

Media Kit for
The Fog of Faith: Surviving My Impotent God

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Biographical Sketches

Media Bio 1:

She fit bucking bales into God’s plan, but bucking fear left this Mennonite farm teen begging—literally and figuratively. Now, after thirty years as a professional psychotherapist, Dr. Leona Stucky narrates her unflinching faith-and-violence dilemma in a riveting memoir which spares neither God nor violence against women and has been **recommended by MS Magazine**.

Media Bio 2:

A minister and psychotherapist for more than thirty years, Dr. Leona Stucky became an author by turning the mirror inward to reveal her own personal story in a gripping and morally unflinching memoir, which has received acclaim from MS Magazine. In her professional life as well as her writings, Dr. Stucky plumbed the depths of faith and identity questions she could not answer, studying contrary schools of thought, and speaking what we seldom say out loud. In her life and writing she provokes new discussions with heart-wrenching, vital stories.

Media Bio 3:

The religious narratives of Leona’s faith could not reconcile the violence that intruded upon her Mennonite farm story. She yielded to answers more in sync with the harsh realities she faced. That was the beginning of a search that lasted throughout her studies and professional career.

Dr. Stucky first received a degree in psychology and philosophy from Boston College, graduating summa cum laude, before plunging into seminary, first at Andover Newton Theological School and then at Eden Theological Seminary. She earned a doctorate from Southern Methodist University with honors, and a Diplomate certificate from the American Association of Pastoral Counselors—their highest credential—for teaching, supervising, and conducting therapy services. She currently has standing as a Unitarian Universalist community minister.

These professional explorations might have quieted her mind, but the areas where integration seemed impossible became mental sand kernels that disrupted many intellectual resting places. Being fiercely honest in confronting contradictions, she honed her wisdom, gained unusual insights, and enjoyed a professional and personal journey that could only be shared by telling the whole story. After numerous failed attempts, Dr. Stucky finally completed her memoir, *The Fog of Faith: Surviving My Impotent God*.

The provocative title aptly indicates the unflinching moral dilemmas she reveals. The gripping story reads like a real-life thriller that readers can’t put down. Still, each step grounds itself in nuanced networks of passion, relational complexities, cultural and religious dilemmas, circumscribed choices bound by woman’s poverty, persistent violence, and an untamable resilient desire to redeem herself with or without God.

Dr. Stucky’s memoir has gained recognition as a well written, riveting story and also as an important work of art. MS Magazine named it on their best summer reads recommendation. Readers typically say they could not put it down. They report being deeply stirred by the content.

An expert and author on domestic violence intervention, Michael Paymar says, “The voice of this woman’s spirit and courage rings clearly as she faces the personal challenges of her faith—when the adversity in life tests the veracity of her beliefs against the reality of terror. This is an important, insightful book that I highly recommend.”

“Your book has been the most impactful book I’ve ever read. It has kept me in it for days during and after I read it.” Barbara, a Mennonite from Kansas

While authoring this book represents the pinnacle of Dr. Stucky’s career, she still maintains a limited psychotherapy practice, often teaches and speaks, and writes an interactive blog. She can be reached at Leona@TheFogofFaith.com or her website www.TheFogofFaith.com.

Book Descriptions

Brief Description of *The Fog of Faith: Surviving My Impotent God*

Leona is cast into bewildering disgrace and poverty—with a baby, a violent husband, and shattered faith. She hacks through the bones of her Mennonite naïveté to confront harsh realities. This riveting and morally unflinching memoir, recommended by MS Magazine, delivers intense suspense, humor, and unusual wisdom.

Description of *The Fog of Faith: Surviving My Impotent God*

After the trauma of a savage attack, a farm girl recovers physically, but her identity, faith, and relationships are shattered.

This is the true story, recommended by MS Magazine, of Leona Stucky's childhood on a Kansas farm, surrounded by a loving family and the simple tenets of her Mennonite community. Violence enters her world in the guise of a young man who seems normal to everyone else but whom Leona knows to be deranged in his obsession of her.

His unrelenting abuses take root, and Leona must deal with them utterly alone. Her pacifist father cannot avenge or protect her, nor can a callous justice system. Even God is impotent.

Leona is cast into a bewildering life of disgrace and poverty—with a baby, a violent husband, and battered faith. Through a series of page-turning events, she hacks through the bones of her naïveté to confront harsh realities and to probe the veracity of religious claims.

The Fog of Faith is a suspenseful and morally unflinching drama of shame and survival, as well as useable and unusual wisdom.

Suggested Interview Questions

- 1. This is a stunning, fast-moving, heart-wrenching story. You wrote with articulate passion and piercing reflection. I think your story telling is powerful, but there is something else that makes this memoir a little different. Can you put your finger on it?**
- 2. Some news coverage talked about your memoir as “wrestling with God.” Do you think that is an apt description?**
- 3. Why, in your mind, is it OK to wrestle with God?**
- 4. Your relationship with your father is like a steady support to you. You seem to be able to appreciate his love for you. Yet he fails you in some big ways, wouldn't you agree?**
- 5. When reading your story I got the feeling that you hated Ron but also felt compassion for him. Would you comment on your feelings for Ron?**
- 6. How could you feel fear and be in danger for so long and still function? What did that experience cost you? Do you still pay a price for it?**
- 7. You frequently come back to some social issues – not to explain them – but they emerge in the context of your story telling. Was there something you wanted us to know about poverty, single mothering, or domestic violence?**
- 8. I would call this a courageous work in part because of the open way you address the problem areas in your life. What is that openness about for you?**
- 9. Did you ponder killing your abuser when you were still with him? After you escaped?**
- 10. What in your life prepared you to face what you did at age sixteen?**
- 11. Other than your seminary boyfriend and then husband, did people try to talk you out of your stand against God?**
- 12. It seems like you had secrets for a long time. Even when you confessed your “sins,” you were not really confessing. Is that right? What did that mean to carry secrets?**
- 13. Do you have regrets about the things you did in those critical years?**
- 14. Given the difficult topics your story uncovers and reinvigorates, it's easy to forget how much humor is there also. I found myself smiling many times when reading your memoir. Would you like to read some segments of the story that might make us smile?**
- 15. I also want to ask you to juxtapose two different segments of your story. One, the early chapter on what it was like to grow up Mennonite; and the other is the story of a public shaming after you became pregnant. Would you read those segments?**
- 16. Could you talk about the experiences of shame that you addressed in the book and what you think about shame now?**
- 17. It sounds like shame has many dimensions and you feel it is linked to our evolution as a social species. Can you say more about that?**
- 18. You think about the big questions in life, and in the book you observe how these big questions tend to shape our thinking and what we pay attention to. Can you talk about that?**
- 19. What do you mean when you say walk close to reality? What does that mean?**

20. What is the best way for people to connect with you? I'm sure others have questions I did not ask.

Interview Sketch

- 1. This is an action-packed memoir. It reads like a suspense novel. How did that happen?**
 - a. They say truth is often stranger than fiction, and I guess it is also often more thrilling. It probably means something that the reader knows this really happened. Against the backdrop of truth, events have a more profound impact.
- 2. In the early part of the book you write about growing up Mennonite. How do you think that childhood affected you?**
 - a. I think it had a profound effect. My ex-husband used to say that you couldn't wash the Mennonite out of me. He was right. Though I don't have all the same beliefs that I was brought up with, many of my current values reflect the Mennonite way of living. I love simplicity. I appreciate non-violence. I'm a quiet kind of person. I've lived my life being a hard worker. I loved the kind of camaraderie we had on the farm, separate from whatever the world might have thought of us. I've never been sophisticated, never truly a woman of the world.
- 3. So, what does it mean to be Mennonite – like the way you grew up?**
 - a. While we had many of the same beliefs as the Amish – to live a simple life, to help each other and be a positive influence on the world, to believe wholeheartedly in God and to work consistently to see God's expectations and blessings in our everyday life, to harm no one – not even enemies – to live within the confines of non-violence, to see one's whole world through the lens of faith, and to not participate in worldly ways that lead to cruelty or distraction from God's ways. We believed all of that, but we didn't enact the kind of strict separation from the world. We had our own community, but we drove cars, had electricity, wore modest clothes but basically looked like everyone else.
- 4. How did you take to your faith as a child? Were you happy in it or did you feel it was too much or too hard to deal with?**
 - a. I loved Jesus and Sunday School and the feeling of being among some of Jesus' special people, because we really did try to do what was right – what Jesus wanted us to do. I esteemed what it meant to be a Mennonite and was proud that my family on my mother's and dad's sides had been Mennonite for as long as anyone knew. It was all I knew. When I was four years old, I told my grandma that I wanted to become a missionary when I grew up. It made her very happy and that idea stuck in my mind for a number of years.
- 5. You became a minister. Isn't that like a fulfillment of your desire as a four year old?**
 - a. There was no such thing as a straight line in my faith journey. I entered seminary more because I hated God than because I wanted to follow His ways.
- 6. That's a pretty strong statement – you hated God. Do you want to tell us what that was about?**

- a. Not really. I think that would give away too much of the story. But I would like to read a small segment of the book that talks about an experience of shame, which perhaps played into my negative feelings. I should warn your listeners though that this was only one small part that played into my feelings – not anything close to the many reasons I felt so much rage at God.
7. **Now you are talking about rage. Do you really think you hated God or was it more that you were enraged?**
- a. I think that as humans we experience hatred as the deepest kind of abiding rage that we are capable of feeling. Those two are not independent feelings, but one is taking the other to the extreme.
8. **OK, so what segment did you want to read? Does it need an introduction?**
- a. Probably not. I'll just say that at this point in my life I had not left the farm, and though I had come to hate God, I was still very much in His world. (Read pages 96 -99.)
9. **Oh my...That was a powerful piece, and I must say that I experienced your whole book that way – going from one powerful segment to another. Sometimes I felt like I couldn't catch my breath, and yet I had to keep reading. It was riveting.**
- a. Thank you for talking about your experience of reading. I hear that often. The reader couldn't get enough and had to keep reading even when it was difficult to absorb what was happening. For a thoughtful book, it goes really fast.
10. **I would totally agree with that assessment. You just can't put the book down. But I want to ask you about the shame experience you just revealed to us. Do you still feel it pretty much the way you did then?**
- a. No. I can still feel what I felt then, and get a sick feeling in my stomach, but that is not my way of seeing it now. Then, it was my whole world. I had no way to counter the shame. I knew I was bad. I saw myself through the eyes of my community, and I had committed some atrocious sins. Now I see that kind of shame as a religious and cultural imposition on the human psyche, sometimes an undeserved and cruel but masterful way of keeping people in line with the powers that be.
11. **Could you explain yourself more or give us an example, so we'd know what you're talking about?**
- a. Shame, as we all know, is a horrible internal experience. We hate ourselves when we feel shame. We hang our head so we don't look into anyone's eyes. We want to sink through the floor so no one can see us. We feel often like we want to die in those moments or hours or days or months. We feel unworthy and like we should hide ourselves forever.
- b. But shame didn't just suddenly emerge within our internal world. It came as one aspect of our species growing societally, what scientists call human sociality. It evolved as a quintessential way to control humanity when no one was looking. We have to function in human groups, and much of the time people in authority cannot be watching us. What is to stop us from disobeying? The threat of having this horrible, aversive experience of being shamed.
12. **So you think shame evolved from our human experience of living in groups as social creatures?**

- a. Yes, I do. And because culture didn't have the authority to fully enforce it, religion was born as the human relational experience that could more completely rule societies through the use of shame, because religion could appeal to a galvanizing, recognized authority that culture could not claim on its own.
 - b. Probably the fear of shame helps us control our behavior more than any other single factor.
13. **So are you saying that we need shame just to be able to live together as groups of people? It seem like you are also complaining about how bad shame is for people.**
- a. Yes, I see it as a both/and situation, not either/or. I guess that shame exists because we as humans could not live up to some social standards without it. At the same time, it has been twisted by the powers that be to use shame to impair some people more than others. I think, for example, that shame has been dumped disproportionately onto women and has been used to keep power out of women's hands. It gives men an unfair advantage. Religion has been used that way for thousands of years.
14. **I'd like to go further with that discussion, but it seems that we are getting away from the memoir you wrote. You don't go into esoteric discussions in your book.**
- a. No, I don't. Although I do discuss, via several different characters, the various reasons to believe or not believe in God, wouldn't you say?
15. **Yes, you do, and you have a way of bringing up issues into our minds but without actually discussing them directly. Like I felt I had a much better understanding of poverty after I read your memoir, but you didn't really directly discuss it. I also felt like I had a sense of what it meant to be a disadvantaged, abused woman, though you didn't say it in so many words.**
- a. I'm glad those subject areas came through to you without me having to do a lot of explaining or discussing from a more intellectual standpoint. I wanted to tell a true story straight through and let people draw their own conclusions.
16. **Speaking of that, why did you write this particular book this way? You have a doctorate degree. You are well educated and clearly are a thinker in your own right. Why not write a self-help book or a treatise on religion or psychotherapy?**
- a. I guess the truth is that I didn't know how to do it any other way. I've tried many different ways to say what people often don't say, even if they know it, consciously or not. Christopher Bollas calls it the "unthought known." I needed to speak out loud some unthought knowns that we don't often acknowledge because we don't have the occasion to think that hard about it. We go through life, often, not knowing what we know.
17. **Can you give us an example or explain this more?**
- a. We often hear people say, when they observe an abusive relationship, why doesn't she just leave him? I could give you ten reasons why and that would dissipate in your mind in minutes. But in my story, you live inside the experience of a trapped woman, and you see through her eyes the choices she must make, and you know something that you wouldn't have understood before.
18. **So you're saying that you wrote the book to help us understand things that maybe we know but are not cognizant of?**
- a. If that is what I'm saying, I'm giving you a limited impression. I wrote the memoir because I had to. I couldn't live with myself if I didn't do it. I've tried my

whole life to explain some things to people, and I've been so inadequate. I finally realized that people can't hear and I can't explain without having people walk a mile in my shoes. Then at least a few of them will get it.

- b. I did not want to die knowing what I know without sharing it in an effective way. Perhaps what I did will not get the message across, but I think it is closer than anything I've tried before.
19. **What is the message you have so deeply needed to speak? What are we supposed to learn?**
- a. This may sound like a copout but it's not. If I could simply explain the message and that would communicate the meaning, I would not have written the story. In my experience, the story and the message are one. Perhaps as you read the story it won't all become clear to you. And we can flesh it out more from the story itself or you can go to my interactive blog at www.TheFogofFaith.com and ask direct questions. I'll just say that part of the compelling nature of the book is that in thunderous ways, though my story may be peculiar and more extreme, I'm telling your story too. I'm showing the way we live our lives, and the more you read and fully absorb the story, the more you know that. The more you know you. The story invites you to think about your own unthought knows.
20. **We've got to wrap it up here. We could keep going for a long, long time. We opened up many subjects that we've barely grazed the top of. I also have a sense that we have communicated something of the essence of this remarkable work. The book itself is so unusual in its straightforward honesty and in its daring. You were courageous to write it, and I dare say that readers may actually be courageous to read it.**
- a. Thank you. There are many courageous readers out there and I respect them all, whether or not they would agree with any of my conclusions. I want to open up a conversation. That's really all this is about. Thanks for having me on your program and for your thoughtful questions.

Feature Article (400-600 words)

THE FATE OF FAITH IN ONE MINISTER'S STORY

In her memoir, *The Fog of Faith: Surviving My Impotent God*, Rev. Dr. Leona Stucky takes a more nuanced route than ministers like Dan Barker or Jerry DeWitt, who renounced their faith and took a stand for atheism. She tells a personal traumatic story of her Mennonite farm family's struggle against violence and desperate health conditions, and her step-by-step disappointment with faith as the problems persisted. She reveals the harm her faith caused as well as the blessings it offered and her necessary journey away from and toward the impossibility and the inevitability of belief.

The tension she holds crosses the boundaries of rationality and emotional needs. In her memoir Dr. Stucky grapples with her family's core human longings. Later in her life, when counseling people who have lost loved ones, she notes for them what she learned at age twenty-three, that scientific explanations seem unable to touch the raw human grasping for connection beyond separation, even beyond death. She remembers and re-experiences grief with her clients. She watches tenderness rise up in the human mind, where love and reality confront one another and fight to the death, because death itself brings on this fight. How can active daily love endure absence? How can we grieve enough to accept what is an anathema to our existence?

In her memoir, she addresses this conundrum **not** by theological disputations but simply by telling her own story, with all its terrors, fascinations, and triumphs. Ms. Magazine recommended this story as a great read. After noting Dr. Stucky's reckoning with domestic violence, Ms. Magazine says, "In her chilling and tumultuous memoir, Stucky recounts her attempts to play by the rules of the Mennonite Church that failed to protect her, and her embrace of feminist notions ... that finally led her to a new life."

Reviewers often say they were unable to put the book down, they didn't want it to end, and they felt like they were engaged in a real-life thriller. One reader says the memoir, "has made an indelible impression on my heart and soul that will be with me forever." Others also see this is more than a simple story, but an important work that will have lasting effects.

When read carefully to absorb layers of meaning, Dr. Stucky's memoir is both a well-written work of art and a clarion call to address honestly the human condition that makes us need belief, while it also shows us the inadequacy of faith.

Dr. Stucky said in a recent talk at El Castillo, a senior center in Santa Fe, that as a psychotherapist she has the opportunity to observe the way people deify their mythical images. If, in one faith or another, these images were intended to be factual or historical representations, they didn't live up to that designation. Myths and legends are just that. What moves her deeply is the ongoing and almost catastrophic need for *More* that permeates client stories, history, everyday conversations, meaning-making ideas about events, and the longing for love—a longing that humans palpably embody.

This human longing is evident throughout Dr. Stucky's passionate memoir, revealed and actualized in unimaginable ways that she interprets with an unusual wisdom. And yet her story is, with its peculiarities and extremes, completely identifiable as a faith journey, one that demands our attention and teaches us courage, patience, and a remarkable way of knowing what we know.

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 8-28-17

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Pastor Wrestles with God

The Reverend Doctor Leona Stucky will be presenting her recently published memoir, *The Fog of Faith: Surviving My Impotent God*, at the BookFest St. Louis on September 23, 2017. This riveting memoir tells the story of Leona's disappointment with and rejection of her Mennonite God before she became a minister. She graduated from Eden Theological Seminary of Webster Groves Missouri and served several Missouri congregations as interim pastor in the early 1980s, before most liberal churches called female ministers.

Dr. Stucky says she has spent a lifetime integrating the claims of faith with the awareness of God's failure to be the-historically-believed-in-God in our world today – a disappointment that plagues many believers. Jennifer Levin, in an article published in the *Santa Fe New Mexican* on June 9, 2017, described the early times of Dr. Stucky's faith journey this way: "When she was a little girl, Leona Stucky believed that a boogeyman lived in the closet at the top of the stairs and goblins huddled under her bed. As she headed up to sleep each night, the terrified four-year-old would pray out loud. . . . She wanted the monsters to know that she had God on her side. The ritual ended with Stucky taking a flying leap across the floor to her mattress before anything could grab her feet.

"No one knows," Dr. Stucky says, "who will carry experiences of God's interactive love with them into adulthood. Some people see expressions of God's love throughout their lives while others see the reality of suffering and can't imagine what a historically active God is doing."

Dr. Stucky does not focus on the sweet-sounding fixes of spiritual oneness or awakening mystery or of surrender to God, though she recognizes all of these as potentially helpful faith stances. Instead, she makes a case for the fluidity of doubt and faith and the reality of dis-belief as part of ongoing mental complexities. When consciously valuing evidence as the source for knowledge, people may disrupt faith stances and when needing help in times of trouble they may execute a kind of reverence for non-rational components of meaning.

While she can straightforwardly discuss dis-belief as well as faith now, after thirty years of psychotherapy and ministry practice, her memoir is **not** a theological treatise, but a raw faith experience that contended with trauma and tragedy, when avenues for help were impotent, including her God.

Ms. Magazine recommended this story as a great read. After noting Dr. Stucky's reckoning with domestic violence, Ms. Magazine described, "In her chilling and tumultuous memoir, Stucky recounts her attempts to play by the rules of the Mennonite Church that failed to protect her, and her embrace of feminist notions ... that finally led her to a new life."

Anyone who has journeyed spiritually, or wondered about the deadly difference between hope and trust, or contemplated the real-life impact of oppression or poverty will find this memoir a compelling, even thrilling, read.

Dr. Stucky will be sharing a booth with two other Santa Fe, NM, authors who also have strong heartland connections, Mary E. Neighbour and Camilla Kattell. You can learn more about all three authors by visiting their websites:

<https://lighthorsepublishing.com>

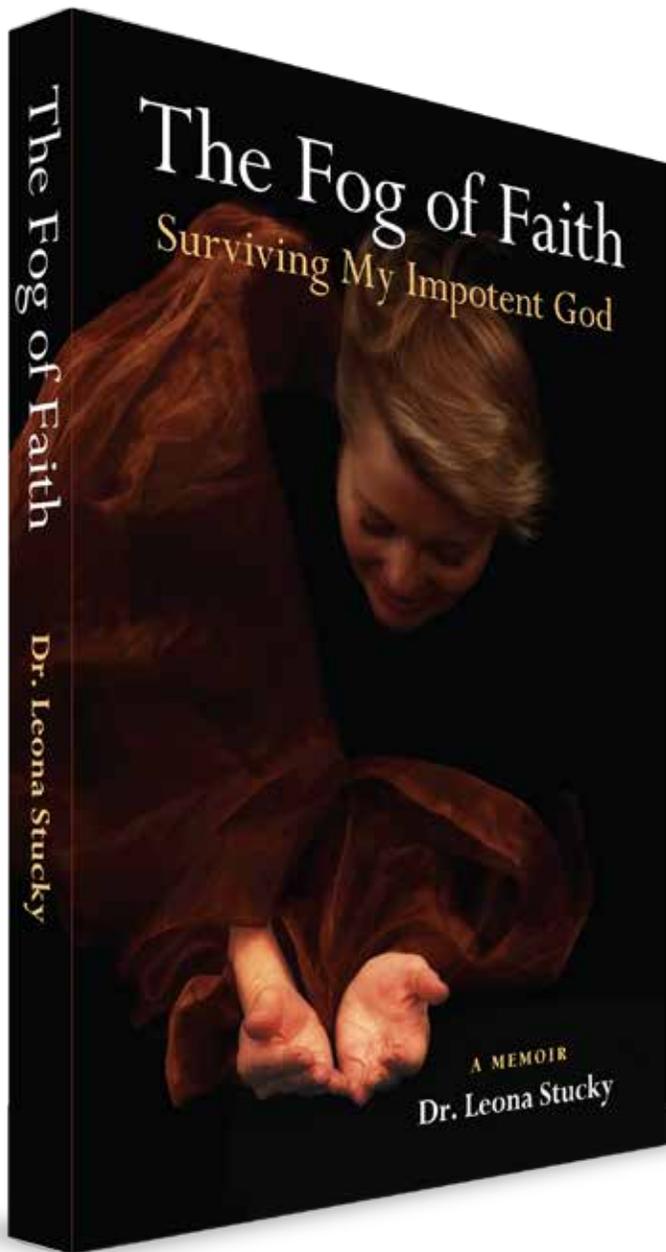
<http://speakrighton.com>

<http://thefogoffaith.com>

They invite you to their booth to engage in interactive play, lively discussions, and warm embraces.

Sample Chapter

Sample of Memoir Chapter 1 (Mary, I could not find a way to copy chapter one from my good copy of the book which is PDF and insert it in here. I don't think I have the final corrected copy in word that you used before you converted it to PDF. Could you please send that to me in the MS Word format? I'm not sure why I don't have it. Probably my error! Thanks! Also please add the sample chapter here or wherever it should be.)



After the trauma of a savage attack, a farm girl recovers physically, but her identity, faith, and relationships are shattered.

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"Great Read" *Ms. Magazine*

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A minister and psychotherapist for more than thirty years, Dr. Leona Stucky became an author by turning the mirror inward to reveal her own personal story in a gripping and morally unflinching memoir, which has received acclaim from *MS Magazine*. In her professional life as well as her writings, Dr. Stucky plumbed the depths of faith and identity questions she could not answer, studying contrary schools of thought, and speaking what we seldom say out loud. In her life and writing she provokes new discussions with heartwrenching, vital stories.

For more information, please visit
www.prairieworldpress.com

PRAISE

Beautifully written, this powerful story unmasks the grim realities that many victims of domestic violence endure and celebrates the resilience required to triumph on the other side of fear and despair. *The Fog of Faith: Surviving My Impotent God* is a compelling memoir about a Mennonite farm teen in the contentious 1970s. Leona Stucky shares the love of family, raising a child by herself, poverty, and the struggle to escape an obsessive and dangerous husband. The voice of this woman's spirit and courage rings clearly as she faces the personal challenges of her faith—when the adversity in life tests the veracity of her beliefs against the reality of terror. This is an important, insightful book that I highly recommend.

– Michael Paymar, author of *Violent No More: Helping Men End Domestic Abuse*

Insightful and compelling, this riveting memoir offers a perspective about violence against women, shame, feminism, trauma, resilience, and relationships.

– JoAnne Tucker, Ph.D. Filmmaker, Producer, Healing Voices—
Personal Stories

A practicing psychotherapist, Leona Stucky spends her days examining the lives of her clients. Now, in this stunning memoir, she turns the mirror inward to reveal her own personal history, from the violent boy she was forced to marry to the violent God she was forced to reject. Naked with fear, aflame with rage, at once heart-pounding and heart-breaking, this true tale climbs from the wheat fields of Kansas to the promised Heaven above—and down again. *The Fog of Faith: Surviving My Impotent God*, glows with the insightful power of necessary art.

– Robert Mayer, author of *The Origin of Sorrow, The Dreams of Ada, Superfolks*, and other books

The Fog of Faith by Dr. Leona Stucky is a brave, wrenching memoir that invites readers on a mythopoetic journey of personal transformation and redemption. This book is a quintessentially American story but also a cautionary tale about these turbulent times when violence and brutality often hide behind the mask of innocence. I applaud Dr. Stucky for venturing into dark and foggy places of our collective soul, and retrieving hard-won wisdom to help light our way.

– Stephen Jimenez, bestselling author of *The Book of Matt - Hidden Truths about the Murder of Matthew Shepard*

In the military I was fortunate to see the strength and inspiring competence of women in very demanding roles. And while this began stripping away the sexist views of my cultural inheritance, it did not provide insight into women's experience. Through Stucky's writing I feel the impotent rage of being deprived opportunities, even an identity, on the basis of sex. I recognize that the vigilance and undercurrent of fear known by soldiers walking hostile streets is also known by women walking in their own neighborhoods, living in their own homes.

– William LaRue, PhD, founder of Compassionate Relating

In *The Fog of Faith*, Leona Stucky tells a gripping story, excruciatingly personal and at the same time genuinely universal. Her bold confrontations with the God of her Mennonite upbringing and her struggle to find a God with whom she can relate will wrench your heart. This book is for those looking for a read that is gutsy and real, a story almost unbelievable, if we didn't know the lady who lived it and went on to help countless others sort through nightmares of their own.

– Rev. Linda Whittenberg, author of *Let Nothing Be Lost, Somewhere in Ireland, Tender Harvest*, and *Dying Can Wait*

Testimonials

Acclaim for *The Fog of Faith: Surviving My Impotent God*

Stucky was just 16 when her boyfriend, fearing she would leave him, raped her and threatened her life. Years later, after they were married and raising a child together, his abuse only became more severe and unrelenting. In her chilling and tumultuous memoir, Stucky recounts her attempts to play by the rules of the Mennonite Church that failed to protect her, and her embrace of feminist notions of faith and survival that finally led her to a new life.



--Ms. Magazine, Summer 2017, "Great Reads for Summer 2017"

Beautifully written, this powerful story unmaskes the grim realities that many victims of domestic violence endure and celebrates the resilience required to triumph on the other side of fear and despair. *The Fog of Faith: Surviving My Impotent God* is a compelling memoir about a Mennonite farm teen in the contentious 1970s. Leona Stucky shares the love of family, raising a child by herself, poverty, and the struggle to escape an obsessive and dangerous husband. The voice of this woman's spirit and courage rings clearly as she faces the personal challenges of her faith—when the adversity in life tests the veracity of her beliefs against the reality of terror. This is an important, insightful book that I highly recommend.

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– JoAnne Tucker, Ph.D. Filmmaker, Producer, Healing Voices –
Personal Stories

A practicing psychotherapist, Leona Stucky spends her days examining the lives of her clients. Now, in this stunning memoir, she turns the mirror inward to reveal her own personal history, from the violent boy she was forced to marry to the violent God she was forced to reject. Naked with fear, aflame with rage, at once heart-pounding and heart-breaking, this true tale climbs from the wheat fields of Kansas to the promised Heaven above—and down again. *The Fog of Faith: Surviving My Impotent God*, glows with the insightful power of necessary art.

– Robert Mayer, author of *The Origin of Sorrow*, *The Dreams of Ada*, *Superfolks*, and other books

The Fog of Faith by Dr. Leona Stucky is a brave, wrenching memoir that invites readers on a mythopoetic journey of personal transformation and redemption. This book is a quintessentially American story but also a cautionary tale about these turbulent times when violence and brutality often hide behind the mask of innocence. I applaud Dr. Stucky for venturing into dark and foggy places of our collective soul, and retrieving hard-won wisdom to help light our way.

– Stephen Jimenez, bestselling author of *The Book of Matt - Hidden Truths about the Murder of Matthew Shepard*

In the military I was fortunate to see the strength and inspiring competence of women in very demanding roles. And while this began stripping away the sexist views of my cultural inheritance, it did not provide insight into women's experience. Through Stucky's writing I feel the impotent rage of being deprived opportunities, even an identity, on the basis of sex. I recognize that the vigilance and undercurrent of fear known by soldiers walking hostile streets is also known by women walking in their own neighborhoods, living in their own homes.

– William LaRue, PhD, founder of Compassionate Relating

In *The Fog of Faith*, Leona Stucky tells a gripping story, excruciatingly personal and at the same time genuinely universal. Her bold confrontations with the God of her Mennonite upbringing and her struggle to find a God with whom she can relate will wrench your heart. This book is for those looking for a read that is gutsy and real, a story almost unbelievable, if we didn't know the lady who lived it and went on to help countless others sort through nightmares of their own.

– Rev. Linda Whittenberg, author of *Let Nothing Be Lost, Somewhere in Ireland, Tender Harvest, and Dying Can Wait*

A thought-provoking and engrossing story of domestic violence, *The Fog of Faith* tells about one woman's journey of struggle and despair, of hope lost and courage found. You will be shocked by the horrific details of the author's abusive first marriage and yet moved by the tenderness found in her Mennonite family of origin. You will cheer for Stucky, a real-life survivor, a woman of true grit and a tested faith.

– Rev. Lynne Hinton, author of *The Art of Arranging Flowers* and *Pie Town*.

From her farm-girl childhood, trusting in a loving God, to welfare mom, rape survivor, and eventually psychotherapist helping others deal with their dysfunctional beliefs, Leona Stucky's memoir traces one woman's spiritual coming of age. Honest and sometimes brutal in its representations of violence, *The Fog of Faith* exposes a patriarchal religious tradition that has too often subjugated women.

– Rev. Gary Kowalski, author of *The Souls of Animals*, *Science and the Search for God*, *Goodbye Friend: Healing Wisdom for Anyone Who Has Ever Lost a Pet*, and other books.

This should never have happened. Yet it happened, and now is a riveting true story of family, faith, and a youthful relationship gone terribly wrong. The author questions her faith and her own goodness, struggling for answers. In this memoir, she invites you to share her journey as she explores the meaning of sex, love, religion and self worth.

– Charlotte Berney, author of *Fundamentals of Hawaiian Mysticism* and former editor of *Antiques & Fine Art Magazine* and *Cowboys & Indians Magazine*

Prior Press Coverage



Like everybody else, I'm one place at one moment and another place at another moment— although the amount of questioning that I do is really the questioning of a skeptic. — Leona Stucky

Rev. Leona Stucky reads from *The Fog of Faith: Surviving My Impotent God*
6 p.m. Tuesday, June 13
Op.Cit. Books, 157 Paseo de Peralta, 505-428-032

From The Fog of Faith: Surviving My Impotent God

At sixteen, I still was no dumb bunny, but I no longer was His sunbeam. At sixteen, the contradictions were gathering like clouds before the storm. Only what He consented to would be done. Right? God did not consent to my death, and I was alive. Yet did He consent to the violence against me? Did He consent to the forced sex?

If He made Ron stop murdering me, why didn't He do it sooner? Couldn't He have brought Ron to his senses immediately? Ron could have suddenly said, "I think God is talking to me! He doesn't want me to kill you."

Was I the one who stopped murder? I endured him until he exhausted himself. I held and calmed him. I suggested the last supper, and I found a way out of the situation by promising never to leave. ©Leona Stucky

Jennifer Levin

When she was a little girl, Leona Stucky believed that a boogeyman lived in the closet at the top of the stairs and goblins huddled under her bed. As she headed up to sleep each night, the terrified four-year-old would pray out loud. Upstairs was dark and scary, and she wanted the monsters to know that she had God on her side. The ritual ended with Stucky taking a flying leap across the floor to her mattress before anything could grab her feet.

“All the time that I was sweating those potential realities, I was assisted by my faith. I could go upstairs because I wasn’t alone. Some people carry that faith with them through their whole lives,” said the Rev. Stucky, who is a local Unitarian Universalist minister. “Some people believe in God’s love, but others see the reality of suffering in the world. And when you look at that reality, it’s very difficult to believe that there’s any kind of powerful or loving God.”

As she writes in her self-published memoir, *The Fog of Faith: Surviving My Impotent God*, Stucky grew up on a rural Kansas farm, bathed in the warm embrace of a large family in a tight-knit religious community. Life was far from idyllic; farming was hard work — Stucky took pride in being her father’s helper — and there was never enough money to keep the rambling homeplace in good repair. Her mother, who had multiple sclerosis, eventually came to depend on a wheelchair and lost the ability to clearly communicate with her children. Though Stucky’s father was strong and capable, a burn accident when he was seventeen left his legs swollen and covered with open sores. Their Mennonite faith, central to their existence, was one of peaceful engagement and nonviolence. This belief was so strong that Stucky’s father spent time behind bars rather than go to fight in the Korean War. Despite the hardships, as a child, Stucky knew that God was good and that nothing bad could ever radically alter the course of her life.

In 1966, at age sixteen, she met Ron. The shy non-Mennonite boy did not smoke or drink, and the two became sweethearts. But after a while, he became too possessive for Stucky — and on the night that she planned to break up with him, before she had even broached the subject, Ron somehow sensed what was coming and flew into a rage. His physical and sexual assault of Stucky — which cracked her foundation, shattered her faith, and changed her future — is the main dramatic plotline of *The Fog of Faith*, which she reads from on Tuesday, June 13, at Op.Cit. Books.

Stucky quickly realized that neither she, nor God, nor her father could save her from Ron, who began abusing her regularly. “It was before feminism, and the world I grew up in was in some ways even earlier than the day. It was more like the 1950s than the ’60s — and being a rural area, closed off from the world, it could have been the 1920s or the late 1800s,” she said.

She became pregnant at seventeen and was forced to marry the young man who treated her like a sex slave. A series of events led her to convince Ron to move to Boston, and so, child in tow and barely old enough to vote, they resettled in a big city, far away from the comforts of family. As

Ron continued to be violent, there finally came a time when Stucky was able to get out of the relationship — but only inasmuch as she understood she was not fated to be with him. Ron spent years stalking her. Despite this, Stucky was saved by her own pluck and by the city's social safety net, which allowed her to go to college, collect welfare benefits, and live with her son in public housing. Decades later, long after Stucky had remarried and after Ron had done more than one stint in prison for his actions, he continued to show up at her family's functions looking for her.

In the mid-1990s, after her second marriage broke up, Stucky moved to Santa Fe, where she accepted a position as the campus minister at the College of Santa Fe. Her role there was more student psychologist than spiritual leader, because the college was historically Catholic and she has advanced degrees in counseling and psychotherapy. She is now in private practice as a pastoral psychotherapist, which she explained is different from Christian counseling. "It's about meaning-making. The pastoral counselor uses whatever they experience on their own spiritual journey that makes them a seeker of life's meaning as a part of their therapeutic self that does the work of therapy. I can't speak for every pastoral counselor, but for the most part we are not trying to make people become Christians, nor is counseling just for Christians."

People often suffer greatly because of internal contradictions over their belief in God that they are either unaware of or have never reckoned with, Stucky said. For instance, many people who think they believe in God really only believe a fraction of the time, and many people who say they are atheists actually believe in God when facing their own mortality. "The biggest mistake we make is thinking we are just one thing. We believe differently at different times."

For Stucky, faith is not just a feel-good opportunity, and it is infinitely more complicated than adhering to the tenets of a religion. "Most of us have some sense that being a part of a faith community makes us good, but when push comes to shove, that's when you have to ask yourself what you really believe. In the Mennonite community, you better believe what you say you believe, because it's going to threaten your life if violence comes your way."

Had she never met Ron, Stucky said she might have married a man from her community. But try as she might, she cannot imagine having lived her whole life as a farmer's wife in Kansas. "I just have a mind that asks too many questions. At some point, I would have to have gotten out." As far as her own faith goes, she considers herself spiritual but not religious, because religion is so weighted with the need for creed. "I really function without a creed. What I would say is that I hold the opposite ends and do the integrating as best I can," she said. "Like everybody else, I'm one place at one moment and another place at another moment. Although the amount of questioning that I do is really the questioning of a skeptic."

Resume

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QUALIFICATIONS

My most recent adventure, writing a memoir called *The Fog of Faith: Surviving My Impotent God*, has taken more than 10 years of soul searching, a dedicated writing practice, re-traumatization, raw honesty, and frequent exhilaration. Reviewers are calling it an “important” book, one not to be missed, a work of art, and a riveting page-turner. As a result of writing this memoir, I’m devoting more time to speaking engagements and leading workshops.

For more than thirty years I’ve offered therapy services to individuals and groups. During these years I’ve also experienced graduate and postgraduate teaching, and founding a professional training institute.

After moving to Santa Fe in 1995, I established a therapeutic practice in a tight market, continued teaching and training therapists, taught graduate classes, and developed a consulting business. Since 2003, my pastoral counseling practice has been recognized by the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Santa Fe as an associated or affiliated community ministry.

EXPERIENCE

- Author, *The Fog of Faith: Surviving My Impotent God* (5/17 to present)**
A Memoir of Trauma and Resilience
- Sole Proprietor and Owner, Therapist, Supervisor, Instructor (5/95 to present)**
Listening Sage Associates (Inc.)
- Private Practice Clinician (4/03 to present)**
Associated or affiliated with Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Santa Fe
(11/03 to present)
- Principal, Business Consultant (1/02 to 12/09)**
AndNow LLC
- Pastoral Psychotherapist, Supervisor, Trainer, Workshop Leader (5/95 to 4/03)**
Pastoral Counseling Center of Northern New Mexico
- Private Practice Clinician (7/94 to 5/95)**
Oklahoma City
- Founding Director, Southwest Institute for Religion and Psychotherapy (4/90 to 7/94)**
- Clinical Director (6/88 to 7/90)**
- Instructor (1/85 to 7/94)**
- Director, Midwest City Associate Office (1/85 to 6/88)**

Psychotherapist (8/81 to 1/85)
Center for Counseling and Psychotherapy
Adjunct Graduate Faculty (9/87 to 9/02)
Phillips Graduate Seminary
Adjunct Graduate Faculty (8/88 to 5/94)
University of Oklahoma
Adjunct Ministerial Staff (9/82 to 9/85)
First Christian Church of Midwest City
Educator/Consultant (5/81 to 12/82)
Red Rock Comprehensive Mental Health Center
Interim Pastor (6/78 to 3/81)
Grace Church United
Friedens United Church

EDUCATION

Doctor of Ministry in Pastoral Counseling (with honors) (6/85 to 5/88)
Southern Methodist University, Perkins School of Theology
Residency Certificate (9/82 to 12/84)
Center for Counseling and Psychotherapy
Master of Arts (9/74 to 5/79)
Eden Theological Seminary
Bachelor of Arts, Psychology and Philosophy (summa cum laude) (9/71 to 8/74)
Boston College

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Board of Directors
American Association of Pastoral Counselors
Vice President and President
Kansas-Oklahoma Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC)
Clinical Member, Fellow and Diplomate
Member, National Committee on Training Resource and Development
Member, S.W. Region Membership Committee
Member, S.W. Region Professional Concerns Committee
American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC)
Member, Object Relations Theory and Religious Experience Study Group
American Psychological Association
Member
UCC/AAPC Task Force
Consulting Editor
American Journal of Pastoral Counseling
State Chairperson
National Interfaith Coalition for Spirituality in Healthcare and Counseling

LICENSURE AND CERTIFICATION

Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor, New Mexico (5/96 to present)
Ordained Minister, United Church of Christ (4/81 to 12/10)
Final Fellowship, Unitarian Universalist Association (12/09)
Member (11/84), **Fellow** (11/88), **Diplomate** (5/94), AAPC

PUBLICATIONS

The Fog of Faith: Surviving My Impotent God, Prairie World Press, NM, 2017

Review of “**Paternity as Function: Structuring the Religious Experience**” by Vassilis Saroglou, The Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling, 2002, Vol. 56, No. 2.

Review of: “**Erotic Justice: A Liberating Ethic of Sexuality**” by M. M. Ellison, The Journal of Pastoral Counseling, 1998, Vol. 1, No. 2.

“**The Impact of Male God Imagery on Female Identity Meaning**”, The Journal of Pastoral Care, Fall 1993, Vol. 47, No.2.

“**The Self Perpetuating Nature of Patriarchy**”, Free Inquiry in Creative Sociology, November 1988, Vol. 16, No. 2.

“**Ruth: The Dangers of the Heart**”, People of Faith, St. Louis, UCC Office for Church Life and Leadership, 1985.

GRADUATE AND POST-GRADUATE COURSES TAUGHT

“**Object Relations Theory and Pastoral Psychotherapy**”: This two semester course teaches the fundamentals of object relations and personality development theory. It focuses on clinical practices that address distorted relational patterns typically used by people diagnosed with personality disorders. It enhances basic clinical skills and the ability to build and track therapeutic relationships. It integrates a critique of psychotherapeutic practice from both theological and feminist perspectives.

“**Pastoral Care**”: Discusses the purpose and scope of pastoral care. It focuses on pastor’s and caregiver’s intervention skills. It addresses crisis situations for individual, families, and groups, and specific chronic dysfunctions that sometimes prevail in parishes and community groups. Students use case material and role plays to expand their response capacities. The course includes presentations about prevention planning and implementation, building healthy communities, and strategies to address problematic dynamics.

“**Pastor as Counselor**”: This course addresses the potential of pastoral relationships to heal characterological and relational wounds. It outlines basic theories of personality development and effective pastoral and therapeutic interventions with a variety of personality styles, gender issues, and relational dynamics. It also discusses interpersonal dynamics in parish communities and suggests ways to cultivate wholeness.

“**Dealing With Religious Themes in Therapy**”: Uses Rizzuto’s theory to discuss God representation development in the context of religious experience, transitional space, and intrapsychic dynamics. Offers practical insights for exploring clients’ religious lives and for understanding the intrapsychic interrelationship between religious experiences and personality development.

“**Women’s Issues in the Helping Professions**”: Focuses on recurrent themes that women confront in helping professions and the historical antecedents to these themes. Addresses the

meaning of mothering as it is redefined in these professions and uses the early mother-infant relationship to develop a methodology and techniques for helping professionals.

“The Mother Archetype”: Focuses on the impact of mothering and nurturing forces on the development of religious experience, morality, and the identity of males and females. Explores historical and current mythological presentations of Gods that belie mothering influences. Discusses the implications of this theory for therapists working clinically with ‘mother issues’. This course has been taught in numerous settings including at the **C. G. Jung Institute, Zurich Switzerland**, June 03.

LEADERSHIP OF SPECIALIZED GROUPS

Group supervision of students and therapists
Support group for family members of murder victims
Trauma recovery and reflection group after 9/11
Communication group in workplace environment