

# **OUTLOOK**

## **'Tao of Dying' author coming to Sandy Baptist**

*Speaker to address spiritual issues on bereavement*

**BY ROB CULLIVAN**

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**The Rev. Douglas C. Smith, author of "The Tao of Dying" as well as the newly published "The Tao of Grieving," says realizing his mission in life took some painful moments, including the death of a number of people he knew.**

For one, he lost his daughter, Kristin, when she was only 7 weeks old, due to multiple causes, including a hole in her heart. He lost another daughter, Maren, when she was 28, after she had suffered for most of her life from neurofibromatosis, or Elephant Man's disease.

"I had several moving experiences with people as they were dying," Smith says during a phone interview from his Madison, Wis., home. "I figured that someone was clubbing me over the head to do this kind of work."

Do the work he has, spending a decade in the hospice field and another decade writing such books as the two "Tao" books, as well as "Caregiving: Hospice-Proven Techniques For Healing Body And Soul," "Being A Wounded Healer," and "The Complete Book Of Counseling The Dying And The Grieving."

Smith will appear at Sandy Baptist Church Thursday, May 1, to present two seminars on "The Spirituality and Ethics of Advocacy."

The morning session will address such questions as how to assess a person's spiritual language and beliefs, identifying and addressing clients' spiritual priorities and examining ways of praying and meditating with clients. In the afternoon, Smith will talk about identifying methods of assisting with moral and ethical concerns – for example, issues surrounding the use of pain medication for the dying – and how to process ethical decisions.

The seminars are intended for chaplains, pastors and lay people who work with the bereaved and dying, according to the Rev. Dennis Alger, who organized the event and is pastor of Zion United Church of Christ in Gresham and the chaplain at Mt. Hood Hospice.

"He's a real person, he's got a lot to share and a great deal of depth," Alger says of Smith, whom he's heard speak several times. "I've not heard anyone go away from one of his seminars and say 'that was a waste.'"

Despite his Christian background, Smith says his seminars are designed to help those dealing with the bereaved and dying of any faith – or none at all. To illustrate, he notes that it's important for those working with the bereaved and dying not to use potentially divisive church language, but to do a spiritual intake or interview with a client before ministering to them.

"What church you belong to, what's the address and what's the name of the pastor doesn't tell us much," Smith says. Instead, counselors and others who work with the bereaved or dying need to ask such questions as: "What is strength for you? Where do you go to get peace?"

Alger adds that the answer can vary from person to person, from a Native American who relies on his or her traditional spirituality to a Catholic who seeks sustenance in the sacraments.



Douglas Smith  
CONTRIBUTED  
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one fashion or another.

"We're always confronting what is holy, and if I have that attitude that I'm literally working with the hands of Jesus or the hands of Buddha, we are doing holy things with holy people."

He adds that working with the dying has enriched his own faith, and says his daughter, Maren, provided one of the greatest examples of hope with her last words, or, more accurately her last song, which she asked those gathered around her to sing.

The song? "Angels We Have Heard On High."

#### **Author's conference**

The Rev. Douglas C. Smith, author of "The Tao of Dying," will present a conference on "The Spirituality and Ethics of Advocacy" from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday, May 1, at Sandy Baptist Church, 34435 S.E. Jarl Road, Sandy. Registration costs \$75, and chaplains and social workers will receive continuing education certificates upon dismissal.

For more information, call the Rev. Dennis Alger at 503-668-5545.

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