |
| ***A-*** *= 90-94* | ***C+*** *= 77-79* | ***D*** *= 63-66* |
| ***B+*** *= 87-89* | ***C*** *= 73-76* | ***D-*** *= 60-62* |
| ***B*** *= 83-86* | ***C-*** *= 70-72* | ***F*** *= **59** or below* |