

Course Syllabus
KNP1446H – Faith Formation
Knox College
Toronto School of Theology
Winter 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor: The Rev. Dr. Sarah Travis
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Course Identification

Course Number: KNP1446H
Course Format: *Online*
Course Name: Faith Formation
Course Location: Online via zoom
Class Times: Thursdays 2-4pm
Prerequisites: none

Course Description

Reformed Christians believe that the Bible belongs to the community of faith and is interpreted by the community through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The community requires training and education if it is to take ownership of the word and apply the word to lived experience. This course considers the role of the Teaching Elder (Minister) in a congregation; explores how individuals are equipped to engage with God's word through the lifespan; and explores best practices and resources for teaching Bible and theology in the church. Paying attention to the post-Christendom context, in which knowledge of Christian scriptures and traditions is no longer assumed, this course equips leaders to foster faith formation in intergenerational, diverse contexts.

This course engages with the theme of innovative leadership in the Knox MDiv.

Course Resources

Required Course Texts/Bibliography

- Brueggemann, Walter, and Amy Erickson. *The Creative Word : Canon as a Model for Biblical Education*. Second edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.
- Florence, Anna Carter. *Rehearsing Scripture : Discovering God's Word in Community*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018.
- Palmer, Parker J. *The Courage to Teach : Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 1997.
- Alary and Travis – The Body at Play Circle Play chapter (unpublished)

A note on the readings: I have not assigned weekly readings, but rather given the dates on which a particular book will be discussed in class. Please read the book by the date scheduled and plan your time accordingly. Please prepare at least 2 insightful comments about each book, to be shared in class discussions.

Course Website

Quercus: <https://q.utoronto.ca/>

This course uses Quercus for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT Quercus login page at <https://q.utoronto.ca/> and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to Quercus using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you'll find the link to the website for all your Quercus-based courses. (Your course registration with ACORN gives you access to the course website in Quercus.) Information for students about using Quercus can be found at: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701>. Students experiencing difficulties accessing Quercus should contact the registrar's office of their college.

Course Schedule (subject to change)

Week 1: January 8

Course Introduction

This week we will talk about faith formation and how people learn. There will be time to review the syllabus together. We will set individual learning goals and get to know each other. What is faith formation and why does it matter? What can we learn about how human development that will help us understand faith formation? We will discuss the significant role of scripture in Christian faith formation.

Week 2: January 15

Context

This week we will look faith formation through the lens of our location as a church post-Christendom. We have far fewer children and youth than previous generations of churches. We live in a truly global church that is diverse in every way. The western church finds itself in a position of marginalization, and repentance for its contribution to colonialism. Faith formation today is not like it has ever been before. We are forging new ground. In this class we will learn

(briefly) about the history of faith formation in North America in the twentieth century, tracing the significance of Sunday School, major social changes and developments in educational theory.

Week 3: January 22

Pastoral Leaders as Teachers

This week we will look at the identity of the pastoral leader – personally and professionally. In many ways – through sermons and liturgy, in bible studies, in pastoral care, in administration, we are given opportunities to teach in the church. What is the role of a pastoral leader in terms of faith formation? What are the qualities of a good teacher in the realm of theological education? Do you see yourself as a teacher and if so, what is your teaching style?

Please come prepared to discuss **Palmer, The Courage to Teach**.

Week 4: January 29

Curating Resources and Curriculum

One of the best things about being a faith formation leader is that you don't have to reinvent the wheel. There are an amazing number of resources available that can be used to support you in your work in the church. This week, we're teaming up with Librarians from the Caven Library who will introduce us to a broad array of resources for faith formation – and where to find them. We will discuss how to choose good quality resources and evaluate them. We will also put Florence's proposal for rehearsing scripture into practice -trying out some of her practices and evaluate their effectiveness.

Please come prepared to discuss **Florence, Rehearsing Scripture**.

Week 5: February 5

Educating through the Church Year

This week we will explore the liturgical year and the opportunities it presents for faith formation in the church. Each liturgical season brings its own set of emotions, longings and theological questions. Through words, images and visual elements, each season of the year is filled with rich opportunities for learning. Liturgical time aligns us with God's story as it is told throughout the church year.

Please come prepared to discuss *Alary/Travis "Circle Play"*

Week 6: February 10

Evaluating Faith Formation Approaches

Maya Angelou said that when we know better, we do better. This class explores some of the criticism of historical educational processes from the perspective of anti-racism, anti-

oppression, decolonizing and feminist scholarship. Christian faith formation has happened in many ways around the globe. It is to our benefit to explore perspectives that might be new or unfamiliar to us. Many of these perspectives offer a critique of the very educational systems in which we were raised. In this way, we pay attention to voices from the margins.

Reading Week: February 19

Week 7: February 26

Book Reviews

Week 8: March 5

Equipping the Family for Faith Formation

One of the first things I learned in pastoral ministry was that ministry to children and youth always involves ministry to families. From baptismal and marriage preparation to confirmation preparation, there are opportunities to teach through life-cycle events. We will talk about what ministry with children and youth looks like today, as well as the elderly. Summer camp is another space of faith formation that welcomes the family. We will talk about the significance of camping ministries for Canadian denominations.

Week 9: March 12

Intergenerational faith formation

In recent years there have been more opportunities for intergenerational learning and worship. As congregations have been reconfigured by such factors as the Covid-19 pandemic and the general decline of mainline congregations. Churches without Sunday schools have long known that it is a blessing to have children in the sanctuary. It is also a challenge. This class looks at intergenerational worship as a means of faith formation throughout the lifespan. How is intergenerational worship a teaching opportunity? This will be an opportunity to introduce Children in Worship and Godly play curricula.

Week 10: March 19

Equipping Leaders for Faith Formation

The pastoral leader is not solely responsible for faith formation – that is a responsibility for the whole Session. A key aspect of pastoral ministry involves training leaders in your congregation. The pastoral leader cannot and should not be leading all of the faith formation opportunities in the church. The pastoral leader does have responsibility to ensure that others are equipped and prepared to lead. This may involve training the Session, church school leaders, and adult Bible study leaders. What are the best practices for equipping church members to lead in the faith formation ministry of the church? How does one fulfill the responsibilities of being a ‘teaching elder’?

Week 11: March 26

Teaching Scripture: Faith Formation and Bible Studies

While scripture plays an important role in all aspects of Christian faith formation, it has a special role in the adult bible study. There are many options for leading bible studies, some of which you have already explored through your bible study assignment. We will discuss best practices for leading a bible study, as well as exploring ideas for content.

Please come prepared to discuss **Brueggemann, “The Creative Word”**

- Lesson plan due

Week 12: April 5

Preacher as Teacher: Sermons as ‘Faith-Forming’

In a typical church, the sermon is probably the most well attended faith formation opportunity. While sermons have many purposes, they are a significant source for the education of the church. Sermons teach us about scripture, theology, and how to interpret the world around us in light of the gospel. This class will talk about the educational potential of the sermon.

- Concise theology of Faith Formation Due

Exam Week

- Church Year Faith Formation Plans Due

Evaluation

Requirements

The final grade for the course will be based on evaluations in six areas:

Basic Degree Students:

1. [10%] Students will participate fully in the classes, being present and on time.
2. [15%] Students will lead a 20-minute bible study, in class, designed for adults. It will be based on any scripture from the Daily lectionary for the assigned date. Students must tell the story and guide the class through a process of studying and learning from the text. Due as Scheduled
3. [15%] Students will submit a lesson plan designed to equip Ruling Elders (the session) on a point of doctrine within the Presbyterian Church in Canada. This document should be no more than 3 pages and may be in point form. Please describe, in detail, how you would teach your Session about a point of doctrine. Visuals welcome. Due March 26.

4. [15%] Students will create a Concise theology of Faith Formation which outlines their own perspective on theological education within the church. This document should be no more than 500 words, and is meant to provide a snapshot of the student's theology related to faith formation. Due April 5
5. [20%] Students will read one of the following books and prepare a 10-minute summary and evaluation of the book – to be presented in Week 7. Time limits will be honoured.

Dean, Kenda Creasy, and Ron Foster. *The Godbearing Life : The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1998.

hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress : Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Jennings, Willie James. *After Whiteness : An Education in Belonging*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020.

Leddy, Shannon, and Lorrie Miller. *Teaching Where You Are : Weaving Indigenous and Slow Principles and Pedagogies*. Toronto ; University of Toronto Press, 2024.

Nouwen, Henri J. M, Michael J Christensen, and Rebecca Laird. *Spiritual Formation : Following the Movements of the Spirit*. 1st ed. New York: HarperOne, 2010.

6. [25%] Students will create a “Church Year Faith Formation Plan.” Based on a particular congregation/ministry context, the student will plan for a year's worth of educational activities – for each season of the liturgical year. Students are required to choose 1 bible study curriculum, design 1 multi-week study, outline a 3-part sermon series, choose a church school or VBS curriculum. Other activities may be described in a paragraph. For example, students might choose a curriculum for an adult advent study, design and prepare a multi-week Lenten study, and preach a series of sermons teaching about Pentecost. Easter might include an intergenerational learning event, and Ordinary time might involve a series of ‘teaching moments’ in worship about Jesus’ ministry. Due April 9.

Grading System - Basic Degree Students

1000, 2000 and 3000 level courses use the following numerical grading scale:

90-100 (A+) Exceptional

Grading System - Graduate Degree Students

5000, 6000 and 7000 level courses use the following alpha grading scale:

A+ (90-100) Profound & creative

85-89 (A)	Outstanding	A	(85-89)	Outstanding
80-84 (A-)	Excellent	A-	(80-84)	Excellent
77-79 (B+)	Very Good	B+	(77-79)	Very Good
73-76 (B)	Good	B	(73-76)	Good
70-72 (B-)	Acceptable	B-	(70-72)	Satisfactory
0-69 (FZ)	Failure	FZ	(0-69)	Failure

Please see the appropriate Conjoint Degree handbook for more details about the grading scale and non-numerical grades (e.g. SDF, INC, etc.).

Policies

A note about “triggers”: As you prepare for your vocation, you will encounter situations in class and in the real world that stretch the limits of your emotional capacity. If you are struggling with your emotions, please reach out to the Professor. In this class, you are welcome to leave the class for a few minutes, or take a walk if you need time to pull yourself together. If your distress continues, please reach out to the Registrar’s office whose staff will be ready to assist you. In your practice of ministry, you will not necessarily have an opportunity to collect yourself before responding to uncomfortable emotions. It is vital that you learn coping skills and strategies for caring for yourself.

Class attendance. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner congruent with the vocation they are seeking to enter and in which they desire to give leadership. To that end, it is a regulation of Knox College that a minimum of approximately 80% attendance at courses (10 of 12 weeks) is required for credit; 100% attendance is expected at seminar courses. Habitual lateness for class will be counted as absence.

Teaching and learning are interactive, not passive, activities. Therefore, students may not “attend” an in-person class through unauthorized audio or video streaming or by watching or listening to a recording; instructors are not obligated to record or permitted to stream their in-person classes. Online classes that include a synchronous video component require the same level of attendance as an in-person course, and students may not “attend” by watching or listening to a recording. Online classes that include an asynchronous component require participation in all the activities for each week or module to meet the attendance requirement. Students requiring accommodations to attend class must present medical and/or Accessibility Services documentation that outlines the type and duration of accommodation(s) required.

Class recording. Much of the learning that goes on in the virtual or in-person classroom is founded upon mutual disclosure that takes place between instructor and student, and between students. Parties outside of this learning community have not committed themselves to this relationship of trust. A student without an approved accommodation who wishes to make an audio recording of an in-person class must secure the agreement of the instructor and all classmates; livestreaming and video recordings are not permitted. Online video-streamed classes may be recorded at the discretion of the instructor. Personal recordings may be used

only by the student who made the recording; no recording may be reproduced, posted, or distributed without the written permission of the instructor.

Late work (BD). Basic Degree students are expected to hand in assignments by the date given in the course outline. There is no penalty for late work, but students must communicate with the instructor if they are going to be late submitting an assignment.] The absolute deadline for the course is the examination day scheduled for the course or the last day of exam week for the semester in which the course is taught, whichever is sooner.

This penalty is not applied to students with documented medical or compassionate difficulties or exceptional reasons (e.g., a death in the family or a serious illness); students facing such difficulties are kindly requested to consult with their faculty adviser or basic degree director, who should make a recommendation on the matter to the instructor and request an SDF. The absolute deadline for obtaining an SDF for the course is the examination day scheduled for the course or the last day of examination week, whichever is sooner. An SDF must be requested from the registrar's office in the student's college of registration no later than the last day of exam week in which the course is taken. The SDF, when approved, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. If a student has not completed work but has not been granted an SDF, a final mark will be submitted calculating a zero for work not submitted.

Late work (Graduate). The prima facie deadline for the completion of work in a course is the last day of the examination week for the trimester in which the course is taken. Students are expected to meet the course deadlines of the instructor offering the course and are advised to plan their research projects accordingly. Students who find themselves unable to meet deadlines for completing coursework can, under certain conditions, receive extensions for completing the work after the dates set by the college in which the course is offered.

The authority to grant an extension for the completion of work in a course beyond the original TST or college deadline (whichever is earlier) for that course rests with the student's college Graduate Director, not the instructor of the course. Nevertheless, the instructor's signature is required for course extension requests to be processed. Students will petition their college Graduate Director for extensions, using a standard form provided by TST on its website. See Section 7.11 of the Conjoint Graduate Degree Handbook.

Course grades. Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor's college before being posted to ACORN. Grades are not official until they are posted to ACORN. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy found at <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/grading-practices-policy-university-assessment-and-january-26-2012>, policies found in the TST conjoint program handbooks, or college grading policy.

Inclusive Language. Knox College has an inclusive language policy, available at https://knox.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Knox-College-Policy_Use-of-Language-Policy-and-Glossary_221003.pdf.

Accessibility. Students with a disability or health consideration, whether temporary or permanent, are entitled to accommodation. Students in conjoint degree programs must register at the University of Toronto's Accessibility Services offices; information is available at <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

Plagiarism. Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to their head of college or delegate according to the Graduate program Handbook linked from <http://www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms/handbooks> and the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>. A student who plagiarizes in this course will be assumed to have read the document "Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing" published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges: <https://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/library/research/theology/avoiding-plagiarism-in-theological-writing/>

Other academic offences. TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>.

Back-up copies. Please make back-up copies of assignments before handing them in.

Obligation to check email. At times, the course instructor may decide to send out important course information by email. To that end, all students in conjoint programs are required to have a valid utoronto email address. Students must have set up their utoronto email address which is entered in the ACORN system. Information is available at www.utorid.utoronto.ca. The course instructor will not be able to help you with this. 416-978-HELP and the Help Desk at the Information Commons can answer questions you may have about your UTORid and password. Students should check utoronto email regularly for messages about the course. **Forwarding** your utoronto.ca email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that emails from me may end up in your spam or junk mail folder. Students in non-conjoint programs should contact the Registrar of their college of registration.

Email communication with the course instructor. The instructor aims to respond to email communications from students in a timely manner. All email communications from students in

conjoint programs must be sent from a utoronto email address. Email communications from other email addresses are not secure, and also the instructor cannot readily identify them as being legitimate emails from students. The instructor is not obliged to respond to email from non-utoronto addresses for students in conjoint programs. Students in non-conjoint programs should only use the email address they have provided to their college of registration.

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Course Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Basic Degrees – Knox and TST

<i>This course has the following course-level learning outcomes</i>	
Outcome	Evaluation
1. to demonstrate competence in leadership for faith formation	Bible study; Church Year Plan, Lesson Plan
2. to choose and evaluate resources for ministry	Church Year Plan, bible study
3. To articulate a theology of faith formation	Concise Theology of Faith formation; Book Review

<i>A student successfully completing this course has made progress towards the following Knox College degree program learning outcomes:</i>		
MDiv	MTS	MPS
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interprets Scripture and Christian tradition (Reformed), using a variety of methods, sources, and norms, to preach, teach, write, and to provide care and witness. <i>Evaluation:</i> Click or tap here to enter text.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates knowledge at a basic level in various theological disciplines. <i>Evaluation:</i> Click or tap here to enter text.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates knowledge at a basic level in various theological disciplines, in the Reformed or another tradition. [* the student may come from another tradition] <i>Evaluation:</i> Click or tap here to enter text.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates skills in creative, faith-centred, adaptive, and innovative leadership for current and emerging communities of faith. <i>Evaluation:</i> Click or tap here to enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/> Finds, selects, reads, and appropriately integrates theological information. <i>Evaluation:</i> Click or tap here to enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates knowledge and skills in spiritual care and therapy, grounded in appropriate theories, for professional practice and leadership in community and institutional settings. <i>Evaluation:</i> Click or tap here to enter text.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enhances the vocational and spiritual development, practices, and well-being of self and others. (See Professional and Critical Competencies.) <i>Evaluation:</i> Click or tap here to enter text.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engages respectfully and constructively in a theological community of scholarship. <i>Evaluation:</i> Click or tap here to enter text.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates an appropriate spiritual and professional identity formation in relation to specialized practice. <i>Evaluation:</i> Click or tap here to enter text.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Analyzes and evaluates social, cultural, and community contexts to enable communities of faith to participate in God's work and justice in a diverse and changing world. <i>Evaluation:</i> Click or tap here to enter text.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Writes and speaks in English sufficiently well to engage in theological discourse. <i>Evaluation:</i> Click or tap here to enter text.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Writes and speaks in English sufficiently well to engage in professional practice. <i>Evaluation:</i> Click or tap here to enter text.

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