

Choosing my religion: New public lecture to explore secular challenges to ritual practice

Australia, Canada, the US, and the UK are often described as secular countries, as exemplified by the increasing numbers of unaffiliated and disaffiliated Christians – or the “nones” and “dones”.

Despite this cultural phenomenon, liturgical scholar the Reverend Canon Dr Lizette Larson-Miller says interest in religion remains high, but there has been a shift from people celebrating official liturgies communally, to widespread individualisation as people engage in parallel expressions of a continuing ritual desire.

Next month Dr Larson-Miller will present an online public lecture hosted by the ACU Centre for Liturgy on the topic: *I am what I ritualise: identity, theology, and liturgy in secular context*.

The public lecture on Monday 8 May will explore the implications of a society where the dominant culture and the church are not in sync, and where religious practices in the domestic church – the household or family - and those in the official church no longer closely align.

Dr Larson-Miller will also explore the ramifications of virtual liturgies, and how post-COVID, continued accessibility to them in the online world has encouraged individualised curation and commodification of ritual expressions.

A Professor Emerita of Liturgy at Huron University College in Ontario, Canada, and Canon Precentor of the Anglican Diocese of Huron, Dr Larson-Miller is an expert on liturgical history, especially late antique and early medieval liturgical developments, rites and rituals with the sick, the dying and the dead, and contemporary sacramental theology and sacramentality.

ACU Centre for Liturgy Director Professor Clare Johnson said Dr Larson-Miller would be addressing a relevant topic for all Christians who are grappling with the impact of secularisation on traditional communal ritual practise.

“Dr Larson-Miller is a dynamic and creative liturgical scholar who pays particular attention to the trends and flows of culture and how they impact on liturgy today,” Professor Johnson said.

“Through her research and commentary, Dr Larson-Miller has identified a desire among people in secular cultures to find spiritual meaning outside the context of traditional religious rituals. The question of how to re-engage the disengaged in communal liturgical practice is well worth considering. Lizette is unafraid to investigate these complex contemporary questions to find creative ways of connecting with changing cultural norms.

“As a woman liturgical scholar in the Anglican tradition, Dr Larson-Miller’s insights will be pertinent to both Catholic and non-Catholic Christians.”

The Rev. Dr Larson-Miller’s public lecture, hosted by the ACU Centre for Liturgy, will be held on Monday 8 May, 10am-11.30am AEST via Zoom.

Registration cost is \$10 (\$5 for concession rate). Register at the ACU Centre for Liturgy website [here](#).

Media Contact: Emilie Ng, 0475 963 606, emilie.ng@acu.edu.au