

LAMENT EMBODIED IN COMMUNITY

ACCOMPANYING GRIEF TOWARD GENUINE HEALING

Shaya Aguilar and Rev. Dr. Soong-Chan Rah



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Young adults are creating a new kind of shared language to capture their grief. The irony is that much of the language is actually emulating the lament theology expressed all throughout the Psalms—honest, human, vulnerable, and longing for intervention and change.

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SETTING THE TABLE

Imagine that your church leadership team were to come together for a time of discernment on communal grief practices and rituals. First, we invite you to prepare your heart, mind and body for a time of reflection and discernment. We invite you to begin with the breath prayer below:

A BREATH PRAYER BASED ON PSALM 46

Opening Breaths: Find a comfortable position, allowing yourself to settle into stillness. Close your eyes softly.

Inhale deeply, inviting peace into your being.

Exhale slowly, releasing any tension or worry.

Repeat three times, focusing on your breath.

Breath Prayer:

Inhale: “God is our refuge,” Exhale: “Our strength in every trial.”

Inhale: “Though the earth trembles,” Exhale: “We will not be afraid.”

Inhale: “There is a river of joy,” Exhale: “Flowing from the city of God.”

Inhale: “God is within us,” Exhale: “A fortress in troubled times.”

Inhale: “Be still and know,” Exhale: “He is God over all.”

Closing Breaths: Take a final deep breath in, feeling grounded and reassured.

Exhale fully, carrying the peace of God with you.

When you’re ready, gently open your eyes, knowing that the Lord Almighty is with you, your refuge and strength.

Feel free to adjust the words or the pacing to align with your own rhythm of prayer. May these words from Psalm 46 continue to inspire and comfort you throughout your day.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. What comes to mind when you consider how your church community has typically navigated grief? Share a story about what grief in your congregation looks like.
2. As you consider this, what do you think is at risk for church communities who do not pause to create rituals around grief?
3. Reflect on what spaces you have felt safe to grieve in the presence of others. Consider a moment or experience that you recognized that you felt safe, secure and understood in your grief and lament. If you're comfortable, share your stories with the group.
4. What patterns do you hear in these stories? What are the ingredients or qualities present that make room for grieving together?
5. Take time to process and pray over what has been shared among your group. Depending on the season your church is in, you may find it important to invite your congregation to share and reflect on their experiences of grief in the community as well. Or you can use your time of reflection to shape how your group feels called to create spaces for communal grief in your context.

CLOSING

What is the “low-hanging fruit” step you could take for yourself and/or your congregation in response to this discussion today?

A low hanging fruit is something you could easily do this coming week.

Given this theme and your context; what is one “moonshot” you could imagine?

A moon shot is a giant leap into relationship and connection that would require monumental effort but be totally amazing.