

A LOVING WITNESS IN THE FRAGMENTS OF WHAT REMAINS

Holy week evokes many different feelings within me as a peacemaker, Christian, pastor, and therapist. When I was serving in a congregation as interim pastor, Holy week was a time of preparation and a time to reflect upon events leading to the cross and to resurrection and new life. But as a trauma therapist who has lived through and continues to live during the Covid-19 pandemic and the violence erupting around our world, I am forced to look upon Holy Week through a different lens. Holy week is about crisis, trauma, grief, and violence. Holy Week is about survival and suffering. Holy week takes us out of a predictable world and plunges us into the depths of darkness. Holy week evokes feeling far from peace and tranquility and in some cases can trigger past trauma.

In her book *SPIRIT AND TRAUMA A THEOLOGY OF REMAINING*, Shelly Rambo states, "Trauma is the suffering that does not go away. The study of trauma is the study of what remains." (p.15) The impact of Holy week does not go away. We often try to gloss over it quickly and move forward to Easter but for those of us who are witnesses to trauma we are often stuck in the aftermath of what remains in fragmented tattered pieces where there is little peace. We are stuck in the emotional part of our brains, in the amygdala, our body's alarm system.

An element of treating collective trauma using the Hakomi method is Unity, connecting with the sense of belonging. We have a need to belong, to be connected, yet the passion story often knocks us from that important community, and we find ourselves alone, disconnected, isolated, and reliving the pain in our minds, bodies, and spirits. Disease, war, politics, racism, sexism, violence, insurrection, poverty, greed, addiction, are just a few things that have divided us and have us searching for unity and a sense of belonging. In a presentation on Hakomi, Manuela Mischke-Reeds stated that "a loving presence is often what has been a missing experience for clients."

As I reflect on the passion narrative, I see witnesses at the bottom of the cross standing in love, in horror and pain. I wonder if our call as peacemakers is to bare witness to the pain, to trauma, to stand united in love as we offer the opportunity to belong. To understand that the impact of Holy Week will not go away but remains here with us allows us to make meaning and move forward. It allows us to eventually move through pain and make some meaning from a situation that will change our life forever.

Not everyone will be able to move to Easter, some will remain in the garden, some at the bottom of the cross, some in the black nothingness of Saturday before Easter, but no matter where you are in your story, you belong. You are loved. You are part of the body. This is another important feature of trauma; it is a physical experience and affects the body. Trauma work is body work. As peacemakers we are challenged to attend to the body (the collective and individual), we are challenged to offer unconditional love, we are challenged to stay and pray. May we stand united in love as we work for the Peace of Christ that passes all understanding. In the words of a statement used at the beginning of many worship services in the United Church of Christ, "No matter who you are or where you are in your journey, you are welcome here."

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