

Sowing Peace

DIGGING INTO LENTEN THEMES OF
LAMENT, REPENT & FORGIVE



Participant Packet



JUSTFAITH

ministries

SOWING PEACE:

DIGGING INTO LENTEN THEMES OF LAMENT, REPENT & FORGIVE

PARTICIPANT PACKET

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About the Author

Sowing Peace was written by teacher, artist, speaker, former JustFaith staff member, and current JustFaith Ministries consultant **Cory Lockhart**.

Currently, Cory specializes in training Nonviolent/Compassionate Communication (NVC), most often working with Catholic organizations, congregations, and schools.

Cory's expansive social justice experience in the United States and across the world led to her current NVC work. Her interest in NVC began in 2013 when it was part of her training for Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT, formerly Christian Peacemaker Teams). At the time she also made a formal commitment to the practice of nonviolence. She is a reservist with CPT and did stints with the Palestine team from 2013 to 2018.

Cory has completed three International Intensive Trainings in NVC and continues to pursue ongoing training in the field, including the role of NVC in social change, NVC and the dynamics of power, and more. She is passionate about the use of NVC as one tool to help transform our world – every day and in every interaction – to one that is more just, equitable, and loving.

Learn more about Cory at corylockhart.com. Reach out to Cory (cory@corylockhart.com) to explore how she can support your organization, your parish, or your family in training or integration of NVC.



INTRODUCTORY MATERIALS

The Sprouting of Lament, Repent, Forgive: Digging into Lenten Themes

Shortly before beginning to write this program, I (Cory) had the great joy of hearing Valarie Kaur, creator of the Revolutionary Love Project speak – twice! Though she is from the Sikh tradition, her words speak so deeply to my Catholic soul, especially for the season of Lent: “The future is dark. Is this the darkness of the tomb or the darkness of the womb?”

As she told stories from her own tradition, she reminded us that we are here now because *our ancestors survived*. They may have survived famine, genocide, natural disasters, wars, poverty, displacement, and other, often human-created, calamities.

You may be entering this season of Lent feeling the upheaval of the world. Both nationally and globally, we have been experiencing what feel like unprecedented times. There is so much uncertainty. There are so many people suffering. How can we respond to such daunting challenges?

Though we may or may not know the stories of our biological lineage, the lineage of our faith tradition offers the fertile soil of lessons and learnings to show us the way. Within and beyond our traditions, we find resurrection-keepers - past and present wisdom-holders, storytellers, and our common home of Earth, who guide us to dig for truths so we may discern a sustainable path through what seems impossible and impassable.

This program is a Lenten program. It is also written with the recognition that resurrection is not just a Christian theme, not just a human theme, but that cycles of death and new life are a part of all of God’s Creation and always have been. In this spirit, you are invited to hold this reframing of Valarie Kaur’s question as you move through the program: Is this the darkness of decomposition or the darkness of life germinating?

As you dig in, note that resurrection-keeping is not primarily intellectual work. It is embodied work of the heart and this program is an invitation to journey in-through-with the heart. You are invited to notice how the process feels *in your body*. Questions throughout the program will encourage you to pay attention to what is happening mentally, emotionally, *and* physically.

Remembering that you, beloved, are made from dust, you are invited to play in the soul-soil of the world: to delve into the messy dirt of humanity, to help what is rotten to compost into fertile soil, and in that soil to sow and nurture perennial seeds of love, hope, and mercy, so we may grow ourselves into a garden of beloved community. You are invited to claim the identity of resurrection-keeper, too.



The Structure of the Program

As the title indicates, this program focuses on three key themes of the Lenten season: lament, repent, and forgive.

Lament: recognizing our world as it is, the layers of complexity, and our own internal complexities in response to it. In the first two sessions, you're invited to dig into the messiness of the world.

Repent: recognizing our own role-personal and collective- in harm-doing and turning toward accountability. In Sessions 3 and 4, you're invited into composting- transforming the harms, hurts, and pains of the world into fodder for new life and growth.

Forgive: recognizing the harm that others have done and holding the possibility of transformation and new life. In Sessions 5 and 6, you're invited to plant- or replant- seeds of connection, trust, and hope and allow them to germinate.

Sessions and optional Weekly Reflections include scripture passages, poetry, and excerpts from Christian writers, as well as writings from other traditions. Imagine the program as a garden patch, the readings as seeds from a mixed-flower packet, offering a variety of voices and topics to plant and tend. All readings will invite you to reflect on your own life and to consider your role in addressing current issues facing our country and world today. You may want to give special attention to some voices and topics- allowing them to take up larger parts of your patch- and less attention to others. Cultivate your Lenten garden as you see fit.

Overview of Sessions

Lament, Repent, Forgive was designed to be flexible to the unique needs of each group. Your facilitator may or may not host the Get-To-Know-You and He Is Risen! We Are Rising! gathering. If you have questions about your group's schedule or which materials your group will use, talk to your facilitator.

Get-to-Know-You Session (optional): This session is an opportunity to get to know each other and explore the "starting point" in the group's understanding and relationship with the words *lament*, *repent*, and *forgive*.

Session 1: Psalms of Lament: What is lament? How can a psalm of lament guide us in our relationship with the world and how might other resurrection-keepers teach us to practice lament well?



Session 2: Holy Ground: With Jesus and modern-day truth-tellers as guides, how do we honestly express ourselves in a context where honest expression isn't valued?

Session 3: From Rot to Richness: Explores our kinship with God and each other and how we practice accountability with one another.

Session 4: Prodigal People: Through the parable of the prodigal son, this session explores the relationship between repentance and forgiveness. What can accountability look like for social injustice?

Session 5: Redemption in Reciprocity: Explores the vastness of God's forgiveness and mercy and invites us to grow our own capacity for forgiveness.

Session 6: Repair. Restore. Rise!: How can we follow Jesus' example: "Forgive them for they know not what they do." This session expands the understanding of forgiveness as both individual and collective practices.

He Is Risen! We Are Rising! (optional) – Participants discern how they can live out the invitation to be resurrection-keepers.

Goals of Lament, Repent, Forgive: Digging into Lenten Themes

- Explore the themes of *lament*, *repent*, and *forgive* through the Gospel and beyond to find your place as a resurrection-keeper
- Dig into the soul-soil that both Lent and springtime invite us into and look for the lessons in the dirt.
- Transform a collection of 7-14 individuals into a *community* of love and support. The members of your community will continue to encourage one another as you seek spiritual transformation and take action for justice after the program has finished.

Weekly Reflection (Optional but strongly encouraged)

Between sessions are reflection opportunities designed to be completed over the course of five days. While engaging in these activities will lead to a much richer program experience, you do not need to have completed them in order to participate in in-session dialogue.



Optional Reflection Partners for Lament, Repent, Forgive

Because the Weekly Reflections won't be discussed during sessions, you may want a reflection partner during the program, someone to check in with to share what has been impactful for you from the Weekly Reflections.

Being reflection partners could mean:

- doing the reflections together, particularly if you are in the same household
- texting with one another through the week, perhaps sharing one insight, challenge, or question from each day's reflection
- scheduling a phone call, coffee date, or walk to chat about the week's reflections

Being reflection partners doesn't have to take a lot of time. It simply offers a way for you to have more interaction with another person in the group during the program.

What to Bring to Each Session

For each session, you will need your Participant Packet. You can print it out, or you can pull it up on a tablet or other device. You will also need a journal and pen or pencil.

We need your help!

Lament, Repent, Forgive is different from anything we've done before! We want to know how we can provide resources that are relevant, meaningful, and helpful to you and your community – but to do this we need your feedback and ideas. Please fill out the surveys below and remind your group to do so as well.

- Pre-Program survey: <https://justfaith.org/sowing-peace-pre-survey/>
- Post-Program survey: <https://justfaith.org/sowing-peace-post-survey/>



About JustFaith Ministries

Overview

JustFaith Ministries (JFM) is a nonprofit organization that serves the work of justice, community-building and reconciliation by creating small-group educational programs that transform hearts, deepen commitment, inspire engagement and equip for action. Over 70,000 people across the country have participated in JFM programs! Our work is crafted and customized for both those who belong to a Christian community as well as those who approach the work of justice from a more broadly spiritual perspective.

Programs for Christian Communities

JustFaith Ministries has a long history of serving churches and small faith communities to empower and expand their work on behalf of justice. Drawing from the heart of the Gospel, our faith-based programming allows participants to explore the intersection of faith and social mission, study an important issue intensively, build community, and discern next steps (faith-in-action). These small group programs include:

- JustFaith Series: this series explores the Gospel's call to respond to poverty, equipping participants to take action in a way that is effective, sustainable, and reflective of their Christian vision. The ecumenical version of this series (JustFaith) consists of three 8-session programs, while JustFaith Catholic comprises four.
- Racial Justice Series:
 - Faith and Racial Equity: Exploring Power and Privilege
 - Faith and Racial Healing: Embracing Truth, Justice and Restoration
 - Faith and Racial Justice: Changing Systems and Structures
- Eco-justice Series:
 - Sacred Land: Food and Farming
 - Sacred Air: Climate and Energy
 - Sacred Water: Oceans and Ecosystems



- Youth for Justice: Invites youth to explore contemporary social issues through the lens of the Christian tradition.
- Faith and Immigration Justice
- Just Action! How to Advocate and Mobilize for Justice
- Want to Talk? Communication Tools for Divided Times
- The Land Is Not Our Own: Seeking Repair Alongside Indigenous Communities
- Preventing Gun Violence: From Rhetoric to Real Solutions

Programs for Broader Audiences

JustFaith Ministries also offers programs that are designed for broader audiences that may not define themselves as religious. Those who are unaffiliated with a church or religious tradition or who identify as “spiritual but not religious” will find these programs relevant and meaningful. These programs may also resonate with an interfaith audience. These programs include:

- Spirituality and Racial Equity: Exploring Power and Privilege
- Spirituality and Racial Healing: Embracing Truth, Justice, and Restoration
- Spirituality and Racial Justice: Changing Systems and Structures
- Want to Talk? Communication Tools for Divided Times

Impact

The best testimony to our work is the outcomes: JustFaith participant involvement in justice and social ministry is vast. Participants report bringing more affordable housing opportunities to their communities; reforming the criminal justice system; advocating for hunger relief at the local, national and international levels; standing in solidarity with our immigrant siblings; becoming ambassadors for Fair Trade and micro-businesses; engaging in anti-racism efforts; advocating for the end of the death penalty; working for sensible gun laws; and many other commitments. The true measure of our work is what happens after the programs are done!

Welcome

Welcome to the JFM community! We can't do this without each other. We are honored to walk alongside you in advancing peace, racial equity, economic justice and a sustainable world, and we hope that you will find as much love and liberation along this journey as we have. Please



keep in touch: let us know how your life has been transformed, the ways you are taking action for justice, and how we can best support you in your spiritual growth and work for justice. Most of all, know that we, the JustFaith Ministries staff, are holding you in our hearts and praying for you throughout your journey.

Join the JustFaith Network

The ultimate goal of this program – and all our JustFaith Ministries programs – is to invite participants into a deeper commitment to the work of love and justice. To support program graduates, we created the JustFaith Network to provide lively and current resources that can sustain you spiritually and equip you with the tools you need for your work to be effective. By joining the Network, you will have access to reflections, small group guided conversations, speaker events, blogs, best practices, and an expanding list of items.

The JustFaith Network is free and open to anyone. You can sign up at:

<https://justfaith.org/get-involved/justfaith-network>

Support JustFaith Ministries - & Inspire More People To Work For Justice

JustFaith Ministries is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. We rely on donations from graduates like you to help us create and distribute our high-quality programs. We hope you consider making a donation, and joining with us in building a more just, peaceful, and equitable world.

To learn about ways you can donate (online; by check; through an IRA, donor-advised fund; and more), visit: <https://justfaith.org/donate>.

Special Thanks!

Thanks to Pax Christi USA for the use of the poems “Minor Miracle” and “Wildpeace.”

Thanks also to Mandy Olivam, Alan Lowhorn, St. William Catholic Community (Louisville, KY), and First Baptist Greenville (SC) for providing feedback during the program’s creation.



OPTIONAL GET-TO-KNOW-YOU SESSION ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A

Facilitator: **Let us pray.**

Reader: We are dust-

All: Made from the same elements as the stars.

Reader: We are dust-

All: From dust we are made, to dust we shall return.

Reader: We are soil-

All: Created in God's image with fertile potential.

Reader: We are soil-

All: We hold the cycles of life within us.

Reader: We are seed-

All: Sometimes dormant, waiting for the right moment

Reader: We are seed-

All: Bursting with new life, new love sprouting in the world.

Reader: God of Life, help us to see ourselves intertwined with all of creation,
to know that being dirt-y is simply a part of being created by you.
May we honor and lean into the cycles of life, death, and renewed life.

All: Amen.



Get-to-Know-You Session Attachment B

Introduction Questions

- What brings you to *Sowing Peace: Digging into Lenten Themes of Lament, Repent, & Forgive*?
- What are you looking for this season of Lent? Is there anything you feel you're missing that you are hoping to find during the *Sowing Peace* series?
- What are you carrying with you as you begin the process? Is there a struggle or sadness you are bringing into this space?
- What is one thing you love about yourself? Or, what would you like the group to know?



Get-To-Know-You Attachment C

Community of Trust Guidelines

Adapted by Anne and Tom Johnson from:

- *Circle of Trust® Touchstones developed by Parker J. Palmer and the Center for Courage & Renewal www.couragerenewal.org (primary source)*
 - *JustFaith Group Guidelines www.JustFaith.org*
1. **Be as fully present as possible.** Be here with your doubts, fears, and failings, as well as your convictions, joys, and successes, your listening as well as your speaking. Listen intently in order to fully understand different points of view. Honor the space between “no longer” and “not yet.”
 2. **What is offered in our community is by invitation, not demand.** Share what your soul calls for, and know that you do it with our support. Commit to ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to speak. Invite others to speak before speaking again.
 3. **Speak your truth in ways that respect other people’s truth.** Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one’s truth in our community does not mean interpreting, correcting, or debating what others say. Knowing that we are each created uniquely, and have different backgrounds, experiences, and views, we commit to honoring differences, knowing they add to the richness of the community’s experience.
 4. **No fixing, saving, advising, or correcting.** This is one of the hardest guidelines for those of us who like to “help.” But it is vital to welcoming the soul, to making space for the inner teacher.
 5. **When the going gets tough, turn to wonder.** If you feel judgmental or defensive, ask yourself:
 - “I wonder what brought her to this belief?”
 - “I wonder what he’s feeling right now?”
 - “I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?”

Set aside judgment to listen to others – and to yourself – more deeply.



6. **Attend to your own inner teacher.** We learn from others, of course. But as we explore prayer, readings, questions, and silence, as well as engage with people both inside and outside our community, we have a special opportunity to learn from within. So pay close attention to your own reactions and responses, which are your most important teacher.
7. **Notice the log in your own eye,** rather than the speck in your neighbor's. It is easier to talk about a misguided politician, close-minded family member, or ignorant coworker than it is to do the deep spiritual work of recognizing our own part in unjust systems and imagining ways to seek accountability, repair, and healing.
8. **Know that it's possible** to leave a meeting of our community with whatever it was you needed when you arrived, and that the seeds planted here can keep growing in the days ahead.

Note: If your group would like to explore more deeply the practices of nonviolent communication and civil dialogue across differences, consider taking the small group program [Want to Talk? Communication Tools for Divided Times](#) together. Alternatively, you could offer it for your church or community.



Get-to-Know-You Session Attachment D

Lament

- As you hear the word *lament*, does it bring up any memories or stories from your life or your community? Does it feel like a positive, negative, or neutral word?
- Are there any emotions attached to the word lament or any memories or stories connected to it?

Repent

- In your childhood what did you learn about repentance? What memories or stories from your life or your community arise as you hear this word? Does it feel like a positive, negative, or neutral word?
- Are there any emotions attached to the word repent or the memories or stories connected to it?

Forgive

- In your childhood what did you learn about forgiveness? What memories or stories from your life or your community arise as you hear this word? Does it feel like a positive, negative, or neutral word?
- Are there any emotions attached to the word forgive or the memories or stories connected to it?



Get-to-Know-You Attachment E

Pre-Program Survey

While optional, this survey helps JustFaith Ministries meet the needs of communities nationwide. Thank you for taking the time to fill it out!



<https://justfaith.org/sowing-peace-pre-survey/>



SESSION 1 ATTACHMENTS: PSALMS OF LAMENT

Session 1 Attachment A

Opening Meditation: Prayer of Opening

Reader 1: Open our hearts, O God.
Open our hearts to the whole world.

Reader 2: The whole-broken world.

Reader 1: Open our eyes, O God.

Open our eyes to the beauty we sometimes miss in our rushed inattentiveness,

Reader 2: The beauty of Your Creation, that is dust-dirt turned into Life, that is We/Us/All.

For You and for Us, let our joy dance us into connection.

Reader 1: Open our eyes, O God.

Open our eyes to the ones we wish not to see:

Reader 2: The ones who are suffering from days, months, years, generations of pain,

human-caused pain, the ones who have been thrown into rot, forgotten, hidden from our sight.

May we remember that they carry the divine seeds of possibility.

Reader 1: Open our eyes, O God.

Open our eyes to the ones we wish not to see:

Reader 1: The ones we claim are other than your beloved children because of the harm,

hurt, hate they bring, the ones who sling mud, deceive, and turn soil to toxic

dirt.



May we remember that they, too, carry the divine seeds of possibility, that no one is beyond your transformative love.

Reader 2: For them and for us, let our grief flow freely, washing away sharp edges, softening hardened clumps of soul-soil, allowing us and them to be molded with one another in blessed and beloved fertile community.

Reader 1: Open our hands, O God.

Reader 2: Open our hands to release what we've grasped tightly- dirt-y ideas, judgments, anything that separates us from us, us from You.

May we allow these to filter through our fingers, clearing, cleansing, Yes-ing to something new.

Reader 1: Open our hands, O God.

Open our hands so that we can dig into soul-soil together.

Reader 2: Open our hearts-eyes-hands so that we can receive what is ours to hold:

Seeds of Connection,

Light of Curiosity,

Water of Care,

The hand of another.

All: Amen



Session 1 Attachment B

Reflection Question:

- When you think about your upbringing, in your family and/or in your faith community, what emotions were “acceptable” to express?

Psalm 12

For the director of music. According to sheminith. A psalm of David.

1 Help, Lord for no one is faithful anymore;
those who are loyal have vanished from the human race.

2 Everyone lies to their neighbor;
they flatter with their lips
but harbor deception in their hearts.

3 May the Lord silence all flattering lips
and every boastful tongue—

4 those who say,
“By our tongues we will prevail;
our own lips will defend us—who is lord over us?”

5 “Because the poor are plundered and the needy groan,
I will now arise,” says the Lord.
“I will protect them from those who malign them.”

6 And the words of the Lord are flawless,
like silver purified in a crucible,
like gold refined seven times.

7 You, Lord, will keep the needy safe
and will protect us forever from the wicked,



8 who freely strut about
when what is vile is honored by the human race.

Group Reflection

- What message speaks to you most clearly? What resonates most strongly with you?
- What connections do you see between what the psalmist describes and our world today?



Session 1 Attachment C

Ah, if we had people of prayer among the people who control the destiny of our country, the destiny of the economy! If human beings, rather than relying on their human methods, would lean on God and his techniques, we would have a world that the church dreams about, a world without injustices, a world where rights are respected, a world with the generous participation of all, a world without repression, a world without torture.

Forgive me for always mentioning torture, but there is a heaviness in my poor spirit when I think about those people who suffer lashes, kicks, and blows from other people. If those who do such things had a little of God in their hearts, they would see that the person they are hurting is their brother or sister made in the image of God. I say this because these situations continue. People continue to be taken to be “disappeared.”

I wish, brothers and sisters, that a little contact with God from these prisons that seem to be hells, would bring down a little light and would make them understand what God desires of them. God does not want those things. God repudiates evil. God wants what is good, what is love.

– St. Oscar Romero, July 17, 1977, from *Through the Year with Oscar Romero: Daily Meditations*

Group Reflection

- Archbishop Romero spoke these words in 1977 about El Salvador. How do you hear them now?
- Do you see parallels between then and now? Here and there?
- What connections do you see between the psalm and the message of Oscar Romero?
- How do his words touch your heart?



Session 1 Attachment D

Grieve - remember

Grieve - draw closer to your essential self.

Grieve - as you're able, do not push away the pain.

Grieve - as you're able, let the hurt open you.

Grieve - let false barriers fall away.

**Grieve - find the path forward in the rub between what we thought before
and what we now know.**

**Grieve - let your longing allow you to see with new vision, to imagine, and to
fortify yourself for the work ahead.**

- Mandy Olivam, *Perceptions, Pleasures, and Powers*. Loam, 2021 (p. 55).



WEEKLY REFLECTION BETWEEN SESSIONS 1 & 2

(Optional but strongly encouraged!)

These assignments are intended to be a guide for your journey; they are challenging and provocative. However, if life pulls you in other directions and you don't get to them, it's perfectly okay. The readings and questions are meant to expand your exploration of the themes. They will not be the focus of your group's conversation.

We encourage you to engage with the materials gradually over the course of the week, but if your schedule calls for setting aside one to two hours to dive in all at once, that too can be a meaningful way to engage.

Begin by lighting a candle (if you have one). Before turning to the readings, pause for at least one full minute of silence as you set aside the demands of the day to simply be present.

Weeks 1 and 2 focus on the theme of **lament**. The readings below offer perspectives from a variety of times and places around the world.

Pre-Program Survey

While optional, this survey helps JustFaith Ministries to meet the needs of communities nationwide. Thank you for taking the time to fill it out!



<https://justfaith.org/sowing-peace-pre-survey/>



Day 1: Prayer Reflection

- Re-read this portion of the Session 1 Opening Prayer:

Open our hearts, O God.

Open our hearts to the whole world.

The whole-broken world.

Open our eyes, O God.

Open our eyes to the beauty we sometimes miss in our rushed inattentiveness,

The beauty of Your Creation, that is dust-dirt turned into Life, that is We/Us/All.

For You and for Us, let our joy dance us into connection.

- Journal Prompts:
 - What resonates with you from these words?
 - What do you see with your heart-eyes when you look at our whole-broken world?

Day 2: God's Tears

- Read the excerpt below from Cole Arthur Riley's *This Here Flesh*¹. Riley is also the author *Black Liturgies*, and is "the creator of *Black Liturgies*, a space that integrates spiritual practice with Black emotion, Black literature, and the Black body; a project of The Center for Dignity and Contemplations where she serves as Curator²:

I can only wonder why we have so many depictions of the cross with Christ I looking stoic and resolved and so few with him crying out in pain and abandonment. When I read the story, he does not seem composed; he seems

¹ Cole Arthur Riley. *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation, and the Stories That Make Us*. Convergent, 2022 (p. 98-99).

² To learn more about Cole Arthur Riley and her work visit <https://colearthurriley.com/>.



devastated. When we reconstruct a Christ whose very face remains unmoved, how are we to trust that he feels or longs for anything at all? A passionless savior cannot be trusted to save. I have never felt closer to God than when he has tears running down his face. I don't delight in this, but by this, I know that I am seen...

And when God bears witness to our suffering, it is not for his consumption or to demonstrate something...I think when God bears witness to our lament, we discover that we are not calling out to a teacher but inviting God as a nurturer- a mother who hears her child crying in the night. She wakes, rises, and comes to the place where we lie. She rushes her holy warmth against our flesh and says, I'm here.

- Journal Prompts:
 - What thoughts and feelings (emotions and body sensations) arise in you in response to this passage?
 - How do you experience God bearing witness to suffering? Who/how is God for you in times of lament?

Day 3: Psalm 90

- Read [Psalm 90](#), one of the communal psalms of lament:
- Journal prompts:
 - What thoughts and feelings (emotions and body sensations) arise in you in response to this psalm?
 - How do the ideas of God's wrath, anger, and indignation resonate (or not) with you?
 - Does the idea of God having such emotions "allow" you, as someone made in the image and likeness of God, to have similar experiences?



Day 4: The Place of Anger

- Read the excerpt below from Lama Rod Owens' *Love and Rage: The Path of Liberation through Anger*³. "Love and Rage" is one of his courses:

[Anger] is always telling me, "Rod, you're hurt right now and you just don't have the courage to look at that, so I'm protecting you. I'm going to protect you as long as you choose not to look at what my function is." That's what anger is always telling me: no, look deeper, look deeper, don't get distracted.

I hear people say, anger is important; we need it to be effective. I believe anger is like a controlled fire. We do controlled fires in forests to create room and space for new growth and to fertilize the soil. But that fire can get out of control if there aren't any skilled people there controlling that fire. For us, if we have no wisdom, then our anger gets out of control, and it starts burning up everything. I see so many people burning up everything. This gets to the question of how do we actually create community with people who are enraged; their rage is really unchecked. For me, it's that I really need to hold space for my anger, not add fuel to their fire.

The great activism needed today entails bridging our personal grieving with the grieving of our communities. Our anger arises over our pain and is only pointing back to our pain. To hold space for our pain is a way we begin to take care of our pain. Taking care of our pain softens our hurt as we do the work of empathizing with ourselves. Empathizing with ourselves makes it easier to empathize with others around us. This empathy is at the root of the love and compassion that will begin to disrupt the systems that create harm.⁴

- Journal prompts:
 - What is your relationship with anger?
 - Where do you see anger used as a controlled burn? Where do you see it out of control?

³ Lama Rod Owens. *Love and Rage: The Path of Liberation Through Anger*. North Atlantic, 2020 (p. 23, 46-47)

⁴ Owens describes himself as a "Buddhist minister, author, activist, yoga instructor, authorized lama, queen." To learn more about Lama Rod Owens' work, visit <https://www.lamarod.com/>



- How do you see communal grieving and communal expressions of anger shaping social change work?

Day 5: Final Weekly Reflection

- Journal prompt: As you conclude the week, reflect on whatever of these questions feel resonant to you:
 - What do you want to dig into more?
 - What thoughts, ideas, and/or parts of you are composting, in transition?
 - What thoughts, ideas, and/or parts of you are germinating or growing?
 - Resurrection-keeping is work of the heart. Remembering that you, beloved, are made from dust, you are invited to play in the soul-soil of the world: to delve into the messy dirt of humanity, to help what is rotten to compost into fertile soil, and in that soil to sow and nurture perennial seeds of love, hope, and mercy, so we may grow ourselves into a garden of beloved community. You are invited to claim the identity of resurrection-keeper, too.
 - How do this week's session and reflections guide you toward resurrection-keeping?



SESSION 2 ATTACHMENTS: HOLY GROUND

Session 2 Attachment A

Psalm 122

Reader 1: A song of ascents. Of David.

1 I rejoiced with those who said to me,
“Let us go to the house of God.”

2 Our feet are standing
in your gates, Jerusalem.

Reader 2: 3 Jerusalem is built like a city
that is closely compacted together.

4 That is where the tribes go up–
the tribes of God–
to praise the name of God
according to the statute given to Israel.

5 There stand the thrones for judgment,
the thrones of the house of David.

Reader 1: 6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
“May those who love you be secure.

7 May there be peace within your walls
and security within your citadels.”

8 For the sake of my family and friends,
I will say, “Peace be within you.”

9 For the sake of the house of our God,
I will seek your prosperity.

All: **Amen**



Session 2 Attachment B

Luke 13: 31-35

31 At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, “Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.”

32 He replied, “Go tell that fox, ‘I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.’ **33** In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!

34 “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. **35** Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

Group Reflection

- In Session 1, you read psalms of lament, honest outcries to God in response to harsh realities. In this reading, Jesus names the coming reality of his death. How do his words in this reading *feel* to you? Do his words, or any part of them, have a similar feeling to psalms of lament?
- Jesus, God incarnate, shows us the true nature of God. What truths that Jesus taught feel challenging to you? What truths of Nature feel challenging to you?
- Psalms of lament end with expressions of trust in God. Where in this reading do you see Jesus’ expression of trust in God?



Session 2 Attachment C

Mitri Raheb, Faith in the Face of Empire

When I cross the checkpoint from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, which looks more like a big prison with watchtowers, trip wires, cameras, turnstiles, metal detectors, and scanning machines, I frequently think that the checkpoint with all its sophisticated surveillance equipment is the manifestation of the empire controlling the flow of goods and peoples and subjugating them...Behind a bullet-proof window sits a young Israeli soldier, not even twenty-five years old, with a machine gun. Outside, people wait in lines for a long time, sometimes hours... In the lines are children trying to attend school; nurses who are late for their shifts; old people wishing to go pray in Jerusalem (after obtaining a permit for one day, if they are fortunate); those seeking medical treatment (if they have permission and the economic means to be treated outside the West Bank); and others...People slowly lose patience... The young soldier may be in a bad mood or may be texting his girlfriend. And then, suddenly in that cavernous hall, there arises the cry of an old Palestinian woman standing in her hand-embroidered dress, raising both hands toward the sky and imploring loudly in Arabic, “Wenak la Allah?” meaning “Where are you, God?”

“Where are you, God?” is a three-thousand-year-old lament that the inhabitants of Palestine have passed from one generation to the next. It is a question that echoes throughout the Bible. It is a question of a people whose faith is continually tested. They do not question the existence of God, or his care, but they wonder why God is not moving. He sees his people being oppressed, he knows how they are being treated, and yet he seems to be silent. The cry is supposed to shake him so that he awakes, acts, and delivers.

Living in a buffer zone and war zone, seeing that which people work so hard to build and call home repeatedly destroyed, being suffocated by the empire, which is intent on being omnipresent and exercising its might, generates this old yet ever-new query, “God, where are you?”

– Mitri Raheb. *Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible Through Palestinian Eyes*. Orbis, 2014 (p. 67-69).



Group Reflection

- What thoughts or feelings arise in response to the reflection about the checkpoint?
- Where in this story do you see humanity straying from our true nature as beloveds made in the image and likeness of God?
- What situations in your community, state, country, or the world lead you to the question, “God, where are you?” Where do you see entire communities or peoples crying out for care?
- Psalms of lament end with praise and expressions of trust in God. What or who helps you to praise God and put your trust in God’s loving spirit?



Session 2 Attachment D

Wildpeace

Not the peace of a cease-fire,
not even the vision of the wolf and the lamb,
but rather
as in the heart when the excitement is over
and you can talk only about a great weariness.
I know that I know how to kill,
that makes me an adult.
And my son plays with a toy gun that knows
how to open and close its eyes and say Mama.
A peace
without the big noise of beating swords into ploughshares,
without words, without
the thud of the heavy rubber stamp: let it be
light, floating, like lazy white foam.
A little rest for the wounds—
who speaks of healing?



(And the howl of the orphans is passed from one generation

to the next, as in a relay race:

the baton never falls.)

Let it come

like wildflowers,

suddenly, because the field

must have it: wildpeace.

Yehuda Amichai. "Wildpeace," in *Imagine a World: Poetry for Peacemakers*. Pax Christi USA, 2005 (p. 120).



WEEKLY REFLECTION BETWEEN SESSIONS 2 & 3

(Optional but strongly encouraged!)

These assignments are intended to be a guide for your journey; they are challenging and provocative. However, if life pulls you in other directions and you don't get to them, it's perfectly okay. The readings and questions are meant to expand your exploration of the themes. They will not be the focus of your group's conversation.

We encourage you to engage with the materials gradually over the course of the week, but if your schedule calls for setting aside one to two hours to dive in all at once, that too can be a meaningful way to engage.

Begin by lighting a candle (if you have one). Before turning to the readings, pause for at least one full minute of silence as you set aside the demands of the day to simply be present.

Weeks 1 and 2 focus on the theme of **lament**. The readings below offer perspectives from a variety of times and places around the world.

Day 1: The Time Is Here to Grieve

- Read Cory Lockhart's poem "The Time Is Here to Grieve" ([Session 2 Attachment E](#))
- Journal prompts:
 - What thoughts and feelings (emotions and body sensations) arise in you in response to the poem?
 - What were you taught (in your family or faith tradition) about the "proper" way to grieve? Does that way align with how you actually experience grief?

Day 2: Humility

- Read [Matthew 23:1-12](#)
- Journal prompts:
 - The word "humble" comes from the Latin root "humus," relating to the earth or ground. How does practicing humility help us to stay grounded and connected?



- Where/how do you see “those who exalt themselves ...humbled, and those who humble themselves... exalted”?
- Where do you wish to see “those who exalt themselves humbled and those who humble themselves exalted”?
- What feelings arise when you consider the previous two questions?

Day 3: A Knock at Midnight

- Read this excerpt from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. sermon delivered on August 9, 1964 at Riverside Church in New York City. The sermon is entitled “A Knock at Midnight.”⁵

In the terrible midnight of war, men have knocked on the door of the church to ask for the bread of peace, but the church has often disappointed them. What more pathetically reveals the irrelevancy of the church in present day world affairs than its witness regarding war? In a world gone mad with arms buildups, chauvinistic passions, and imperialistic exploitation, the church has either endorsed these activities or remained appallingly silent. Oh, how tragic this is! It reveals that as people knock with determination, they are so often left disappointed. A weary world, pleading desperately for peace, has often found the church morally sanctioning war.

Those who have gone to church to seek the bread of economic justice have been left in the frustrating midnight of economic deprivation. In many instances the church has so aligned itself with the privileged classes and so defended the status quo that it has been unwilling to answer the knock at midnight... The church must be reminded that it is not the master or servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool. If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority. If it does not participate actively in the struggle for peace and for economic and racial justice, it will forfeit the loyalty of millions and cause men everywhere to say that it has atrophied its will. But if the church will free itself from the shackles of a deadening status quo and, recovering its great historic mission, will speak and act fearlessly and insistently in terms of justice and peace, it will enkindle the

⁵ Read a longer excerpt of the sermon at

<http://archive.timesandseasons.org/2004/01/a-knock-at-midnight/index.html>



imagination of mankind and fire the souls of men, imbuing them with a glowing and ardent love for truth, justice and peace. Men far and near will know the church as a great fellowship of love that provides light and bread for lonely travelers at midnight.

- Journal Prompts:
 - What thoughts and feelings (emotions and body sensations) arise in you in response to this passage?
 - What parallels (if any) do you see between the church King describes and the church(es) of today?
 - How does your church community respond to “the struggle for peace and for economic and racial justice”?

Day 4: Wildpeace

- Re-read the closing reflection, “Wildpeace” ([Session 2 Attachment D](#))
- Journal prompts:
 - What thoughts and feelings (emotions and body sensations) arise in you in response to the poem?
 - What images arise in you when you allow yourself to imagine *wildpeace*?

Day 5: Final Weekly Reflection

- Journal prompt: As you conclude the week, reflect on these questions:
 - What do you want to dig into more?
 - What thoughts, ideas, and/or parts of you are composting, in transition?
 - What thoughts, ideas, and/or parts of you are germinating or growing?
 - Resurrection-keeping is work of the heart. Remembering that you, beloved, are made from dust, you are invited to play in the soul-soil of the world: to delve into



the messy dirt of humanity, to help what is rotten to compost into fertile soil, and in that soil to sow and nurture perennial seeds of love, hope, and mercy, so we may grow ourselves into a garden of beloved community. You are invited to claim the identity of resurrection-keeper, too.

- How do this week's session and reflections guide you toward resurrection-keeping?



Session 2 Attachment E (Weekly Assignments)

The Time Is Here to Grieve by Cory Lockhart

The time is here to grieve.	You cannot know the next life while you are clutching.	Stomp! Wail!
The time is here to open up to change, to loss, to “I’ve never lived in this world before.”	You cannot see it if you are only looking backward.	Fall to your knees in the relief of Surrender.
What do you know? Practically nothing.	Look around. Who is here with you? Who holds your hand? The gentle, warm touch may change nothing except to remind you that you are not alone.	The time is now to cry. The cry is now to Time.
What do you want? For the pain to go away.		More time! Mourn time.
Then you must let it go.	Look ahead. Do you tremble at the fog? Do you tense with every “I don’t know“?	Grief flowing transforms. Grief stagnant petrifies.
Holding onto the fear, the hurt, the sorrow, stuffing them down into your body, only inflames your being.	Are you willing to step forward anyway?	What do you choose?
Grasping at what cannot be contained only exacerbates exhaustion.	Look to Mother Earth. Notice that She is steady under your feet. She is all around you, cradling you. She will not fall away, even if you betray Her. She will sustain you with her tender-fierce maternal care.	River or fossil?
Clinging to the known, even as it slips away, only prolongs despair.		
Allow yourself despair. Let it flow through you, washing you, dirty, clean, wearing away your edges. Softening.	If you let her.	



SESSION 3 ATTACHMENTS: FROM ROT TO RICHES

Session 3 Attachment A

Prayer of Opening

Facilitator: **Let us pray.**

Reader 1: Open our eyes, O God.
Open our eyes to the ones we wish not to see:

Reader 2: The ones who are suffering from days, months, years, generations of pain,
human-caused pain, the ones who have been thrown into rot, forgotten, hidden
from our sight.
May we remember that they carry the divine seeds of possibility.

Reader 1: Open our eyes, O God.
Open our eyes to the ones we wish not to see:

Reader 1: The ones we claim are other than your beloved children because of the harm,
hurt, hate they bring, the ones who sling mud, deceive, and turn soil to toxic
dirt.

May we remember that they, too, carry the divine seeds of possibility, that no
one is beyond your transformative love.

Reader 2: For them and for us, let our grief flow freely, washing away sharp edges,
softening hardened clumps of soul-soil, allowing us and them to be molded with
one another in blessed and beloved fertile community.

All: **Amen**



Session 3 Attachment B

That we are all made in the image of God meant that as we are intimately related to God, we are also related intimately to each other...Because of the presence of the image of God within us, what affects the welfare of one of us affects us all, God included.

The bonds that connect us are the bonds of love, God's love for us, which draws us, but also our love for God, and neighbor, which cannot be separated from each other. Remember Dorotheos of Gaza's illustration of this reality...Imagine, he asks that we have drawn a circle with a compass. God is at the center, where the point of the compass went. Now imagine that the outside of the circle is the world, and the lives of human beings are represented by many straight lines drawn from the outside to the center. Notice how as follow a single line from the outside toward God, all the lines come closer together. This is the way human beings relate to God and to each other, for

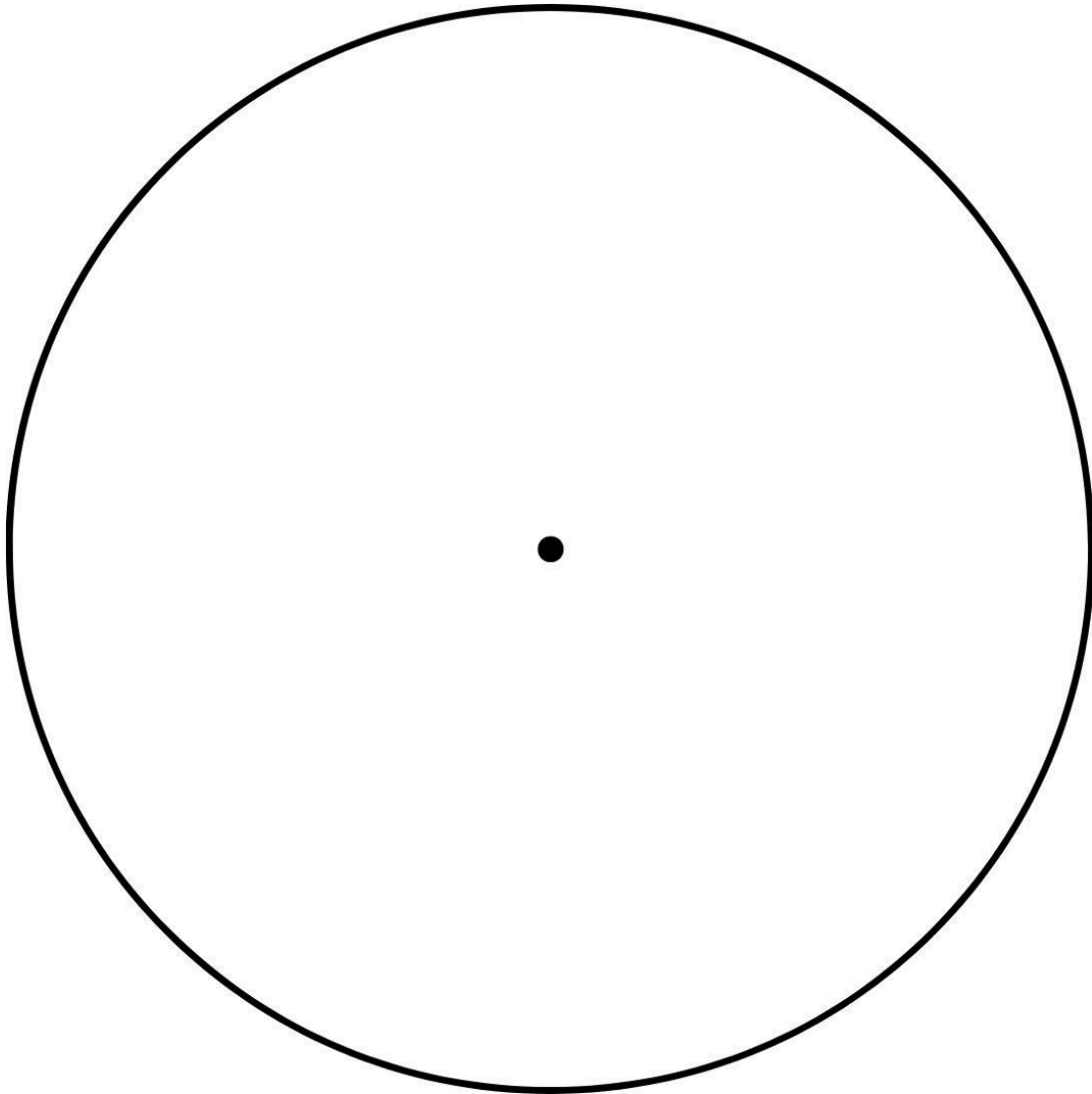
The closer they are to God, the closer they become to one another; and the closer they are to one another, the closer they become to God...

We cannot love God and hate or even be indifferent to our neighbor...This love of other people who are God's images is not an abstract love of humanity, a warm feeling of kinship toward humankind in general...There was nothing abstract or unfocused about the love of which Dorotheos is speaking. Love of neighbor included taking very seriously the actual day-to-day welfare of real people with whom the monks came into contact.

– Roberta Bondi. *To Pray and to Love: Conversations on Prayer with the Early Church*. Augsburg Fortress, 1991 (p. 31-32).



Session 3 Attachment C





Session 3 Attachment D

Luke 13: 1-9: The Parable of the Fig tree

13 Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. **2** Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? **3** I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. **4** Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? **5** I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

6 Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. **7** So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’

8 “Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. **9** If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’”

Group Reflection

- Who, like the caretaker, has helped you to process pain when you have acted or spoken in a way you regret?
- When and how have you- as an individual or part of a community- practiced repentance that led to new fruits?
- Where have you- as an individual or part of a group or community- not yet borne fruit because you haven’t taken responsibility for harm you’ve done (even unintentional harm)?
- Where in our country or world do you see manure needing to compost? Knowing that this is a stinky question, allow yourselves a few moments for humor before tilling the contents of the question. What might composting look like in these places?



Session 3 Attachment E

Rest in the knowledge that the work of making a new world

Will last your entire lifetime, and many more.

Feel free to go slow and deep.

Believe yourself and take care how you need.

Release. The cosmos recycles.

What you no longer hold will be put to use in another way.

What would it feel like in your body to know you're not abandoning,
but renewing and setting free?

Opening to the universe is opening to infinite expansion.

Opening to others is opening to eternal union.

Opening to yourself is opening to unfathomable possibilities.

– Mandy Olivam. *Perceptions, Pleasures, and Powers*. Loam, 2021 (p. 23).



WEEKLY REFLECTION BETWEEN SESSIONS 3 & 4

(Optional but strongly encouraged!)

These assignments are intended to be a guide for your journey; they are challenging and provocative. However, if life pulls you in other directions and you don't get to them, it's perfectly okay. The readings and questions are meant to expand your exploration of the themes. They will not be the focus of your group's conversation.

We encourage you to engage with the materials gradually over the course of the week, but if your schedule calls for setting aside one to two hours to dive in all at once, that too can be a meaningful way to engage.

Begin by lighting a candle (if you have one). Before turning to the readings, pause for at least one full minute of silence as you set aside the demands of the day to simply be present.

Weeks 3 and 4 focus on the theme of **repent**. The readings below offer perspectives from a variety of times and places around the world.

Day 1: Prayer Reflection

Re-read this portion of the Opening Prayer (which is also a portion of the Session 1 prayer):

Open our eyes, O God.

Open our eyes to the ones we wish not to see:

The ones who are suffering from days, months, years, generations of pain,

human-caused pain, the ones who have been thrown into rot, forgotten, hidden from our sight.

May we remember that they carry the divine seeds of possibility.

Open our eyes, O God.

Open our eyes to the ones we wish not to see:



The ones we claim are other than your beloved children because of the harm, hurt, hate they bring, the ones who sling mud, deceive, and turn soil to toxic dirt.

May we remember that they, too, carry the divine seeds of possibility, that no one is beyond your transformative love.

For them and for us, let our grief flow freely, washing away sharp edges, softening hardened clumps of soul-soil, allowing us and them to be molded with one another in blessed and beloved fertile community.

- Journal Prompts:
 - What resonates with you from these words? Are there people you struggle to see with your heart-eyes?
 - If there are people you struggle to see with your heart-eyes, how do you feel about that? Do you think it is a matter of willingness (you simply do not want to open yourself to certain people) or capacity (you are too wounded, exhausted, or otherwise in a place of low capacity that you don't have the energy to open yourself this way) that makes it challenging?

Day 2: The Parable of the Fig Tree

- Re-read the session's Gospel reading ([Luke 13:1-9](#), also Session 3 Attachment D)
- Journal Prompts:
 - What does composting the feelings of guilt, shame, grief, disappointment, anger or other feelings mean for you?



- What could rich soil look like from you- or a group you are a part of -taking responsibility for harmful action (even unintended harm)?
- *Also consider delving more deeply into this question from the session: Where in our country or world do you see manure needing to compost? What might composting look like in these places?*

Day 3: Repentance

- Read Kathleen Norris' essay, "Repentance" from *Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith*⁶ below:

...when I have asked children to write their own psalms, their poems often have an emotional directness that is similar to that of the biblical psalter...Children are frequently astonished to discover that the psalmists so freely express the more unacceptable emotions, sadness and even anger, even anger at God, and that all of this is in the Bible that they hear read in church on Sunday morning.

Children who are picked on by their big brothers and sisters can be remarkably adept when it comes to writing cursing psalms, and I believe that the writing process offers them a safe haven in which to work through their desires for vengeance in a healthy way. Once a little boy wrote a poem called "The Monster Who Was Sorry." He began by admitting that he hates it when his father yells at him; his response in the poem is to throw his sister down the stairs, and then to wreck his room, and finally to wreck the whole town. The poem concludes: "Then I sit in my messy house and say to myself, 'I shouldn't have done all that,'" "My messy house" says it all: with more honesty than most adults could have mustered, the boy admitted the depth of his rage and also gave him a way out. If that boy had been a novice in the fourth-century monastic desert, his elders might have told him that he was well on the way toward repentance, not such a monster after all, but only human. If the house is messy, they might have said, why not clean it up, why not make it into a place where God might wish to dwell?

⁶ Kathleen Norris. "Repentance," *Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith*. Riverhead, 1998 (p. 69-70)



- Journal prompts:
 - What resonates from the story?
 - Where is your house messy? What do you wish to do to “make it into a place where God might wish to dwell”?
 - Where is our collective house messy? What is one action you or your faith community can take to make it into a place where God might wish to dwell?

Day 4: The Rich Man and Lazarus

- Read [Luke 16:19-31](#), the story of the rich man and Lazarus
- Journal Prompts:
 - Lazarus is the only person named in any of Jesus’ parables. Are there people, perhaps like Lazarus, who you walk by regularly, whose names you don’t know?
 - How can you extend a greater sense of kinship with those people?
 - In the story the rich man realizes the consequences of his action only after his death. Where have you seen individuals, groups, or institutions, repent and practice accountability for harms done?

Day 5: Final Weekly Reflection

- Journal prompt: As you conclude the week, reflect on these questions:
 - What do you want to dig into more?
 - What thoughts, ideas, and/or parts of you are composting, in transition?
 - What thoughts, ideas, and/or parts of you are germinating or growing?
 - Resurrection-keeping is work of the heart. Remembering that you, beloved, are made from dust, you are invited to play in the soul-soil of the world: to delve into the messy dirt of humanity, to help what is rotten to compost into fertile soil,



and in that soil to sow and nurture perennial seeds of love, hope, and mercy, so we may grow ourselves into a garden of beloved community. You are invited to claim the identity of resurrection-keeper, too.

- How do this week's session and reflections guide you toward resurrection-keeping?



SESSION 4 ATTACHMENTS: PRODIGAL PEOPLE

Session 4 Attachment A

Prayer: Take heart, start now

Facilitator: **Let us open with the words of Dorothy Day⁷.**

Reader: As Pope John told the pilgrimage of women, Mothers for Peace (the seventy-five of us who went over to Rome to thank him for his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, just the month before his death) “the beginnings of peace are in your own hearts, your own families, schoolrooms, offices, parishes, and neighborhoods.”

It is working from the ground up, from the poverty of the stable, in work as a Nazareth, and also in going from town to town, as in the public life of Jesus two thousand years ago. And since a thousand years are as one day, and Christianity is but two days old, let us take heart and start now.

All: **Let us take heart and start now.**

Reader: In our hearts

All: **Let us take heart and start now.**

Reader: In our families.

All: **Let us take heart and start now.**

Reader: In our schools and places of work.

All: **Let us take heart and start now.**

⁷ Dorothy Day. “The beginnings of peace.” *The Modern Spirituality Series: Dorothy Day*. Ed. Michael Garvey. Templegate, 1996 (p. 78).



Reader: In our churches.

All: **Let us take heart and start now.**

Reader: In our neighborhoods.

Reader: In every place we go.

All: **Let us take heart and start now.**

Facilitator: May it be so.

All: **Amen.**



Session 4 Attachment B

Luke 15: 11-24: The Parable of the Lost Son

11 Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

13 “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ 20 So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

Group Reflection

- After getting work feeding pigs, but not having anything to eat himself, the son “came to his senses,” realizing that his father’s servants were better off than he was. Have you



witnessed someone “coming to their senses” by first realizing the harm done to *themselves*? Did you question whether they also understood their impact on others?

- In this parable, not only does the son repent, but the father forgives him and celebrates his homecoming. Have you ever expressed regret or repentance- as an individual or as part of a group- and *not* been received with such welcoming forgiveness? How was that for you?
- Is repentance necessary for forgiveness? What if we are talking about systemic injustices- racism, sexism, economic oppression, for example)?
- Is forgiveness necessary after repentance? What if we are talking about systemic injustices- racism, sexism, economic oppression, for example)?



Session 4 Attachment C

We have a project that we're starting. It's called the Truth and Justice Project. And we're actually going to be working with institutions, asking them to focus on their institution – to kind of step back, put aside all the global stuff.

And it began, really, in 2018, when we were opening the [lynching] memorial. The local newspaper, the Montgomery Advertiser, was kind of complaining a little bit. They said, "Oh, we know you're going to talk to The New York Times and the Washington Post and all of these other – but you won't talk to us." [laughs]

And I said, "Well, let's have a conversation about that." And we showed them their coverage of lynchings that took place in this area, early in the 20th century. And you read it, and it breaks your heart. They were absolutely encouraging this violence. And I said, "If you ask me why don't I trust you, it's rooted in my knowledge of this history."

And we started a dialogue, and the editor didn't know about any of that stuff, but when we confronted him, he says, "You know what? We have to apologize." I said, "I think that would be really powerful." And on the opening [day of the memorial], they did this massive headline, massive frontpage, a whole edition dedicated to apologizing for their role in contributing to racial terror, lynchings, in this community. And it was really powerful.

But this project that we're doing is a project that is going to encourage these institutions to do exactly what the Advertiser did in that setting.

– *On Being* with Krista Tippett, Bryan Stevenson, "Finding the Courage for What's Redemptive." accessed 17 December 2024. Originally aired December 3, 2020,

<https://onbeing.org/programs/bryan-stevenson-finding-the-courage-for-whats-redemptive/>

Group Discussion

- What resonates with you from this story?
- What do you see as the relationship between trust and repentance? Is repentance easier in relationships of trust? Is trust easier when someone – an individual or group/institution – practices accountability? Does it depend on the particular circumstances?
- What institution(s) would you like to see take responsibility for past and/or present harms?
- For those institutions, what could taking responsibility look like?



Session 4 Attachment D

Facilitator: **Let us pray.**

Reader 1: Our Mother Who Art
in the kitchen
cooking us up
hallowed may we see
all that is
Your kingdom here
delivered into our hands
Your will in children
and trees leafing out
on earth
as if it were Heaven.

Reader 2: Give us this day
bread we could feed
the world
and snatch us bald-headed
if we try to swallow it all.

Reader 1: Don't forgive us
till we learn it is all for giving.
That salve you've got in a pot
on the back of the stove
only heals when everybody has some.

Reade 2: And heed us not
if we believe You look like us
and love us best
and gave us the True Truth



with a license to kill Others
 writ inside.
 Deliver us from this evil.

Reader 1: For it is Yours,
 this kitchen we call Universe
 where you stir up our favorite treat,
 the Milky Way,
 folding deep into sweet
 our little sphere
 with its powerful glory
 of rainforests
 and oceans
 and mountains in feather-boa mist
 forever

All: **if we don't blow it up**

Reader 1: and ever

All: **if we don't tear it down**
Amen

Reader 2: (Ah women
 Ah children
 Ah reckon She's about fed up.
 We better make room at the table
 for everybody
 before She yells "OUT!"
 and turns our table over,
 before She calls it off
 this banquet we've been hoarding
 this paradise



we aim to save
with bombs.)

– George Ella Lyon. “Prayer,” *Imagine a World: Poetry for Peacemakers*. Ed. Peggy Rosenthal. Pax Christi USA, 2005 (p. 134-135).



WEEKLY REFLECTION BETWEEN SESSIONS 4 & 5

(Optional but strongly encouraged!)

These assignments are intended to be a guide for your journey; they are challenging and provocative. However, if life pulls you in other directions and you don't get to them, it's perfectly okay. The readings and questions are meant to expand your exploration of the themes. They will not be the focus of your group's conversation.

We encourage you to engage with the materials gradually over the course of the week, but if your schedule calls for setting aside one to two hours to dive in all at once, that too can be a meaningful way to engage.

Begin by lighting a candle (if you have one). Before turning to the readings, pause for at least one full minute of silence as you set aside the demands of the day to simply be present.

Weeks 3 and 4 focus on the theme of **repent**. The readings below offer perspectives from a variety of times and places around the world.

Day 1: Offer Your Gift

Read [Matthew 5:20-26](#)

- Journal Prompts:
 - What thoughts and feelings (emotional and physical) arise in response to the passage?
 - What gifts can you offer more fully to the world once you have composted/transformed/reconciled past harms you have done?



Day 2: Minor Miracle

- Read Marilyn Nelson’s poem, “Minor Miracle” ([Session 4 Attachment E](#)). Note that it depicts a racially charged interaction between a white man and two Black people (one being the poet herself); it includes a racial slur and obscenity.

It is likely that, whatever your race, you will feel a strong emotional response to this story. If you are a person of color, the interaction described may evoke past experiences of confrontation and threat. If you choose to engage with this reflection, please be extra gentle with yourself, perhaps allowing yourself extra time to let the emotions move through you or even reach out to someone who can listen compassionately as you process your response to the poem.

- Journal prompts:
 - What thoughts and feelings (emotions and physical sensations) arise in response to this poem?
 - One person’s repentance doesn’t change the structural racism that exists. Does this story in any way impact how you see racism or people who carry out racist actions?
 - Have you ever been surprised by someone’s act of repentance? How did it impact trust between you?

Day 3: Lessons from Living Systems

- Read the short excerpt from Margaret Wheatley’s *Who Do We Choose to Be?*⁸ below:

In the dynamics of living systems, newness and disturbances create pathways to survival. If the organism fails to understand what’s happening, or if it ignores the signals, there is no possible way for it to survive. Old identities and irrelevant maps, first mislead and then result in death. Any living system that fails to change, that refuses to encounter its present reality, dooms itself to extinction.

⁸ Margaret Wheatley. *Who Do We Choose to Be? Facing Reality, Claiming Leadership, Restoring Sanity*. Berrett-Koehler, 2023 (p.132).



This is clearly what is happening with the human species, no longer sapient. Closing down or refusing to understand reality, pretending that nothing's happening, that we can proceed as we've always done – these are the behaviors of people gone mad. If we don't open to our changing circumstances, if we don't actively work with new information, death is assured. This is a simple biological fact of life.

- Journal Prompts
 - What thoughts and feelings (emotions and physical sensations) arise in response to this excerpt?
 - “Closing down or refusing to understand reality, pretending that nothing's happening, that we can proceed as we've always done – these are the behaviors of people gone mad.” Consider a particular justice issue that is important to you. Where do you see a need for individual or communal opening to reality and taking responsibility for harm being done?
 - What's an example of someone/an institution who, like the *Montgomery Advertiser* in the Bryan Stevenson story ([Session 4, Attachment C](#)) is open to repentance and repair for harm done?

Day 4: An Agreement with Mother Earth

- Read this short explanation of Inaakegewin: An Agreement with Mother Earth by Isaac Murdoch⁹, an Ojibewe story-teller, singer, song writer, educator, artist:

Inaaknigewin is a form of governance on how we live on the land. It is a set of principles and guidelines that we follow to ensure that we live with nature. It is very important that we try to understand this in today's world, because today, we seem to go against nature.

Our mother earth constantly gives. The plants, the water, everything is always giving life to everything else. The main principle of the inaaknigewin is being able to give. Rather than it being about a rights-based way of life, inaaknigewin is responsibility-based. Instead of having a right to water, we should have a responsibility to it. Following inaaknigewin ensures balance and harmony. The principles of inaaknigewin come from

⁹ <https://www.lessonsfromearthandbeyond.ca/chapter-1-inaaknigewin.html>



the heart so that we work together in a good way. Inaaknigewin is a responsibility-based approach to the environment and each other.

- Journal prompts:
 - What resonates from this statement?
 - How might an individual or collective orientation toward responsibility rather than rights change how we interact with one another and our Mother Earth?

Day 5: Final Weekly Reflection

- Journal prompt: As you conclude the week, reflect on these questions:
 - What do you want to dig into more?
 - What thoughts, ideas, and/or parts of you are composting, in transition?
 - What thoughts, ideas, and/or parts of you are germinating or growing?
 - Resurrection-keeping is work of the heart. Remembering that you, beloved, are made from dust, you are invited to play in the soul-soil of the world: to delve into the messy dirt of humanity, to help what is rotten to compost into fertile soil, and in that soil to sow and nurture perennial seeds of love, hope, and mercy, so we may grow ourselves into a garden of beloved community. You are invited to claim the identity of resurrection-keeper, too.

How do this week's session and reflections guide you toward resurrection-keeping?



Session 4 Attachment E (Weekly Assignments)

Minor Miracle¹⁰ by Marilyn Nelson

Which reminds me of another knock-on-wood
memory. I was cycling with a male friend,
through a small midwestern town. We came to a 4-way
stop and stopped, chatting. As we started again,
a rusty old pick-up truck, ignoring the stop sign,
hurricaned past scant inches from our front wheels.
My partner called, “Hey, that was a 4-way stop!”
The truck driver, stringy blond hair a long fringe
under his brand-name beer cap, looked back and yelled,
“You f*****g n*****s!”
And sped off.
My friend and I looked at each other and shook our heads.
We remounted our bikes and headed out of town.
We were pedaling through a clear blue afternoon
between two fields of almost-ripened wheat
bordered by cornflowers and Queen Anne’s lace

¹⁰ Marilyn Nelson. “Minor Miracle.” *Imagine a World: Poetry for Peacemakers*. Ed. Peggy Rosenthal. Pax Christi USA, 2005 (p. 66-67).



when we heard an unmuffled motor, a honk-honking.

We stopped, closed ranks, made fists.

It was the same truck. It pulled over.

A tall, very much in shape young white guy slid out:

greasy jeans, homemade finger tattoos, probably

a Marine Corps boot-camp footlockerful

of martial arts techniques.

“What did you say back there!” he shouted.

My friend said, “I said it was a 4-way stop.

You went through it.”

“And what did I say?” the white guy asked.

“You said: ‘You f****g n****s.’”

The afternoon froze.

“Well,” said the white guy,

shoving his hands into his pockets

and pushing dirt around with the pointed toe of his boot,

“I just want to say I’m sorry.”

He climbed back into his truck

and drove away.



SESSION 5 ATTACHMENTS: REDEMPTION IN RECIPROCITY

Session 5 Attachment A

Open Our Hands

Facilitator: **Let us pray.**

Reader 1: Open our hands, O God.

Reader 2: Open our hands to release what we've grasped tightly- dirt-y ideas, judgments, anything that separates us from us, us from You.

May we allow these to filter through our fingers, clearing, cleansing, Yes-ing to something new.

Reader 1: Open our hands, O God.

Open our hands so that we can dig into soul-soil together.

Reader 2: Open our hearts-eyes-hands so that we can receive what is ours to hold:

Seeds of Connection,

Light of Curiosity,

Water of Care,

The hand of another.

All: **Amen**



Session 5 Attachment B

Luke 15: 17-32: The Parable of the Lost Son

17 “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ 20 So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

25 “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

28 “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

31 “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”



Group Reflection

- When and from whom have you – as an individual or part of a group – experienced forgiveness and grace beyond your hopes? Were you able to forgive yourself?
- When and with whom have you – as an individual or part of a group – found forgiveness an easy practice? When and with whom have you found forgiveness a difficult practice?
- The older son is resentful that the father celebrates his brother's return so expansively, even after the father reassures him that everything of the father's is his, too. Have you ever witnessed acts of forgiveness and believed the person/group/institution to be unworthy of it?
- What makes a person/group/institution worthy of forgiveness?
- Are there people/situations that you believe are unforgivable?



Session 5 Attachment C

Forgiveness and grace have much more to offer any culture than we give them credit for. They are rare sightings these days, yet where I have seen them, when I've been offered them, I realize that they are not the weak, pitiful emotions of people who don't value themselves. They are the generous gift of people who know their worth cannot be diminished or compromised.

(Pause for one breath.)

When we offer grace or forgiveness, we refuse the false correlation between our worth and actions. But I'm not speaking about the kind of grace or forgiveness that coddles or panders. We don't forgive out of our own desperation for another person; we forgive to invite one another back into our highest selves, back into our commitments. There is an acknowledgement that someone has been wronged or hurt, and forgiveness extends the possibility of trying again.

(Pause for one breath.)

I have struggled my way through forgiveness and grace, just as most of us struggle with them because of how often our hearts have been broken and how often we've been betrayed. I think it's important for us to heed the warnings. Maybe eventually we can all learn to forgive far and wide, the way religions have taught. But for me to think of it that way is too tall an order. Maybe now we only need to forgive close in, nearby: the people in our families and our communities, the people we struggle alongside. Rather than denounce mercy, we try it in small doses. From there maybe forgiveness and grace spread and cover us, become more of the air we breathe.

– Prentis Hemphill, *What It Takes to Heal: How Transforming Ourselves Can Change the World*. Random House, 2024 (p.173–174).

Group Reflection

- What did this reading *feel like* for you? What emotions and/or body sensations arose from listening?
- What resonates for you in this reading?



- Have you ever thought of forgiveness as a “generous gift of people who know their worth cannot be diminished or compromised”?
- Does practicing forgiveness and mercy in small doses feel possible for you?



Session 5 Attachment D

Blaming Never Helps

Reader 1: *When you plant lettuce, if it does not grow well, you don't blame the lettuce. You look into the reasons it is not doing well. It may need fertilizer, or more water, or less sun. You never blame the lettuce. Yet if we have problems with our friends or our family, we blame the other person. But if we know how to take care of them, they will grow well, like lettuce. Blaming has no positive effect at all, nor does trying to persuade using reason and arguments. That is my experience. No blame, no reasoning, no argument, just understanding. If you understand, and you show that you understand, you can love, and the situation will change.*

Reader 2: *One day in Paris, I gave a lecture about not blaming the lettuce. After the talk, I was doing walking meditation by myself, and when I turned the corner of a building, I overheard an eight-year-old girl telling her mother, "Mommy, remember to water me. I am your lettuce." I was so pleased that she had understood my point so completely. Then I heard her mother reply, "Yes, my daughter. And I am your lettuce also. So please don't forget to water me too." Mother and daughter practicing together, it was very beautiful.*

– Thich Nhat Hanh. "Blaming Never Helps." *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*. Bantam, 1991 (p. 78-79).



WEEKLY REFLECTION BETWEEN SESSIONS 5 & 6

(Optional but strongly encouraged!)

These assignments are intended to be a guide for your journey; they are challenging and provocative. However, if life pulls you in other directions and you don't get to them, it's perfectly okay. The readings and questions are meant to expand your exploration of the themes. They will not be the focus of your group's conversation.

We encourage you to engage with the materials gradually over the course of the week, but if your schedule calls for setting aside one to two hours to dive in all at once, that too can be a meaningful way to engage.

Begin by lighting a candle (if you have one). Before turning to the readings, pause for at least one full minute of silence as you set aside the demands of the day to simply be present.

Weeks 5 and 6 focus on the theme of **forgive**. The readings below offer perspectives from a variety of times and places around the world.

Day 1: Open Our Hands

Re-read this portion of the Opening Prayer (which is also a portion of the Session 1 prayer):

Reader 1: Open our hands, O God.

Reader 2: Open our hands to release what we've grasped tightly- dirt-y ideas, judgments, anything that separates us from us, us from You.

May we allow these to filter through our fingers, clearing, cleansing, Yes-ing to something new.

Reader 1: Open our hands, O God.

Open our hands so that we can dig into soul-soil together.

Reader 2: Open our hearts-eyes-hands so that we can receive what is ours to hold:



Seeds of Connection,

Light of Curiosity,

Water of Care,

The hand of another.

- Journal Prompts:
 - What resonates with you from this prayer?
 - What are you releasing and receiving or what would you like to release and receive?

Day 2: Dorothy Day

- Read the Dorothy Day quote¹¹ below:

God is on the side even of the unworthy poor, as we know from the story Jesus told of the father and the prodigal son. Charles Peguy, in God Speaks, has explained it perfectly. Readers may object that the prodigal son returned penitent to his father's house. But who knows, he might have gone out and squandered money on the next Saturday night, he might have refused to help with the farm work, and asked to be sent to finish his education instead, thereby further incurring his brother's righteous wrath, and the war between the worker and the intellectual, or the conservative and the radical, would be on. Jesus had another answer to that one: to forgive one's brother seventy times seven. There are always answers, although they are not always calculated to soothe.

¹¹Dorothy Day. "We prodigal sons." *The Modern Spirituality Series: Dorothy Day*. Ed. Michael Garvey. Templegate, 1996 (p. 79).



- Journal prompts:
 - What thoughts and feelings (emotional and physical) arise in response to the quote?
 - Who, if anyone, grants or granted you grace/forgiveness over and over? How is/was that for you?
 - Day is writing about “the unworthy poor,” people living in poverty who are often treated with contempt rather than understanding. Do you see forgiveness practiced selectively in our culture? Who is it offered to? Who is denied it?

Day 3: Reflection

- Read [Luke 6: 27-36](#).
- Journal prompts:
 - In this passage, Jesus tells his followers to love their enemies. In her work, Valarie Kaur talks about loving our opponents. How do the words “enemy” and “opponent” feel to you? Does it feel more possible to love and be merciful toward one or the other?
 - Are there people or systems that you would consider an enemy or opponent? Does loving them feel possible?

Day 4: Nonviolence Principle

- Martin Luther King’s Third Principle of Nonviolence¹² states:

Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, or evil, not people. Nonviolence recognizes that evildoers are also victims and are not evil people. The nonviolent resister seeks to defeat evil, not persons victimized by evil.

¹² <https://thekingcenter.org/about-tkc/the-king-philosophy/>



- Journal Prompts:
 - How do the statements in this principle align with Jesus' teaching?
 - How do they resonate with you? Challenge you?

Day 5: Final Weekly Reflection

- Journal prompt: As you conclude the week, reflect on these questions:
 - What do you want to dig into more?
 - What thoughts, ideas, and/or parts of you are composting, in transition?
 - What thoughts, ideas, and/or parts of you are germinating or growing?
 - Resurrection-keeping is work of the heart. Remembering that you, beloved, are made from dust, you are invited to play in the soul-soil of the world: to delve into the messy dirt of humanity, to help what is rotten to compost into fertile soil, and in that soil to sow and nurture perennial seeds of love, hope, and mercy, so we may grow ourselves into a garden of beloved community. You are invited to claim the identity of resurrection-keeper, too.
 - How do this week's session and reflections guide you toward resurrection-keeping?

Support our Work

JustFaith Ministries is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. We rely on donations from graduates like you to help us create our programs and get them to the communities who need them. We hope you consider making a donation, and joining with us in building a more just and peaceful world. To support our work, visit: [justfaith.org/donate](https://www.justfaith.org/donate)



Check Out Our Additional Programs

JustFaith Ministries offers small group programs on a wide range of topics, including civil dialogue, creation care, racial justice, poverty, Indigenous justice, and gun violence. Invite your group to continue on to another JustFaith Ministries program: <https://justfaith.org/programs/>

We Need Your Help!

Please share your feedback and suggestions by filling out the survey! In doing so, you are helping us create future resources that are relevant and meaningful to you and your community.



<https://justfaith.org/sowing-peace-post-survey>



SESSION 6 ATTACHMENTS: REPAIR. RESTORE. RISE!

Session 6 Attachment A

Sowing Seeds

Facilitator: **Let us pray.**

Reader 1: Loving God, as we anticipate the death and resurrection of Jesus,

We consider what needs to die in us

So that new life may spring forth.

Reader 2: We dig into the times we have failed to love expansively.

We unearth the times we have looked away from pain.

We expose our regret to the elements

So that it may compost into soil ready for planting.

As Reader 3 begins, place seeds in the seed pod.

Reader 3: In rich soul-soil, we sow seeds of love and mercy.

Son-light coaxes them to sprout and grow.

The holy water of gratitude keeps them supple and stretching

Toward You, our God, and toward each other.



Recognizing that turning toward life and love in any direction

leads us to You.

May we lean into the cycles of death and rebirth,

Tomb and womb,

Decomposition and germination.

All: **Amen**



Session 6 Attachment B

Contrast Jesus' prayer with the slowness of man to forgive... Or contrast the prayer with a society that is even less prone to forgive. Such is the persistent story of mortal life. The oceans of history are made turbulent by the ever-rising tides of revenge...In spite of the fact that the law of revenge solves no social problems, men continue to follow its disastrous leading. History is cluttered with the wreckage of nations and individuals that pursued this self-defeating path.

Jesus eloquently affirmed from the cross a higher law. He knew that the old eye-for-eye philosophy would leave everyone blind. He did not seek to overcome evil with evil. He overcame evil with good. Although crucified by hate, he responded with aggressive love.

A second lesson comes to us from Jesus' prayer on the cross. It is an expression of Jesus' awareness of man's intellectual and spiritual blindness. "They know not what they do," said Jesus. Blindness was their trouble; enlightenment was their need... The men who cried, "Crucify him," were not bad men but rather blind men...History reverberates with testimonies of this shameful tragedy...This tragic blindness expresses itself in many ominous ways in our own day...

I can never turn my eyes from that cross without also realizing that it symbolizes a strange mixture of greatness and smallness, of good and evil. As I behold that uplifted cross I am reminded not only of the unlimited power of God, but also of the sordid weakness of man. I think not only of the radiance of the divine, but also the tang of the human. I am reminded not only of Christ as his best, but of man at his worst.

We must see the cross as the magnificent symbol of love conquering hate and of light overcoming darkness. But in the midst of this glowing affirmation, let us never forget that our Lord and Master was nailed to that cross because of human blindness. Those who crucified him knew not what they did.

– Martin Luther King Jr. "Love in Action." *Strength to Love*. Fortress Press, 2010 (p. 34-41).



Group Reflection

- When have you had your eyes opened to your own ignorance? How did your new insight change you?
- How do you respond to others' lack of awareness?
- What might “aggressive love” look like when trying to address harms – of individuals or institutions – that happened in the past?
- Is there a way to practice forgiveness for present and past injustices? If so, who gets to decide what it looks like and who is responsible for offering it?



Session 6 Attachment C

- Reader 1: A Lakota educator described his use of council at a training school for youth who had been assigned there by a court: “all would sit in a circle to discuss the incident, and everyone would contribute and learn. From the start, the perpetrator was thus put on equal footing with all others in community, including those harmed. Perpetrators were considered to be an integral part of the community because of their important role in defining what was inappropriate behavior and pointing out weak spots in the community that influenced it. The ultimate goal of the process was not punishment, but rather to restore peace and harmony in the community.”
- Reader 2: ...This process has been used by indigenous peoples for thousands of years, not as an intervention, but as a way of life. A fundamental difference [between this process and Restorative Justice] is that Restorative Justice works with relationships between individuals or small groups; it is not a process held by the community. It is a powerful intervention, but does little to strengthen community. With indigenous peoples it is the community that must be kept healthy, so when threats occur, they must be handled in ways that strengthen community.
- Reader 3: I’ve heard many stories of redemption and healing from Restorative Justice, but here’s a Dakota practice for healing that tantalized my heart: if a person was murdered, the murderer would be welcomed into the family, not as a slave, but treated with all the gifts, kindness, and respect that the dead person would have received. This new relationship was permanent and provided “healing a harm that might otherwise have divided the community.” In a specific incident a teenage boy killed his friend in a fight. He was adopted as a replacement son. (This difficult decision took several days of council.) The community came for the adoption ceremony bringing many gifts for him and the family.

– Margaret Wheatley. *Who Do We Choose to Be? Facing Reality, Claiming Leadership, Restoring Sanity*. Berrett-Koehler, 2023 (p. 246-47).



Discussion questions:

- Have you ever been a part of or witnessed restorative practices like those described here? If so, what was that like for you? If not, would you want to be?
- Can you imagine yourself in the place of the family who adopted the boy who killed their son? What makes it easy or difficult to do so?
- In Western cultures, harm-doing is often looked at as an individual problem, rather than a communal problem, so root causes of harm or cyclical patterns of harm are often not addressed. Think of a group, community, or institution you are a part of (faith community, workplace, family, etc.). What, if anything, would change if community processes were used to address harm? What would be the fruits of practicing forgiveness and repair in this way? Session 6 Attachment D
- What is the most valuable insight or experience you have received from our time together this season of Lent?
- How does the exploration of lamentation, repentance, and forgiveness inspire you to live differently? What is one action you will take as a result of this program?¹³

¹³ Sometimes it can feel overwhelming to figure out how to take action in a way that is both effective and in line with your values. [Just Action: How to Advocate and Mobilize for Justice](#) equips small groups with practical advocacy and organizing tools and guides them in creating an effective and achievable action plan to address a justice concern they're passionate about.



Session 6 Attachment E

Prophets of a Future Not Our Own

By Ken Untener

It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision. . . .

This is what we are about: We plant seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.

This enables us to do something, and to do it well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for

God's grace to enter and to do the rest.

*We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder
and the worker.*

We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

All: Amen.

OPTIONAL “HE IS RISEN/WE ARE RISING!” GATHERING

With a static understanding of history, we get stuck. Alternatively, a dynamic understanding of history carries with it endless options for the future. This is why I love these words in the first epistle of John, “It is not yet made manifest what we shall be” (1 John 3:2)...This was the fascinating message of the prophets: people have a voice, and how the story, their story, continues and unfolds. They can make choices.

As Rafi Khoury writes:

And it is here where we distinguish two types of narratives, two types of memories: the closed ones and the creative ones; memory as prison and memory as prophecy. As a prison, memory could modify us in a certain time and place and prevent us from getting out of it. According to that meaning, memory is no more a stimulant, but a paralyzing reality. It paralyzes our vitality and creativity. We ruminate on the past, but we remain unable to imagine the future. We are no more able to invent history. As a prophecy, memory is a stimulant. It helps us, on the basis of our vivid memory, to go forward and invent a new future and a new untold narrative.

– Mitri Raheb. Faith in the Face of Empire: The Bible Through Palestinian Eyes. Orbis, 2014 (p. 20).

Reflection:

- Having moved through the themes of lament, repent, and forgive, knowing that the story of Jesus is not paralyzing, but offers us choices, what is one seed you’d like to tend, one step you want to take toward a new untold narrative?
- What is the most valuable insight or experience you have received from our time together this Lent?
- JustFaith Ministries offers small group programs on a [wide range of topics](#), including civil dialogue, creation care, racial justice, poverty, Indigenous justice, and gun violence. Would you like to continue on to another JustFaith Ministries program together as a group?

- What is one action we can take as a group in response to what we've learned and experienced together? (For some groups, continuing onto another JFM program may be your action step, as these programs will include an action-planning section related to your program topic).
 - Create a clear and measurable goal for how you will take action. Encourage participants to choose something that is challenging yet achievable.
 - List the steps it will take to achieve your goal. Or, list the first 1-2 steps.
 - Assign individuals to be in charge of completing each step or holding the group accountable to completing each step.
 - List "due dates" for each step.

Help us create future resources that are relevant and meaningful to you
and your community.

Please share your feedback and suggestions by filling out the survey!



<https://justfaith.org/sowing-peace-post-survey>