

## GRIEF 12/27

### *Spiritual practice*

#### *The Ambiguousness of Grief - and the particular-ness of grief.*

This Advent, as a spiritual practice we've been preparing our hearts room - opening our hearts unto the love of Jesus - trusting that His love can birth new things within us. Things that we deeply need - but sometimes don't feel - things that in our day-to-day struggles we couldn't imagine would make a difference - ... these things like joy, peace, comfort, wonder... hope.

**In Today's spiritual practice we'll do the same. We will prepare our hearts room for these such things, as we face grief - and lament.**

4 years ago we held our first lament service, and we've started to honor grief in our community more regularly, through our virtual services. We've found that exposing ourselves to and facing - the real pain of living in this world - nurtures our resilience during these times.

Grief - is a manifestation of both the **beauty and terribleness** of this life we live. Grief is a reality we live with. Grief isn't something to get over. As much as we are living, breathing human beings - ones who embody the beautiful love of God. **And as long as we exist to love - we will also encounter grief.**

Our partnership with God to birth Joy , peace, comfort, wonder, hope- is what we need to face this world. When pandemics hit and race-based violence persists and our heroes and our loved ones die.

These elements of our faith - are not blankets to shush our pain. They are how we survive in the pain. **IT IS WHY we take time to prepare our hearts room.**

We will have more loss. Loss that feels large, and small, and all at once. Individually and collectively. Clear and ambiguous. With closure and no closure.

Today we grieve.

We Grieve that [COVID has claimed the lives of 1.75 million people worldwide](#)

[350,000 lives in the United States.](#)

[11,963 lives in Massachusetts](#)

[...and counting...](#)

WE are learning friends...

[We are learning that we are vulnerable.](#)

["That we are surrounded every day by the exposure to sudden and devastating calamity" \(43\)](#)

[That we do not have immunity from all of life's arrows.](#)

[We are not protected.](#)

[We are not imminently safe.](#)

[We will be hurt.](#)

## **We will experience loss.**

Our lament is daring and brave because in it we “honor the hard truths we have learned during these times of pandemics: How our suffering has been unequal, elders have been vulnerable and alone, black and brown neighbors have borne disproportionately the brunt of sickness and death. Native communities, our land’s original caretakers, have been particularly hard hit—as they have been so many times in the past. Asian Americans have been targeted by hateful words and actions. “ (sojo.net). So let our prayers and gestures of lament - as daring as they might be - be expressed for the health of our hearts - but also for the healing of neighborhoods, cities and this nation!

### ***We name today and grieve the losses of friends and family and those in our church community who have passed away:***

As I pray through these names, could you put a hand on your heart... ? As a sign of your heart preparing room - holding grief alongside others in this community - bound by the Spirit of God. After each name I read we’ll say a collective response of “I’m sorry.”

- We remember and name Don Harnois (pronounced Harn-wah), father to Cloie Andrysiak, who died on March 27th

“I’m sorry”

- We remember and name, Leela Joseph, grandmother to Jeremiah Anthony who died on April 2.

“I’m sorry”

- We remember and name Dr. G”eh”mo Young Wong, godfather to Dr. Lyssa Paul-ay, who died on December 2nd.

“I’m sorry”

- We remember and name, Fred Schlimm, dear friend of Elizabeth Bales, who died this December.

“I’m sorry”

- We remember and name, Drena Hills, mother to Joshua Hills, who died this December.

“I’m sorry”

- We remember and name, Wes McPhail, close family friend of Jen Morris’ who died this December.

“I’m sorry”

- We remember and name, Elliot Wooley, brother of Shelley Rhea-Bell, who died on November 30th.

“I’m sorry”

- We remember and name, Connie McMurray, grandmother of Brian McMurray who died on October 25th.

“I’m sorry”

Chat: I make space now for you to chat in the names of lives lost - in the last couple of months - that you would like to honor and remember - perhaps a personal loss, or societal loss, or a national loss....

Don't worry about spelling, or dates - **just chat in the person's name whose life mattered to you:**

[Read chat names: \(or hold silence\)](#)

We honor these lives named today - the ones whose names were spoken by the lips of loved ones, whose names were cherished and committed to memory and heart.

And we grieve today - the nameless. The names that didn't come into my inbox, or through this chat... The ones whose names we don't know. Those who are bed-ridden, dying alone. The ones whose names have long been forgotten by family and friends and our country. But Lord God we trust now that you will whisper and breathe their names you know so well into their ears... that you will call them by name, “child of God”, “beloved”.

***Let us Pray:***

God of all power and love,

The one who grieves and weeps with us - and holds us close,  
we give thanks for your unfailing presence  
and the hope you provide in times of uncertainty and loss.

Revive us to live as Christ's body in the world:

a people who pray, worship, learn,  
break bread, share life, heal neighbors,  
bear good news, seek justice, rest and grow in the Spirit.

Wherever and however we gather,

And may your Holy Spirit continue to speak to us today, in our grief.

Amen. (adapted - Episcopal Church)

**POST IMAGE REFLECTION:**

In just a moment you will see an image displayed on your screen.

We will use this image to reflect on our story and the story of God within us.

Here is the world.

Here is the world that Mary and Joseph lived in.

Here is the world that the Shepherds lived in.

Here is the world that Herod ruled in.

Here is the world that the Magi lived in.

Here is the world that Jesus was born into.

Here is your world. Our world.

What would you like to ask Jesus in this world - where both beautiful and terrible things happen?

How would you like to participate with Jesus in this world - where both beautiful and terrible things happen?

For now, listen to Jesus' words to you:

"Don't be afraid."

"Don't be afraid."

"I am with you.

And you are not alone".

Let us worship together, with our closing song.