

Poetry, Protest, Prayer – The Spirituality of Lament

An Online Retreat with Rev. William Hal Strong

Overview

Scripture is filled with stories of broken-hearted people speaking their heartbreak to God in poetry, protest and prayer. Though present in the Bible, many of us today are uncomfortable with lament despite feeling a great need for this profoundly powerful spiritual practice.

In this retreat we will explore the roots of lamentation in scripture and tradition and reclaim its meaning for our lives through deep listening, prayer, small group sharing, and writing our own laments for the healing of our own sorrows.

Friday Evening Session

The Friday evening session provides an introduction to the topic of lamentation, its place in scripture and the Christian tradition, and its role in the trauma recovery process (and who among us has not been traumatized by the living of these recent days?). This session concludes with an overview of the remaining two sessions, a brief Question & Answer period, and the giving of heart work in preparation for the morning.

Saturday Morning Session

Any discussion of lamentation in the Christian tradition needs to address the appropriateness of the practice itself – is it acceptable, permitted, encouraged even, for humans to be angry with God, and to express that outrage? This question will be explored personally and scripturally through journaling, sacred reading and small group discussion. This session concludes with a brief Q & A, and the giving of heart work in preparation for the afternoon.

Saturday Afternoon Session

Our last session will begin with a brief review of the importance of lamentation in the Bible, in the Church, and in our lives. We all need to lament. Keeping silence is unfaithful and unhealthy. At this point a suggested structure or guidance will be offered for composing one's own lamentations. There will be opportunity to practice this within the context of the larger group, the time to compose quietly on one's own, and then to share those personal lamentations VOLUNTARILY in small groups. The session will end with a guided conversation among all the participants on how to incorporate the spiritual discipline of lamentation in our personal lives and in our faith communities.

Bio – Rev. William Hal Strong

A country preacher and minor poet, Rev. William Hal Strong is ordained in the United Church of Christ and serves two rural congregations in southside Virginia. Rev. Strong holds an M. Div from Union Presbyterian Seminary, a certificate in short term crisis counseling from Virginia Commonwealth University Department of Patient Counseling, and is a graduate of the RUAH School of Spiritual Guidance in Richmond, VA.