

HEALING THE HEALERS

SPECIAL EDITION: COVID-19

A **LIVE** TOWNHALL

Navigating Communal Trauma in Faith

EXPERT REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

A PROJECT FROM

ODYSSEYIMPACT!

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Introduction

At Odyssey Impact, we believe in the power of personal story to change perspectives, change attitudes, and even to change the world. As the COVID-19 pandemic intensified in the U.S., Odyssey Impact responded to the needs of faith leaders, spiritual care providers, and faith communities by convening live town halls on requested topics. Experts, leaders, scholars, and on-the-ground providers shared their candid insights and questions arising in this unprecedented time.

Our hope is the following guide will help current Faith Leaders in their work to lead a thriving congregation or community and faculty as they prepare future faith leaders to navigate trauma.

May our networks of care be strengthened, our imaginations expanded, and our hope ignited.



For the creation of this written resource, we are grateful to the Rev. Dr. Kate Wiebe, Executive Director of the Institute for Collective Trauma & Growth, and our partner on *Healing the Healers Series 1: Collective Trauma and Growth*.

<https://healingthehealers.org/project/>

Panelists



REV. MATT CREBBIN

Senior Pastor

Newtown Congregational Church
Newtown CT



REV. DR. TYSHAWN GARDNER

Pastor, Plum Grove Baptist Church

Tuscaloosa AL

Vice Pres. of Student Affairs

Stillman College



REV. DR. STORM SWAIN

Assoc. Prof. of Pastoral Care & Theology

United Lutheran Seminary

author of Trauma and Transformation
at Ground Zero: A Pastoral Theology

Moderators



REV. DR. KATIE GIVENS KIME

Director of Religion and Civic Engagement

Odyssey Impact



REV. MARK RAMSEY

Executive Director

Macedonian Ministry

Expert Reflection and Discussion Guide

Rev. Dr. Kate Wiebe

In further exploring a conversation between congregational faith leaders from April 15, 2020, about what wisdom and insights can be drawn in our context of the Covid-19 pandemic from experiences of other kinds of communal tragedy and anxiety, you are invited to consider the following four themes in light of your and your community's situation:

Video Clip #1: When a Disaster Unfolds in Slow Motion

Video Clip #2: Facing Death in Our Life Together

Video Clip #3: Innovative Embodiment amid Turmoil

Video Clip #4: Where is Joy amid Tragedy

We invite you to reflect personally, with your staff or colleagues, or in small group discussions among those with whom you minister. After viewing each of the following sections, please take time to reflect first on what the speakers share. Then, consider the prompts below for ways you may continue to respond and practice care amid the unfolding and aftermath of pandemic in your midst.



Rev. Dr. Kate Wiebe

is a pastoral psychotherapist and organizational health consultant who focuses her research and practice around restoring leaders and groups after major critical events. She has served as the Executive Director of the Institute for Collective Trauma and Growth since 2012, and has volunteered as a National Responder with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance for nearly a decade. She lives with her family in Santa Barbara, CA.

When a Disaster Unfolds in Slow Motion

Video Clip #1

(if you are using the link to the hour long town hall please refer to time code - 6:14-10:18)

The prophet Joel describes a series of adverse events which harm a community, including two types of “locusts.” Joel describes how one of the pests acts fast, wreaking havoc quickly. Then, in another case, citizens may observe the kind of pests that move slowly across the horizon, their unavoidable devastation arriving at a painstaking snail’s pace. In this section, the speakers discuss how a pandemic impacts a community at a much slower rate than an episodic event like a hurricane or tornado, even as the ultimate devastation may be similar or even more catastrophic.

Consider the ways the results of the pandemic may be unfolding slowly, or even yet to unfold, in your community. In what ways has your community been responding so far? In what ways are you needing to prepare for what may still be coming? How best can you pace your response, and care along the way, to sustain yourself and those around you?

★ Additional Resource

The Millennial Narrative

by Jaco Hamman, a book on the Book of Joel for today’s and future generations.

www.themillennialnarrative.com

Facing Death in Our Life Together

Video Clip #2

(if you are using the link to the hour long town hall please refer to time code -: 29:55-37:56)

Facing death is challenging at all times. Yet, even so, death is inescapable and the impacts of death are all around us. Heartbreakingly, during a disaster or a pandemic, we find that “ordinary” or “natural” deaths still occur, or we still struggle with other types of deaths or losses from our past. These more common stressors do not take a moratorium and further complicate our experiences of disaster.

What might it mean to gather together, especially in times of physical distancing, to live life together? What does it mean to face death together – both pandemic related deaths and other deaths? What wisdom might the forebearers of our faith traditions share with us about how they lived life together, even amid tragedy and trials?

★ Additional Resource

Life Together

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Innovative Embodiment amid Turmoil

Video Clip #3

(if you are using the link to the hour long town hall please refer to time code - 38:22-46:23)

Scholars of trauma and stress have identified several practices proven to help individuals and groups process adversity. They include breathing slowly and practicing other forms of embodied rituals, including stretching, eating nourishing food, hydrating, sleeping, art, and spending time in caring relationships. For example, Dr. Gardner leans on particular devotionals and prayer practices, while Rev. Crebbin values time spent weeding his outdoor garden, and Dr. Swain is often aided by attending to breathing.

In what ways are you practicing and encouraging the people with whom you minister to practice embodied rituals? In what ways are you finding the innovation of these practices to inspire you and those around you? How are you finding these practices helpful for the children in your midst? What practices might you and your community add in the coming days or weeks?

★ Additional Resource

The Deepest Well

by Nadine Burke Harris

Where is Joy amid Tragedy

Video Clip #4

(if you are using the link to the hour long town hall please refer to time code 46:32-54:43)

In this section, the speakers reflect on the complexity and nuances of experiencing joy in the aftermath of tragedy. Particularly in faith contexts, it can be deceptively easy to urge one another to “find joy.” Many times, such a reminder is a life-giving practice; other times, such suggestions can be experienced as shame-inducing. In reflecting on his experiences of ministry in Newtown, Rev. Crebbin has found it important to distinguish between “joy” and “happiness.” Dr. Swain values practices of comfort that are not just another task.

In what ways have you been experiencing joy, or not experiencing it, during the weeks of physical distancing and illnesses related to pandemic? How does your faith tradition inform your sense of joy amid tragedy? In what ways are you finding your community draws on your faith tradition’s understanding, or is in need of being reminded of foundational belief? In what ways do you experience joy as a gift, and in what ways may it feel burdensome or distant?

★ Additional Resource

Jo: 100 Poems

edited by Christian Wiman