

FOR JULY 19

Today's spiritual exercise will be one of grief and lament. Our church has been learning a lot about grief and lament. We had our first service of lament almost four years ago, and we've started to honor grief in our community about once a month during these virtual services.

We do this because it's part of our path to all the good stuff. The way to life moves through suffering. My spiritual director reminds me on the regular that unless a person experiences suffering, they can not know what it means to hope. He also reminds me that if we don't grieve our losses, we carry them with us as heavy, unseen baggage.

Grief and lament are part of how we stay alive in hard times, not just shutting down our emotions but letting them breathe. And grief and lament is part of our path to freedom, where we can live with joy and resilience and hope, without our losses being all that defines us.

Today, I'll invite you to name aloud loss and grief in three categories - all of which I've felt just this past week.

- 1) We'll name grief over public injustice.
- 2) We'll name grief over losses we've born during this pandemic.
- 3) We'll name grief over deaths, both inside and outside of our community at Reservoir.

If you don't have a loss you feel in one of the categories, I encourage you when the time comes to just wait in silence, and imagine yourself listening to the grief of your sisters and brothers and siblings in the church, sharing it with them for a moment, even if you don't feel it personally.

But for real, when each time, I get to the part where I say "Name aloud", I encourage you, even if you're with others, say it out loud. "I grieve that..." And when I pray the responsive prayer, that starts with "How long..." pray it with me, if you will.

Let's begin:

#### PUBLIC INJUSTICE

Jesus who taught us to pray: Your Kingdom come, you know our world is not as it should be. People of selfish, evil intention, and and people who just don't know better do harm and cause suffering and diminish and threaten your children over and over, God. You saw us clergy on the steps of the State House on Friday advocating for police reform and immigrant rights, and we grieve, God, the deaths of Black men and women when law enforcement turns violent. We grieve the deaths of George Floyd and Breona Taylor and many more of your beloved children. We grieve the separation of families and the detainment and loss of children at our Southern border. We grieve the over-disciplining of Black and brown children in our schools. We grieve the neglect and disregard of the global poor by the wealthy and strong and powerful throughout the earth.

For all the pain and loss from public injustice, God, hear our prayers.  
*(I'll give you a moment. Say it aloud, friends: I grieve...)*

For this grief, God, we pray:  
How long, O Lord, will we bear this pain? Turn and answer us. We trust in your love. Hear our prayers, and give us life.

#### PANDEMIC LOSSES

And our Mother and Father God, who cares for us all, you have seen and known all the loss we have faced in this time of pandemic. We have lost the lives of loved ones. And we have lost freedom. We have lost plans. We have lost opportunities. We have lost connection and jobs and resources and movement. We have lost the year we hoped to live together. We have lost peace of mind. Sometimes we have lost hope.

For all the pain and loss from the COVID pandemic and our quarantine, God, hear our prayers.  
*(I'll give you a moment. Say it aloud, friends: I grieve...)*

For this grief, God, we pray:  
How long, O Lord, will we bear this pain? Turn and answer us. We trust in your love. Hear our prayers, and give us life.

#### DEATH

And God, our Shepherd and Gardner, who tends to the life of your children, you know those beloved to us who have passed away during this time. We grieve the losses of great and prominent people, like my hero, the namesake of my youngest child, John Lewis. We grieve the losses of friends and family and those in our church community who have passed away.

**-We remember Robert Chege's uncle, James Kariuku, who died on April 20th.**

**-We remember Jeanne Morris, Jen Morris' mother, who passed away on July 9.**

Friends, as you remember James and Jeanne, I encourage you to name any you know who have died, whose loss you grieve.

*(I'll give you a moment. Say it aloud, friends: I grieve...)*

For this grief, God, we pray:  
How long, O Lord, will we bear this pain? Turn and answer us. We trust in your love. Hear our prayers, and give us life.

And we add: for all these, beloved by God and remembered by us, we pray.

God of life, Source of our life and breath, God who creates and protects nourishes all life,  
We hold our grief before you today.

We celebrate the lives and memory of these sisters and brothers and siblings we have lost, thanking you for their lives and legacy.

God of Resurrection, who has conquered death, and who brings life out of death still, We remember those we have lost and ask you to welcome them into your eternal embrace. May your light forever shine upon them, and may you give us the blessing of reunion on the day of resurrection.

And God of comfort and hope, be present with kindness and grace to all those of us who mourn, That we can carry on in hope and strength, That we can remember and honor those we have lost, And That their legacy will remain in our hearts and in our minds and in our action for a better world.

We ask, God, with all our grief, that you would hold our sorrow and loss, that you would work in all these broken places to mend, to heal, to restore, to redeem, and to turn us around toward life and joy abundantly.

This we pray in Jesus' name,  
Amen.