

Raising awareness of

Moral Injury in Worship

A guide for Churches

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in bringing awareness about moral injury to your congregation within a worship context! The Church can offer a lot in the recovery and healing process of moral injury and by bringing greater awareness to your congregation, the Church has a better chance of being that place of comfort for those who need it most.

Moral injury has mostly been unrecognized throughout the last century, even though it has been documented by war literature tracing back to Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Throughout the past few decades, moral injury has often been assumed to be part of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), even though they are very different wounds. Moral injury is a disruption in an individual's confidence and expectations about his/her own moral behavior or others' capacity to behave in a just or ethical manner. It "results from having to make difficult moral choices under extreme conditions, experiencing morally anguishing events or duties, witnessing immoral acts, or behaving in ways that profoundly challenge moral conscience and identity and the values that support them. Moral injury is found in feelings of survivor guilt, grief, shame, remorse, anger, despair, mistrust, and betrayal by authorities. In its most severe forms, it can destroy moral identity and the will to live."** The possibility for moral injury is not limited to those in active combat but can include any position where life and death decisions are made.

In January 2014, the first class on moral injury was taught at Brite Divinity School by Dr. Rita Brock and Dr. Coleman Baker, leaders of the Soul Repair Center. This worship guide is a project of several students in that class who believe that the support of church communities is an essential part of the soul repair process. The goal of this worship guide is to equip worship leaders with tools and resources for speaking about moral injury in the worship service, in order to raise awareness about moral injury in the congregation. The resources in these pages are meant to be suggestions and to foster creativity within your congregational worship. Please respect the work of the contributors by giving them credit if a significant portion of their work is used. For other resources that could be incorporated in worship, see the Soul Repair Center website.

Sarah Almanza, Contributor
Will Brown, Contributor
Douglass Anne Cartwright, Editor
Maria D. Garza, Contributor
Jacob Walsh, Contributor

Call to Worship

Leader: As God is our shepherd we need nothing else.

People: We rest in green pastures and walk by still waters, which renews and refreshes our tired spirits.

Leader: God guides us along paths of righteousness,

People: And walks with us through shadowed valleys so we are not afraid.

Leader: Though all manner of evil befalls us, we will not be afraid

People: For The Great Shepherd's staff comforts us in dark times.

Leader: God set the banquet table for us in the presence of those who oppose us. There we are anointed with oil and our cup overflows.

People: Love and mercy shall never depart from us, as long as we hold God near. Amen.

Adapted by Jacob Walsh from Rev. Quentin Chin, <http://re-worship.blogspot.com>

Opening and Closing Candle Litanies

Opening

To symbolize our respect for all lives, we light these two candles.

In many cultures, white is the color of death and grief.

We light the white candle this day to remember all those around the world who have suffered and suffer now because of war. We recognize and mourn the loss of lives and the suffering on all sides.

(Light white candle)

In many cultures green is the color of life and its constant renewal.

We light the green candle to hold fast our knowledge that in the midst of wars, the struggle for life persists and, in the aftermath of war, that it is possible for ordinary life to be healed and renewed.

(Light green candle)

Closing

We use these candles to symbolize our respect for all lives as we are gathered together in this space. Although we extinguish them now, at our meetings end for this week, we know that the grief and suffering in the world as well as the hope for healing and renewal continues on. We hold these in our hearts until we meet again.

(Extinguish candles)

Adapted from the Truth Commission 2011

Prayers

God of all,
As we prepare for this time of worship,
take those things that we carry with us,
the burdens deeply embedded,
and help us to remember that you also carry these things.
May each person in this community be surrounded by
your love,
and may we share that love with our neighbors
as we worship you.
Amen.

Written by Sarah Almanza

For those whose lives are broken by distress
May the God of healing restore us

For those whose lives are broken by fear
May the God of healing restore us

For those whose lives are broken by anger
May the God of healing restore us

For those whose lives are broken by pain
May the God of healing restore us

For those whose lives are broken by illness
May the God of healing restore us

For those whose lives are broken by sin
May the God of healing restore us

God of healing
gently touch these lives
with your Spirit
Bring warmth and comfort
life and wholeness
restoration
into fractured lives
and souls

God our Mother,
Living Water,
River of Mercy,
Source of Life,
in whom we live
and move
and have our being,
who quenches our thirst,
refreshes our weariness,
bathes
and washes
and cleanses
our wounds,
be for us always
a fountain of life,
and for all the world
a river of hope
springing up in the midst
of the deserts of despair.
Honor and blessing,
glory and praise
to You forever.

Amen.

Written by the Medical Mission Sisters

Written by John Birch, <http://www.faithandworship.com/>

Prayers

O Giver of Life and Light,

We seek you this day for your comforting presence. You alone, Lord, can still our restless hearts and minds and it is you alone, God, who knows every fiber of our being. You knit us together in the womb and you knew us by name before birth. You know our thoughts and our hearts before we can even begin to think of you, Holy Creator. You are the one who knows us best and loves us most. Divine Presence, I ask that you come into each one present here today; to show them your unconditional love and to shine your light into the darkest of places. We recognize today, God, that we have all been through dark places, but some of us have experienced darkness that penetrates us to our core. There are those among us who have experienced things that darken their entire being. They say war changes a person, and we know that is surely true. It can darken even the brightest of personalities. But we are the light of the world and we ask that you help us be light to one another. Use us this day, Lord to be beacons of hope to those who feel hopeless and lost. Where there is darkness, use us to shine your light. When one of us feels alone, scared, hurt, depressed, angry, restless, or hopeless, you are there. You are working in us and through us and we are ever thankful that we can be your instruments of peace. Ephesians 6:12 reminds us, "Our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." We know that we can put on the full armor of God and we can go to battle. We don't necessarily have to leave the country or even the seat we are currently sitting in to do battle for you, God. You can use us as wielders of the light from right here and right now. Show your unconditional love through each of us as we move about in the world. We thank you again and always for your love, which knows no bounds and we pray this in your name, God Almighty and Everlasting.

Amen.

Written by Jacob Walsh

Beginning and End,
When we feel lost in the dark
When being alone is the only thing we know
When we have experienced a violation of our moral beliefs
We turn to you with this internal struggle.
We seek your compassionate understanding and care.
We yearn for you bring light to the path
We beg that your presence be known in our lives
We ask you to help mend the violation of our beliefs.
Bring healing to the injured souls of your children.
Amen.

Written by Sarah Almanza

Prayers

Loving and Healing Lord,

We come before you this morning as broken people. Our lives are shattered, like bits of a ceramic plate that has been dropped on the kitchen floor. We cannot put the pieces back together properly. We need you, God. You alone can help us pick up the pieces and create something new. You are the creator of every piece of matter and the creator of life. Lord, you can create new life in us, no matter how broken our life may seem. We have suffered much pain here on Earth. We have experienced loss and grief, heartache and sadness, anger and pity. Redeemer, draw us in close to you and pull us close to each other so that we can help each other move forward in our shattered lives. Just as glue and plaster bind material together, so you bind us together in fellowship here today, God. Push us in new ways with the Spirit as we continue to do your work in the world. You call us to care for our neighbors and so often we forget that our neighbors can be in the same pew as us. We need not always look outside these doors to show your love to our neighbors. O gracious Lord, we thank you for your Son who was the true example of unconditional love for neighbor. His sacrifice is more than we deserve, yet you give it to us freely. Guide us as we seek to love each other and to help heal the brokenness of life we find on our faith journeys together.

Amen.

Written by Jacob Walsh

Gentle me,
Holy One,
into an unclenched moment,
a deep breath,
a letting go
of heavy experiences,
of shriveling anxieties,
of dead certainties,
that, softened by the silence,
surrounded by the light,
and open to the mystery,
I may be found by wholeness,
upheld by the unfathomable,
entranced by the simple,
and filled with the joy
that is you.

Written by Ted Loder

Prayers

Almighty, powerful and redeeming God,

You are wonderful and awesome, creating and sustaining, all loving and all healing. We come before you, and offer ourselves, just as we are, both in our joys and in our brokenness. We thank you for the joys in life, whether these are great or small, we are thankful for all your good things in this life. But we also know that we all carry pieces of ourselves that are broken, and we want to share these with you, so that we might be more whole. We ask you heal us these places, and where we are broken, throughout our lives, deep in our bodies, and even in our souls. Some of these wounds are deep, and may never heal, but we ask that you bandage them. Teach us to live with these scars that may never heal, that they may grow to be more than just shame and sorrow, that they may become lessons and signs of your grace and mercy, that teach us to not hurt or harm each other, and ourselves. May we be your servants to your world, rather than victims and perpetrators to its dark corners and tragedies. We ask for your strength, peace, strength, and guidance, so that we may be whole and made new again, and learn to live with a new heart, made in stronger from our suffering, more patient to your timing, and made more open to your peace and grace.

In your ever present name we pray,
Amen.

Written by Will Brown

God of all there was, and is, and what will come to be,

We join before you and honor all that is good and holy in your name. You have created us as we are, and continue to love us as your own, regardless of what may happen. We are reminded of your love for us by the goodness of your creation, and through the life, death, and resurrection of you Son, as well, who reminds us that you are with us, not only in the best of days, but that you are right beside us, even in the worst of suffering. In these deepest and darkest days of our suffering, we are reassured by your Son's presence, that he suffers not because of us, but with us, so that we are not alone in the most desperate of times, when we live with knowing things that no soul should have to know or have done. We thank you for this, and ask you to heal us where we have been harmed, and in time to teach us to turn that pain to something useful, so that others may not have to suffer the same in the future. For this hope in the future, we thank you, and in the age old words of hope spoken by Julian of Norwich, we pray that one day, all will be well.

In your name we pray,
Amen.

Written by Will Brown

Biblical Texts and Readings

Betrayal by those in authority is a prominent characteristic of moral injury and can lead to a loss of meaning and faith in one's life. The Bible is full of stories of betrayal that can help to shed light on moral injury for a congregation. Here is a list of some of these stories as well as another possible reading.

Genesis 4:1-16 -- The story of Cain and Abel

Genesis 6:9 - 8:29 - The story of God, Noah, and the flood

Genesis 25:19-34 -- The story of Jacob and Esau

Genesis 38 -- The story of Judah and Tamar

Judges 16:1-22 -- The story of Sampson and Delilah

2 Samuel 11 -- The story of David, Uriah, and Bathsheba

Matthew 27:1-10 -- The story of Judas' betrayal and suicide

John 18:15-27 -- The story of Peter's Denial of Jesus

The Mark of Cain:

After Cain kills Abel, God marks Cain so that others will not kill him. When moral injury occurs in a situation where killing is necessary or impossible to avoid, a person is forever changed, forever marked by their actions.

Judas:

Those who have experienced moral injury, especially veterans, have a higher risk of committing suicide. Judas, after he betrays Jesus, is so filled with shame and grief that he sees suicide as the only option.

Noah and the flood:

Noah followed God's commands in building an ark and gathering two of every creature to take with him on the ark. What the story often does not focus on is the massacre for all of those who were left behind. Is it possible Noah experienced moral injury from following God's commands? After the flood, the story says that Noah drank wine until he was drunk. Often, alcohol is used by those with moral injury to numb the pain, grief, and

Possible Reading

Written by D. H. Lawrence

I am not a mechanism, an assembly of various sections.
And it is not because the mechanism is working wrongly,
that I am ill.
I am ill because of wounds to the soul,
to the deep emotional self
and the wounds to the soul take a long, long time,
only time can help
and patience, and a certain difficult repentance,
long, difficult repentance, realisation of life's mistake,
and the
freeing oneself
from the endless repetition of the mistake
which mankind at large has chosen to sanctify.

Sermon Starter

Faith in Unexpected Places

Luke 7:1-10 and/or Matthew 8:5-13

Background:

Both Luke (Luke 7:9) and Matthew (Matthew 8:10) use the Greek word *thaumazo* (thou-mad'-zo) which we translate "marveled" or "amazed" to describe Jesus' response to the centurion's faith. The centurion was one the most unlikely persons to amaze Jesus. He was a Gentile. Doubtless he had a pagan upbringing. He was a Roman, stationed in Palestine to subject the Jews to the Emperor's rule. He was a man of war. He achieved the rank of centurion by distinguishing himself above others in the brutal Roman martial arts. Not exactly the résumé you'd expect for becoming one of the Bible's great heroes of faith. Relate it to today: our veterans may not be proud of what they have done or been asked to do, but they can certainly have a strong faith.

Main points:

1. Faith crosses all barriers.
2. Faith makes us active in God's work.
3. Faith makes us humble.
4. Faith trusts in Christ alone.

Possible Introduction:

God expects God's children be people of extraordinary faith. God wants us to look at our circumstances through the eyes of faith. The Bible says faith can move mountains. How is your faith now? Faith can bring changes in our situation. Hebrews 11:1 says "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Our faith is not based on our present situation but it looks forward to the future. Do you have this kind of faith? How can you exercise this faith? In our text today I am speaking of a Roman centurion who had a great faith. Jesus told about him, "I tell you I have not found such great faith even in Israel." In our message today we are going to see how we can achieve such faith. What is so special about this Roman soldier that Jesus was amazed at his faith?

Possible Conclusion:

Whom do you trust this morning? Perhaps the centurion had never known Jesus personally, he just would have heard about Jesus from others but still he trusted in Jesus. We have the living Word of God, God has led us in the past, and still we fail to trust in our God. Jesus was amazed at the centurion's faith. He did not find such faith in the whole of Israel. What was so special about the centurion's faith? The centurion's faith crossed all barriers. The centurion's faith made him active in God's work. The centurion's faith made him humble. The centurion's faith made him trust in Jesus alone. We find the servant received his healing because of the centurion's faith. What are your circumstances this morning? What is it that is bothering you the most today? Have faith in God. Look at your circumstances through the eyes of the centurion. God can do anything for you, if you just have faith. Amen

Written by Jacob Walsh

Sermon Starter

Possible Body of the Sermon:

The story of the Roman centurion sending word to Jesus through Jewish elders and his subsequent exclamation, “I am not worthy ... but only say the word...” is simple, and yet somewhat complex. These same words could be churning in our veterans minds, and it is often the only thing that is remembered as they return home expecting to find everything as when they left. Unfortunately, it is not the same. Everything is different; however, the good news and hope is that in God’s eyes, our veterans are worthy. Through faith in Jesus, all barriers are broken. At times, we become the barrier, but Jesus is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us (Ephesians 2:14).

In the story, the Centurion, despite his background, approaches Jesus and depends on the healer to grant healing for a slave. The centurion must rely on his faith, not his might as a soldier. The relationship with God and the community of people surrounding our veterans will surely make both active in God’s work to bring healing from the healer, Jesus. Faith and trust in Christ alone brings a mysterious spiritual healing that brings peace and strength to keep on believing in God’s love and mercy.

While there is no doubt that in the aftermath of violence, there is a deep-seated illness of broken minds and spirits, there will always be the possibility toward healing. One must be willing to be humble and ask God for help. As the community journeys along, the process of healing must involve active listening in order to receive the healing that God gives freely to anyone who is willing to receive.

Written by Maria D. Garza

Hymns

<u>Hymn Title</u>	<u>Chalice Hymnal</u>	<u>United Methodist Hymnal</u>
Abide With Me	#636	-----
Come, You Disconsolate	#502	#510
How Firm a Foundation	#618	#529
O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go	#540	#480
Jesus, Lover of My Soul	#542	#479
O Sacred Head, Now Wounded	#202	#286
Out of the Depths	#510	-----
What Wondrous Love Is This	#200	#292
O Day of Peace That Dimly Shines	#711	#729
This Is My Song	#722	#437

Children's Sermon

Have you ever had an injury, an owie, or boo-boo that really hurt? What happens when you get an owie? (wait for responses) Maybe someone cleans it up and puts a Band-Aid on it? Eventually it gets better right? Sometimes our owies leave scars. Do any of you have any scars from your owies?

Sometimes people get really bad owies on their hearts. You can't clean these owies up or put Band-Aids on them and often they will leave scars.

But did you know there is a way we can help these people with heart owies? We can let them know we want to be their friend, we wish their owie would get better but until it does we will listen to them and love them. You can tell them that not only will you listen to and love them but God will also listen to them and loves them no matter what. Do you think that is something you can do?

Let us pray:

**God,
Help us to be friends to people who have owies on their heart. Remind us to listen to them and love them just as you do. Help heal their owies.
Amen.**

Written by Sarah Almanza

Communion Meditation

In his book *A Distant Grief*, Kefa Sempangi says when he began his ministry in Uganda, he was challenged by some older ministers about the need for continual repentance. One of them would often ask him, “Are you repenting? Are you walking in the light? Are you being broken?”

The older minister went on to stress how important it is to be broken, even as Jesus was broken for the world. He said to be broken is to have no pride. If there is pride, there is no confession. If there is no confession, there is no forgiveness. Those who are broken are broken to heal broken relationships. Those who are broken do not find their identity in always being right.

Another minister read the story of the feeding of the five thousand. He read how Jesus took the loaves and the fish and looked up to Heaven and blessed and broke the loaves. Then he said, “Until God breaks your will, he will never use you. You will remain only a nice loaf of bread.”

He went on to say that the believer’s commitment to other believers should be no less than that of Jesus himself. The believer should be willing to say, “This is my body, broken for you.” And then the believer must be willing to offer talents, abilities, time, and resources to be broken for the good of others.

As we meet around the Lord’s table and as you thank Jesus for allowing his body to be broken for you, ask yourself if you are willing to be broken for him and for others. Examine your heart to see if while accepting his great sacrifice, you have chosen in reality to remain a nice, unbroken loaf of bread.

Ask yourself, “Am I repenting? Am I walking in the light? Am I being broken?” As we gather at this table, we realize that we must all be broken, just as Jesus was for us.

Written by Jacob Walsh

Communion at the Lord’s Supper prompts for an honest self-evaluation and brings forth the struggles within ourselves. The struggles help us celebrate as we are reminded of God’s forgiveness, and as we accept God’s invitation. The Lord’s Supper stirs tears of repentance but also smiles of celebration. It calls forth horror at the intensity of Jesus’ suffering yet also gratitude for what his sacrificial death provides for us. Accepting the invitation at the table is like participating in a personal appointment with the Lord who has invited us to meet him alone despite our failings. It is a time for introspection, repentance, confession, and praise. It is a time for a new beginning, to live with purpose and power among people who follow Christ and among those who need to know him.

Adapted by Maria D. Garza from http://christianstandard.com/2014/02/cs_article-1435/

The Lord’s Supper is effective—it does something. This is strange language to most of us. We understand how we do something, take the bread and break it and the cup and drink it, but we may not see how God does anything. We do not come to the table to learn something with our minds: we come to meet God. God and people meet here and something happens. Here we touch eternity. Here God gives love, forgiveness, acceptance and we receive. He acts, and we adore. In prayer we go to God. In the Lord’s Supper he comes to us. We are not learning something, or remembering something, but doing something—we are meeting God.

Written by Dr. Myron J. Taylor, <http://www.myronjtaylor.com/communion.htm>

Breaking Glass Idea

It would be a great idea to break colored plates or mirrors and put them back together in a different way, if the service was going to be interactive. The message would be that God can help us piece our shattered lives back together and ideally, people would have different colors that could be plastered together on the same setting. Something like these:

Suggested by Jacob Walsh



Further Resources and Information

For worship and liturgy resources, including video testimonies:

Sippola, John, Donald Tubesing, Amy Blumenshine. *Welcome Them Home, Help Them Heal: Pastoral Care and Ministry with Service Members Returning From War*. Deluth, MN: Whole Person Associates, Inc., 2009.

Soul Repair Center, Brite Divinity School. <http://brite.edu/academics/programs/soul-repair/>

For more information on moral injury:

Brock, Rita and Gabriella Lettini. *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury After War*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2012.

Goodell, Jessica and John Hearne. *Shade It Black: Death and After in Iraq*. Haverton, PA: Casemate, 2011.

Shay, Jonathan. *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*. New York: Scribner, 1984.