

April 13, 2018

*In partnership with the Steve Hicks
School of Social Work, UT, Austin*



Reconceiving Hope

Serene Jones, Joel Baden & Carrie Elkin

Infertility is an often silent and agonizing form of grief. It is rife with hope deferred and can threaten one's sense of being whole, complete, and beloved. It stresses relationships and isolates socially. And the numbers of families impacted by infertility keeps growing as people wait until later in life to become parents. Come learn with us how to provide insightful, responsive care to those experiencing infertility and related reproductive loss.

Through plenary talks and breakout sessions we will explore how religious identity can affect one's experience of infertility, both positively and negatively. We will hear how traditional biblical interpretations can be reframed for healing and hope. We will learn about effective therapeutic methods and religious liturgies for healing, as well as examine the moral dimensions of fertility treatments. We will ask together, "Can hope be re-conceived in the darkness of infertility?"

Friday, April 13th, 2018

9:00 am-4:30 pm

Austin Seminary, 100 East 27th Street

Register Here: <https://www.austinseminary.edu/page.cfm?p=4214>

5.0 CEUs for Social Work

Cost: \$60 (includes lunch); \$30 per person for groups of 3 or more.

Special Music and Storytelling by Carrie Elkin

Plenary Speakers:

Serene Jones, President and Johnston Family Professor for Religion and Democracy at Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York. Contributor to ***Hope Deferred: Heart-Healing Reflections on Reproductive Loss***. A highly respected scholar and public intellectual, the Rev. Dr. Serene Jones is the 16th President of the historic Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York. The author of several books including *Trauma and Grace*, Jones, a popular public speaker, is sought by media to comment on major issues impacting society because of her deep grounding in theology, politics, women's studies, economics, race studies, history, and ethics.

Joel S. Baden, Professor of Hebrew Bible, Yale Divinity School. Co-Author of, ***Reconceiving Infertility: Biblical Perspectives on Procreation & Childlessness***. Prof. Joel Baden is a specialist in the Pentateuch, Biblical Hebrew, and disability theory in biblical studies. He has written widely for a popular audience, in venues such as *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Slate*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Politico*, CNN.com, and *The Daily Beast*. He is currently at work editing *The Oxford Handbook of the Pentateuch* and writing forthcoming commentaries on Deuteronomy (IECOT) and Exodus (Anchor).

Plenary Moderator: **Cynthia Rigby**, W.C. Brown Professor of Theology, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Afternoon Breakout Sessions:

Understanding Reproductive Trauma: Signs, Symptoms, and Strategies for Help

Carol Pierce Davis, PhD, **Licensed** Psychologist in Private Practice, National Register of Health Service Psychologists, Member ASRM-MHPG, Licensed Preacher with the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd

Often, people associate miscarriage with trauma, but do not always think of the *inability* to get pregnant as trauma. This workshop will cover the multiplicity of traumas that can be experienced related to reproduction. It will also give clinicians and other caregivers signs and symptoms to look for as well as suggest therapeutic modalities beneficial for treating reproductive trauma.

Moral Considerations in Assisted Reproduction

Mark J. Cherry, Professor in Applied Ethics and Professor of Philosophy, St. Edward's University **and Rabbi Alan Freedman**, Temple Beth Shalom

Bioethics is a plural noun. Rather than sharing one morality, we are confronted with a wide variety of strikingly different moral visions of appropriate medical choice. This means that in our very diverse society there is not one unique answer to the ethical questions raised by assisted reproductive technologies. This session explores significant elements of our moral diversity in such matters. We will consider a variety of secular and religious, including Jewish and Christian, responses to assisted reproductive technology

The Moments in Between: An Exploration of Biblical Liturgy that Heals and Comforts
Rabbi Amy Cohen, Temple Beth Shalom

In this workshop, we will explore biblical teachings that have inspired modern liturgical innovations, providing comfort for those in our communities experiencing infertility. We will look at biblical stories and texts that can be adapted for liturgical purposes and we will discuss how powerful these innovations are for our congregations and parishioners, as they seek comfort and support during the moments of reflection, sadness and doubt that often accompany individuals on their journey to create a family.

Reproductive Loss, Mourning for Self and Others, and Abortion: Agape Ethics and Moral Status

William S. Greenway, Professor of Philosophical Theology, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Mourning fetal loss includes mourning the lost dreams of would-be parents, and also mourning a lost future for the zygote, that is, mourning for the other. This session focuses upon mourning for the other, which typically varies in intensity in relation to fetal age, and which presumes some affirmation of the moral status of the zygote, an issue at the heart of debates over abortion. Informed by the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, I suggest an agape ethic that facilitates one way of consistently understanding/describing varying intensities of mourning in relation to a graduated affirmation of the moral status of the zygote, unqualified affirmation of the moral status of women, and, in correlation, a qualified affirmation of abortion.

Grieving Through the Infertility Journey

Jessica McDaniel, LPC, The Austin Stone Counseling Center

This workshop will take you through understanding the vast complexities of the bereavement journey women and men walk through as they seek to start or grow their family. We will discuss the dynamics of grief in various stages as well as what it looks like to help the individual and couple discover meaning and purpose through this type of

long-suffering. Bereavement includes not only tangible loss couples may experience through infertility but also the losses incurred from broken dreams and unmet expectations. This breakout session will be led with a faith perspective for understanding grief in the midst of a person's religious or spiritual belief system.

Interpreting Biblical Infertility: Different Reading Strategies for Understanding Infertility in the Hebrew Bible

David Schones, PhD Candidate, Hebrew Bible, Southern Methodist University

This workshop discusses some of the latest interpretive approaches for understanding involuntary childlessness in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. Drawing on the well-known biblical text Genesis 16 & 21, the story of Sarai, Hagar, and Abraham, participants will learn about advantages and potential pitfalls of using biblical narratives in their personal life, religious faith communities, or to advocate assisted reproductive technologies. Specific emphasis will be placed on the work of disability, gender scholars, historiography, surrogacy, and African American/minoritized perspectives.