

#ResistHarm

IDEAS FOR MARCH LAMENT

Resist Harm's theme for March is lament. Lament is a passionate expression of grief, that may be expressed in art, music, poetry, or prose. The grief named in lament often is born of regret or mourning; most of us involved in the UMC have much to regret and mourn. Years of struggle, disappointment, suffering and pain weigh heavy on us. Our proclamation of God's limitless love is compromised by our exclusions and judgments against ourselves and against members of our own body. Many of us have not had the opportunity or taken the time to process our own pain, our own lament. This itself creates more harm and pain.

During the month of March, during this month of lament, we encourage our faith communities and all of us to lament. By raising our voices and naming our pain, we not only have an opening to process this grief as we mourn, but as we open our hearts together to God, we create more space for God to do a new thing.

Lament can be expressed in many ways, but we have curated a number of resources and ideas for you to use:



- **Plan or participate in a service of lament.** We are aware of two areas holding services focused on lament. The Great Plains conference will hold special Ash Wednesday prayer services in every district on February 26, 2020. Learn more here https://resistharm.com/protest_events/resistharm-prayer-event-ash-wednesday-2020-repent-and-resist. Oklahoma will hold a

special service of lament in the Tulsa area on March 1 at University UMC. Learn more here https://resistharm.com/protest_events/lament-a-worship-service-mourning-church-harm-to-the-lgbtq-community. Are you planning a service of lament? Please let us know.

- **Build a small wailing wall.** Your church might offer this tool so that people can write and place their prayers of lament in it. We will have instructions soon but creatively, how might you create an opportunity for people to offer their prayers of lament?



- **Pray the Psalms.** The prayer book of the Bible is a rich and formative spiritual practice. The Upper Room has a wonderful resource for praying the Psalms. Here is the link <https://www.upper-room.org/resources/praying-the-psalms>
- **Write a Celtic blessing.** Beth Richardson offers a Celtic blessing from her book *Christ Beside Me, Christ Within Me: Celtic Blessings*, chapter 6, "The Struggling Times." Watch it here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yI687dZ4meE>. Perhaps writing a Celtic blessing would be a good way for you to give voice to your pain.
- **Write a Psalm.** Have you ever written a Psalm? Johnny Sears has prepared a tool that gleans from Walter Bruggeman's work on how to write a Psalm of Lament. Here is a link to that resource <https://resistharm.com/worship/psalms-of-lament-a-guide/>.
- **Make prayer beads, prayer shawls or another artistic expressions of your lament.** In her book *Beads of Healing: Prayer, Trauma, and Spiritual Wholeness*, Kristen E. Vincent describes how prayer beads can help us speak our truth, offer our lament, and open us to receive God's response. You can find full instructions for how to make prayer beads here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUJP-WVCSwc>. Or choose your own mode of sharing your lament creatively.
- **Write a prayer of confession for you or the church.** Ground your resistance in a prayer of confession. Acknowledge the ways you and our church have caused harm. Give voice to how complex and difficult it is to speak confession as a community that includes those most harmed. What confession are you and your congregation called to offer? (We encourage you to share your Prayer of Confession through our #ResistHarm worship page <https://resistharm.com/worship/#add-worship-resource>.)
- **Walk a labyrinth.** Labyrinths are a tool for centering, contemplation, and prayer. A worldwide directory is available here <https://labyrinthlocator.com>.



• **Create a prayer flag** to express your prayer of lament and to use at General Conference 2020. Foundry UMC is leading the effort to create a series of prayer flags for General Conference. The flags created, representing the prayers of so many, will encircle the civic center. Would creating a prayer flag be fruitful for processing your grief, your suffering, your pain? The instructions for the prayer flag exercise are here <https://resistharm.com/worship/prayer-flags-for-gc2020>.

- **Invent you own way to lament.** We invite you to lament. We have a God who cares. A God who loves us and wants to hear our cries. Let's all find ways to resist the harm that holding our laments brings. Cry out to a God who cares and know that you are God's beloved.