

Western Theological Seminary

**Metaphors in Pastoral Care and Counseling:
Utilizing the Therapeutic Model of David Grove**

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Abstract

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Metaphors in Pastoral Care and Counseling: The Therapeutic Model of David Grove

This paper offers a method for pastoral counselors to utilize in healing individual and corporate anxiety. The model uses the modern therapeutic technique of Dr. David Grove in conjunction with the biblical psalms of lament.

David Grove maintains that people use metaphors to describe past traumatic experiences, and that these metaphors provide the key for healing these wounds, or the "wounded child within," in the past where they first occurred. Grove's therapeutic process emphasizes careful attention to the office setting, healing the wounded child within in the past, allowing the client's use of metaphor to express the trauma, and strict regard to the "clean" language used by the therapist. Grove also contends that the wounded child within is "frozen" in time, and the therapist must help guide the client through and beyond that experience so that healing may occur. This is achieved through an understanding of the information stored in the child within, the memories which describe the environment outside the child's body, and the bodily boundaries described in metaphors.

The psalms of lament provide a biblical basis to support and guide both individual and corporate metaphorical healing. These psalms first allowed the Hebrews to voice their pain to God, and through that venting to be healed. The same can be true for the believing community. The psalmist offered a plea describing the pain and suffering God's people had endured, then demanded God's grace and healing. After expressing their anxiety, the community praised God for God's goodness.

The similarities between Grove's therapeutic method and the psalms of lament deal more with form than content. Both express a desire to heal the hurts of the past, hurts that are described in metaphorical terms. Both seek consolation and justice through the evolution of metaphors within the bodily and environmental constraints. Both move beyond that pain to a place of comfort and healing.

This joint healing method may be used by pastoral counselors in both corporate and individual ministry. A congregation can benefit from expressing public lament, especially during the "dark" seasons of the church year, transitions, and losses, where it may first seem more appropriate. The structure of worship services can also place more emphasis on lament, then allow the liturgy and prayers to invite healing. Sermons may utilize metaphors to convey the suffering many experience and the healing God's love can bring. A pastoral counselor may make a powerful impact on individuals, couples and small groups by leading them through metaphorical and biblical exercises, expressing pain and working through that pain to find healing.

The church must reclaim its healing ministry. That ministry is rooted in Scripture, which still speaks to the anxiousness of people. The combined therapeutic method of David Grove and the psalms of lament offer a model for voicing that anxiety and enabling healing.

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Introduction

The conversation began like countless others during my fifteen years of ministry. With the shyness of a teenager about to ask for a date, Jim asked if we could talk. He suggested we pick up lunch and go to a park where we could have privacy. After one bite of his sandwich, Jim began to tell me about the purpose of our meeting. At thirty-two, he was just beginning to realize that his feelings were frozen. With a lovely wife and two beautiful children, Jim lived the middle-class suburban dream. His job was satisfying and his religious life seemed in order. However, Jim simply could not feel. He wondered if I could help him recover his ability to feel.

Jim's real name is "Legion." Within the walls of the church there are countless people who are struggling to feel. Emotionally and spiritually, Legion is "stuck." Rather than knowing the powerful sense of calm that Christ came to bring, Legion wrestles to find peace in a soul at war. Rather than growing in faith, Legion lives in the same stagnant place. Sometimes, by God's grace, Legion seeks the pastor for help. Not wanting to play psychologist, the pastor often advises prayer and Scripture reading. While these and other tools of faith may bring some relief, the honest parishioner will confess that the root cause for his/her symptoms has not been addressed. The result is that the anxiety of being stuck creates more paralyzing anxiety.

Legion's problem does not show itself only in the privacy of the pastoral counseling setting. This "stuckness" is corporate as well. A friend relates a story of a congregation embroiled in a fierce battle over the leadership of its pastor. The pastor had tried to introduce some contemporary elements into the service. Evidently, this created tremendous anxiety in the minds of several of the parishioners. As a result, a special person (my friend) was appointed to mediate the disagreement.

After meeting with several people from the various factions, my friend called a special consistory meeting. He walked in wearing a coat tightly wrapped. Following the opening devotions, he removed his coat to reveal a referee shirt. It was his visual reminder that the church could not continue to play without rules and without authority. He was the authority and his task was to help the church get "unstuck."

Talk with any pastor will reveal the unique "stuck points" of different congregations. Each church has gotten stuck over issues that make others laugh. But these issues reflect the anxiety that change produces. Churches pick a symbolic event to contain their anxiousness. The pastor needs to find ways to rise above these "anxiety attacks" and move the congregation to new levels of faith.

That is far easier said than done. When churches are stuck, they become accustomed to their "stuckness." Changing perspective is risky and hard work. The pastor, then, must find new ways to facilitate healing and encourage change. These new ways must be unobtrusive. These approaches must be introduced often on a subconscious level. They must invite change, not force it. They must call on the God-given internal resources of the church. And they must bring the congregation to sing a new song.

Though helpful, understanding is not the only thing that is necessary for healing to occur. If understanding was all that was necessary, people could change easily and organizations like Alcoholics Anonymous and diet clubs would hardly be necessary. What makes change so difficult? Why do people struggle all their lives with their addictions and obsessions? Could it be that we have failed to honor the person in the time of their trauma? Could it be that the symptoms belong to that person at another time? Could it be that unless that person is healed in the past, the symptoms will persist?

For too long the church has appeared powerless over the anxious behavior of its parishioners. It is time for a new model of dealing with this debilitating "dis-ease." Not just any model will do. The church remains submissive to the Bible. Any model that is presented must at least have biblical precedence.

Such a model can be found in the biblical songs of lament. David and the nation of Israel used the songs of lament as a regular part of worship. But why? Obviously, the lament psalms proved therapeutic. Somehow, the recitation of these liturgical laments invites reestablishment of the bond between humanity and God. This is a powerful spiritual moment. But more seems to happen as well. It was the singing of the "blues" that brought some kind of healing. When reminded of their past failures or struggles, a new song of the blues would be sung to bring the healing needed. Psalms such as 13, 22, 32, 35, 49, 143 and others formed a journal of healing from stuck points. It is my contention that an understanding of the process of singing songs of lament that follow the biblical pattern offers a model of healing for individuals and communities.

This is a crucial issue in our time as some in the church refuse to allow lament to be a part of worship. In recent years, the rise of positive thinking, possibility living, and contemporary praise worship have left the notion that those who are anxious have not embraced the "full gospel." In effect, new walls of division are erected that alienate and create new levels of anxiety. Meanwhile, those outside of the church no longer find the healing that has been the rite of the church for centuries. Rather than the peace that passes understanding, there is anxiousness and fear that blocks understanding.

I propose to offer a model for healing that has rich biblical roots and modern therapeutic insight. Built on the foundation of the psalms of lament, this model offers hope for the anxious souls that have been traumatized in earlier experiences. Using the insights gained through the exegetical work of biblical scholars and the therapeutic brilliance of David Grove, I offer a model for transforming ministry. Used at almost any skill level, this model can open doors to healing that have seemed sealed like tombs.

"And What Would You Like to Have Happen?:"

The Therapeutic Style of David Grove

"And what would you like to have happen?" This is the innocuous question that David Grove uses to begin his therapeutic intervention. Everything that happens after that first question remains a gentle invitation to change. David Grove began his work in therapy with Richard Bandler and John Grinder of Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) fame. No doubt Grove's training in NLP taught him to listen to client language in ways that have not been common. As he listened, he paid special attention to the metaphorical phrases people used to describe their experience. Interrogating these phrases, Grove discovered that when asked the right questions, the metaphors contained important information that provided the key for healing wounds of the past. A gentle man himself, Grove began to look for therapeutic intervention that shifted power away from the therapist and towards the client. His study and research lead him to an approach that is revolutionary. For the purposes of this paper, I will first present a case study that reveals the unique nature of Grove's work. Then, I will present information on the key concepts that make Grove's method unique. Though learning this technique requires hours of practice and study, this overview will provide enough information for the inquisitive student to wrestle with the possibilities of healing a hurt from the past in the past.

Case Study: "Fuzzy"

The following demonstrates a Type I intervention with a client who could not "stay connected." The symptom had originated during a childhood hospitalization; the client could recall hospital staff struggling to give her a general anaesthetic. During this struggle she became dissociated from her body and experienced watching herself on the operating table from the ceiling. This scene had repeated itself over and over again, maintaining the experience of not being "connected."

In this verbatim¹, I will record the therapist's questions in normal text and the client's responses in italic text.

And what would you like to have happen?

I would like to be able to stay connected.

And you would like to be able to stay connected. And when you would like to be able to stay connected, how do you know that you don't stay connected?

It's...ahh...fuzzy.

And it's fuzzy. And when it's fuzzy where is it fuzzy when it's fuzzy?

In my head.

And whereabouts in your head?

Here.

And...here. And when it's fuzzy and it's here, does it have a shape or a size?

It's like a fuzzy ball.

And like a fuzzy ball. And what kind of fuzzy ball?

Lots and lots of...ah...strands and...um...grey, of grey, white.

And grey and white. And is there anything else about a fuzzy ball with lots and lots of strands of grey and white?

It keeps expanding.

And it keeps expanding. And as it keeps expanding, what happens next?

Can't...um...can't tell anything more.

And it can't tell anything more. And as it can't tell anything more, what happens next?

Nothing.

And nothing happens next. And how long does nothing happen, and what happens after nothing happens and fuzzy ball expands?

It's a long time.

And it's a long time, and it's a long time...And what happens after a long time?

It's fuzzy again.

And it gets fuzzy again. And as it gets fuzzy again, what happens next?

It gets less fuzzy.

And it gets less fuzzy. And as it gets less fuzzy, then what happens?

It keeps getting less fuzzy.

And it keeps getting less fuzzy. And as it keeps getting less fuzzy, what would it like to have happen when it keeps getting less fuzzy?

It would like to know that it was joined back up with the body on the table.

And it would like to know if it was joined up to the body on the table. And how could it know if it was joined up to the body on the table?

It wouldn't be looking down and seeing the body on the table.

And it wouldn't be looking down and seeing the body on the table. And where would it be when it wouldn't be looking down?

It would be back in the head.

And it would be back in the head. And what could be the first thing that could happen so that fuzzy looking down could begin to go back to head?

Could fly.

And it could fly. And could fuzzy fly? And could that be a fuzzy fly?

(Laughing) No! But fuzzy could fly.

But fuzzy could fly. And can fuzzy fly?

Yes.

And fuzzy can fly. And where would fuzzy like to fly to?

To the little girl's head.

And to the little girl's head. And when would fuzzy like to fly to the little girl's head?

Now.

And now...And as fuzzy flies to the little girl's head now, what happens next?

She wakes up.

And she wakes up. And then what happens when she wakes up?

She has ice cream.

And she has ice cream. And does fuzzy who flies like to have ice cream?

(Laughing) Of course.

And of course she likes to have ice cream. And what kind of ice cream does fuzzy like the best?

Chocolate.

And she likes chocolate ice cream. And she likes to wake up when she's been on the table and when she wakes up and fuzzy has flown into her head, then she can have chocolate ice cream.

And does she like that?

Yes.

And she likes that.

And she likes even better being connected.

And she likes even better being connected. And she likes even better being connected...And now she knows she's connected, and she knows chocolate ice cream, and she's connected, and she's been waiting to be connected for such a long time.

mmm

And now she is connected...And does she need anything else when she's connected?

Fuzzy could take a break now.

And fuzzy could take a break now. And so fuzzy would like to take a break.

mmm

And would she like to say anything else, as she begins to take a break?

Hooray.

Did you get what you wanted?

mmm

Is she alright?

mmmmmmmm

How do you know?

She's happy.

And she's happy.

And in one piece. (Fuzzy is the name of the child within)

No doubt the reader of this verbatim will wonder just what happened in the above account. In some senses, it is not possible to say accurately. The work that was done was internal. It belonged to the child of the past. The healing that occurred happened to a much younger child at a much earlier time. The meaning of the metaphors is not clear to those who read the words, but to the client, the metaphors were words of life. In order to make some sense out of the above process, I will attempt to describe the various crucial components of the therapeutic process just shared.

Atmosphere

Important to the therapeutic process Grove uses is the atmosphere of the room. It is not uncommon for a session to last more than an hour. Therefore, the client needs a comfortable place to sit with minimal intrusion from sounds or sights. I have found that a low level of light is helpful.

I have watched Grove do his "magic" several times. Curiously, he is able to work his "magic" in front of a sizeable crowd. I theorize that the client's desire for resolution of internal stress invites the client to ignore the pressure of the crowd. Further, it is much safer to look inside when several hundred eyes are staring at you. Thus, "turning in" is not difficult. For the pastoral counselor, however, the room atmosphere becomes much more important.

It is extremely important that the counselor not sit directly in front of the client. The client will need to let her eyes lose focus so that the process can turn inward. Sitting directly in front of the client can prohibit that inward movement.

Also, eye contact is to be avoided at all costs. It may happen that the counselor "peeks" at the client from time to time to discover things about physical responses to the process. However, eye contact calls the person away from the time and place where the individual has been focused and makes it difficult for the process to continue.

"Let the Past Be Healed In the Past"

Grove says, "the past needs to be healed in the past." By this, he means that talking about a traumatic experience with an adult is looking back on time with the understanding of an adult - something the child did not have at the time of the traumatic experience. If someone is to be healed in the past, there will be a need to regress the person back in time. Often, a wound has occurred at ages under ten. It is these wounds that establish the patterns of future frustration. Because the person is stuck at that young age, he or she is not able to be free from the trauma. Grove calls this person in the past a "wounded child within." The technique Grove uses induces a light trance. The person becomes so absorbed in the process that they are far more interested in going inside of themselves to find their wounded child within.

The Wounded Child Within

It is Grove's contention that all people have been wounded emotionally as children. The secret to healing that wound is to regress the person back in time to the moment before the wound occurred. There, the child can be found frozen in time. It is this child that prohibits the adult from functioning in effective or satisfying ways. So, the person must go back to the past where the past can be healed in the past.

With that understanding in place, let me begin by talking about the wounded child within. As Grove explains, a wounded child within is a fragment of a child's persona in which traumatic learning is stored and which remains "frozen" at a moment in time just before a traumatic experience. In an unsuccessful attempt to heal past hurts, this wounded child creates symptoms in the body and mind of the adult. Clues to these child within symptoms are found in the rich metaphoric language used by the adult when experiencing physical or psychological pain: "A lump in my throat" or "a heaviness on my chest" may be the first clue to the presence of a wounded child within and the healing the child needs.

Grove contends that the reason a person remains stuck is that somewhere in that individual's past, he or she was wounded. That wound can occur as early as the first days of life. It is the child that is stuck in time. It is the child that needs to be freed and allowed to know that it survived the trauma of the past. When the child can know that at a deeply internal level, the person can "grow up" to reach a level of maturity that will allow changes to occur.

Once the wounded child within is found, Grove argues for the rights of a child. Included in those rights are the following²:

1. **To use their language without having to explain themselves.** It is the nature of therapy with adults to ask for definitions of words. Adults can define. But kids are still learning the meaning of the words in their experience. As they describe what has happened to them, they need to be able to do what a child's imagination can let it do.
2. **Not to talk about the content of their experience.** If a child was traumatized in the past, it is not necessary to retraumatize them in the present. Asking them how they feel or what they are doing is asking them adult questions that a child may not be able to handle. Therefore, the therapist needs to ask questions that deal with the metaphors - the containers of experience.
3. **To say, "I don't know."** It may well be that the child does not know. Some things are out of the realm of awareness for a child. Believing the child will be key for helping her to move on to the next metaphor or memory. The therapist must respect the child's need to protect herself.
4. **To answer only questions they want to.** If the child has been traumatized by an adult, and most have, then the child needs permission to withhold information that may make the child feel too vulnerable for comfort.
5. **Not to have to talk about their feelings.** It is not common for children to talk about feelings in the same way adults do. It is far more likely that a child will act out based on those feelings. Asking a feeling question of a child insures that the person will move to the present and answer the question as an adult. Childhood is the time of experience. It is more important than feelings.
6. **To be resistant. This may be the only way they can let you know to stop what you are doing.** Resistance is a key indicator that the therapist has asked the wrong question. Forcing a child to do something s/he does not want to do is to retraumatize the child. Rather than punishing the child for failing to answer, the therapist needs to see resistance as a clear sign to ask a better question.
7. **To expect you to be their therapist and not the adult's.** The child has been looking for help to get unstuck. Turning to the adult is abandonment. Staying with the child and asking good questions allows the child to discover the resources s/he needs.

8. **To be healed at the time of their trauma.** It is the past trauma that has the person stuck in time. It is that person back there, back then that needs to experience healing. Trying to affect change in the present is similar to trying to put out a fire years after it started.
9. **Not to be forced into making eye contact.** It is necessary for the child within to not have eye contact. Eye contact pulls children out of the past and brings them to the here and now. It is important in maintaining a trance state that the person be allowed to defocus.
10. **To teach the therapist how best they can heal.** The prophet said, "and a little child shall lead them." When working with a wounded child within, the therapist needs to listen carefully to the direction the child gives. Assumptions made by the therapist are invitations for disaster. The child is the only one who knows what the metaphors mean and the child is the one who knows what needs to happen next.
11. **To take the time they need to heal themselves.** The healing process must happen in its own time. Trying to rush that process will be met by resistance. The wise therapist allows the child all the time s/he needs to get done what needs to be done.
12. **To find a passage through their experience that does not retraumatize them.** The goal is healing. It is not necessary to be hurt again so that healing can occur. While the patient may cry during this process, these are usually the "cool tears" of healing and relief.

Metaphors

Therapeutic metaphors are the containers of experience. While the metaphor is not the actual experience, all of the feelings of the traumatic experience are contained in the metaphor. The metaphor only exists for a brief moment in time. When the therapist discovers the metaphor, it must be understood if the metaphor belongs to the adult or the child within. While all the metaphors are important and must, near the end of the therapeutic intervention, be recombined, it is the metaphor of the child within that has the power to heal the trauma of the past. Grove repeats time and time again that the role of the therapist is to empower the metaphor. To do that, one needs to interrogate the metaphor until it confesses its strength.

The key thought behind what Grove says here is that the resources for healing are found in the metaphor. If the metaphor is empowered by the right questions, the wounded child within can find the power or resources needed to resolve a trauma from years ago.

The reason Grove makes use of metaphor is that metaphor is the language of the child. Because children are so oriented to the outside, they see things and become the things they see.

Butterflies, walls, knots, knives, rain, - all these things become the avenue of experience and memory for the child. In using these images, the child stores all of the emotion of the experience. To promote healing, then, these metaphors must be given a life of their own so that they can do the healing they need to do.

Clean Language

Fundamental to Grove's work is language. In the opening paragraph of a learning module, Grove writes,

The primary medium for the delivery of the healing art is language. Therapeutic language must be a sacred language in the sense that it has to be bracketed off from the profane language of everyday speech. Therapeutic discourse has its own inherent grammar and syntax which feels just right and has a soporific sense.³

By clean language, Grove means words that do not impose any interpretation of the therapist onto the client. The key to this healing modality is the use of language that does not violate the person's experience. Rather, it is the therapist's responsibility to help people find their own resources to heal their own pain.

Grove says,

Clean language accesses the language of the child within (primary processing language) without contaminating it with the therapist's metaphors. It is the therapist's responsibility to ask only questions that feel just right to a child within. Questioning proceeds spatially, i.e., strictly according to the focus of the client's information. The therapist's next question must always go to exactly the same source from which the last piece of information came. For example: If a client says, "I'm scared," the source of the client's information is feeling ("scared"); "he's coming to get me" the source is memory. The next question goes to either feeling (And when you're scared, where are you scared?), or memory (And when he's coming to get you, what happens next?).⁴

To explain further the concept of clean language, it may be helpful to view the following chart, reproduced below from a study guide written by Grove⁵:

Primary Processing Language	Secondary Processing Language
Lexical, word dependent	"Ordinary" language use; the client talks about her experience
Words are linguistic clues; lack of syntax, usual grammar	Sentences; case and grammar dependent
Use of primitive language of metaphors; symbols and sounds, such as silence, grunts, groans, tremors and shaking (A child within is most often alexithimic)	A formalized language of models and similes
Draws out the contours of pre-traumatic experience	Restricts information to an adult interpretation of child's trauma; only talks about trauma from an observer's perspective
Time dependent, has a short half-life	Not time dependent because it is dissociated from experience and can be recalled with minimal degradation of meaning
Depends on the therapist's asking the right questions to support the context	Context can become merged with "solutions" the therapist offers
Structured according to its own internal logic	Structured according to external logic dictated by grammar, syntax and social context
Meaning depends solely on the information source	Meaning depends upon both sender and receiver of information
Sends messages but is not interactive	Sends messages and is interactive because it takes into account the receiver

Notice the difference in questions when posed in a "clean" form. The chart below compares typical questions with "clean" questions:

Questions	Clean Questions
<p>What can I do for you?</p> <p>How can I help?</p> <p>What seems to be the matter?</p> <p>What is your problem?</p> <p>What brings you here (today)?</p> <p>How do you feel?</p> <p>What is going through your mind?</p> <p>What is on your mind?</p> <p>I am listening.</p> <p>What are you thinking?</p> <p>How do you feel about that?</p> <p>What does it remind you of?</p> <p>Tell me what happened.</p> <p>What do you think/feel?</p> <p>Can you get in touch with that feeling?</p> <p>How does that make you feel?</p> <p>Are you angry/do you feel angry?</p> <p>You must have a lot of anger.</p> <p>I want you to...</p>	<p>What do you need to have happen?</p> <p>What would be helpful?</p> <p>What do you want?</p> <p>What would you like?</p> <p>What would you want (to happen here today)?</p> <p>Are you experiencing anything now?</p> <p>Is there anything (you are thinking)?</p> <p>Is there something you are thinking?</p> <p>Is there something you want to say?</p> <p>Are you thinking anything?</p> <p>And when that happened how did you feel?</p> <p>And when that happened how does that affect you?</p> <p>And when that happened...?</p> <p>Is there anything happening?</p> <p>And when you have that feeling, what does that feel like? And where do you feel it?</p> <p>And when that happened did you have any feeling?</p> <p>What is that feeling like?</p> <p>Did you feel anything when that happened?</p>
Words	Clean Words
<p>addiction, habit, compulsion</p> <p>depression, anxiety, phobia, obsession, pathology</p>	<p>What is it that you don't want to do?</p> <p>What is it that you don't want to think/feel?</p>

Clean language is used as a tool to:

1. Create hygienic conditions within the client's experience, making the event more amenable to transformation.
2. Facilitate a state of self-absorption and naturalistic trance.
3. Communicate effectively and efficiently with nonconscious processes.
4. Avoid contamination or deconstruction of the client's subjective experience.
5. Minimize resistance.
6. Translate feelings out of words into physiological imagery.
7. Achieve resonance and amplification of client language to discover the source of their metaphors and symbols.
8. Pinpoint accurately questions and statements that reflect the client's model of the world.
9. Empower the child within by using the child's primary processing language.⁶

Rules of Clean Language

There are certain rules that assure clean language. They can be summarized as follows:

1. Ask questions answerable by the child within. If one question is not answerable, ask a different one.
2. Use the same verb form and tense as the client.
3. Use the subjunctive mood. This allows choices and solutions to come from the information source.
4. Do not use the definite article "the."
5. Use "you" only when the client uses "I." "You" must be contextualized so that it goes to the child, not to the adult.
6. Use "he" or "she" only if the client uses the pronoun, as it implies a dissociated observing adult ego.
7. Begin each sentence with "And...."
8. Use "And when..." as a natural invitation to regress the client.⁷

Time Management and the Meaning of Time

For Grove's work, time has new meaning. It is possible to have an event so traumatize a child or younger person that the feelings from that experience become "frozen" at that time. The work of the therapist is to find that child frozen in time and help him or her "grow up." Other parts of the child may mature, but certain parts of that child remain frozen and actually locate themselves physiologically. Grove describes this phenomena as follows:

A wounded child within is a fragment of a child's persona in which traumatic learning is stored and which remains "frozen" at a moment in time (T-1) just before a traumatic experience (T).

This fragment is an undifferentiated information mass where the child within (figure) and the external environment in the memory (ground) are fused with the child's internal feelings (metaphor). These fused information sources form a homeostatic milieu in which the child remains "frozen" or trapped.

Although other parts of the child's experience continue to evolve, the trapped fragment never moves beyond T-1 through T to T+1 (the moment immediately following the traumatic event). Symptoms develop because the movement necessary to complete this progress cannot occur.⁸

As stated earlier, Grove pleads to let the past heal the past. He believes that one of the reasons it is so difficult for modern psychotherapy to be effective is that it deals with the adult in the here and now, when the trauma occurred much earlier to a much younger person. Therefore, he intends to help the person regress to the time of the traumatic experience (T). Rather than repeatedly reliving the traumatic experience, we store the memory of the traumatic experience (T) somatically in a metaphor that is T-1. The goal of metaphor therapy is to grow the person up through T and into T+1.

Time changes when dealing with traumatic experiences. In Grove's descriptions of time, there are three key moments. The first is T-1. This is the time leading up to but not including the actual traumatic event. The wounded child is frozen in T-1. Allowing him/herself to remember only the

things that led up to the actual traumatic experience, in T-1, provides a certain kind of safety. Even so, the child has not "grown up." Symptoms for the child may show themselves at any time as the unresolved trauma continues to "exist" within the body of the adult.

The second key portion of time is "T." T stands for the actual traumatic event. The child blocked the memory of that traumatic event because it was too painful. Grove suggests that in more traditional therapeutic work, people are sent back to T as an adult. As they recover memories they can then talk about the experience in very adult-like ways. Logic and reason help them to understand all about what happened. Unfortunately, the child that was wounded back there has not yet been allowed to grow up.

In order for children to enter into T, they must have some resources or assurances that the traumatic event will not hurt them any more. The process must allow them to survive that time and to see life on the other side of T.

The third measure of time is T+1. This is the point when all the trauma of T has been lived through with the resources necessary for survival. In T+1 the wounded child within discovers that it did survive and that it is O.K. T+1 is the place of healing and moving on. However, all of the trauma and all of the issues involved in T-1 and T must be dealt with before T+1 will be O.K.

When working with a metaphor for healing, it is important to work with time in what seems to be an unconventional way. It is important, Grove says, to manage time to determine the moment in which an intervention occurs. He suggests that the time between a stimulus and a response is 1/10 of a second, a very small unit of time. It is in this time that the manufacturing or replication process occurs and this is where the focus for intervention will be.

The key difference between Grove's technique and other techniques is focus.

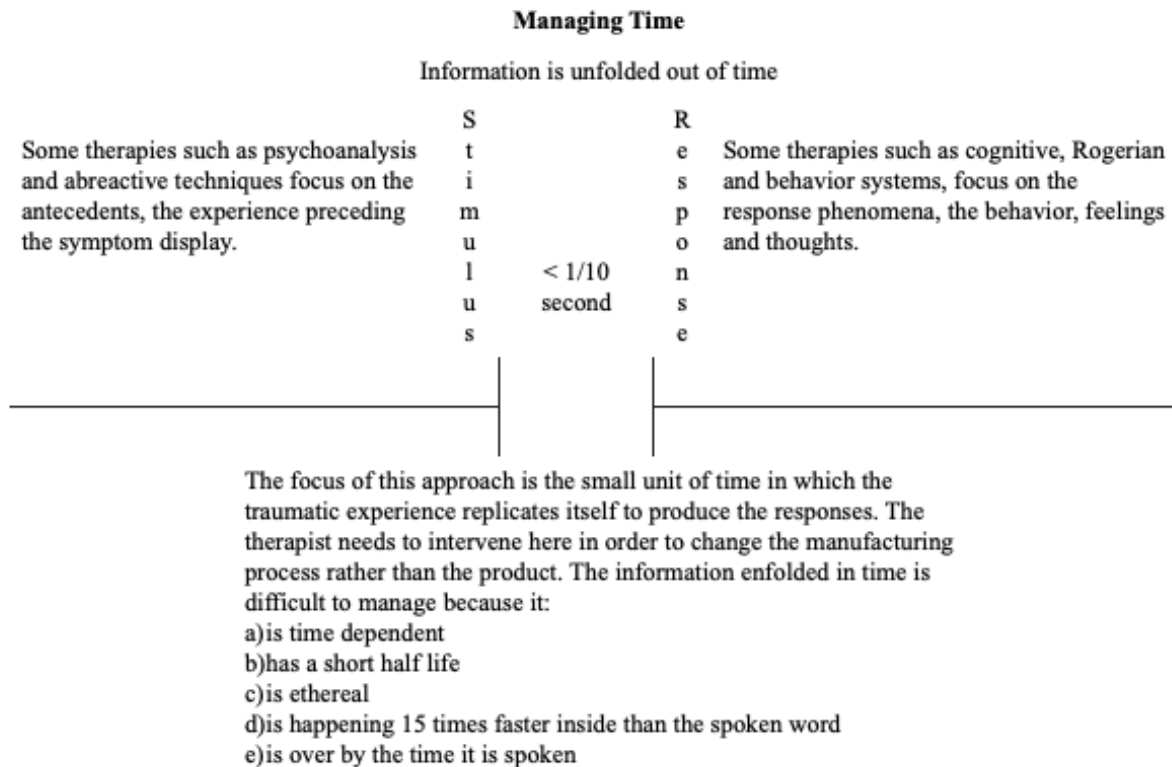
In discussing the difference between his modality and other therapies, Grove says,

Many therapeutic interventions focus on the response after a given stimulus. They observe behavior, thought patterns and feelings, then attempt to modify that response. Rogerian techniques talk about the experience. Behavior techniques deal with the response to the experience. Gestalt awareness works with the affect. All of these focus only on the descriptive level, the response part of the time continuum.

Because the response is the product of a stimulus, by the time there is any phenomenon to observe or feel, it is too late to intervene at the point when the response was created. The product (response) has already been manufactured. Some changes can be made by dealing with the response, but these are areas that simply do not change by talking about them. By using clean language, however, time can be moved back to the time the response was manufactured and changes can occur.

Other therapies focus on the time before the stimulus by determining how etiology and history affect present feelings and behavior. In traditional psychoanalytical theories, past experiences or memories are uncovered. Abreactive work attempts to recover memories and some child-within techniques go back to discover where the child is and to nurture that child. All of these techniques discover conditions prior to the stimulus and are not necessarily healing, although at times they are useful and may produce some resolution.⁹

The following chart describes Grove's view of time management:



Further advice about time management includes the need to have the right verb tense that meets clients where they are in their experience. If the counselor asks a question that leads to the future before the client is ready to go, there will be a clear sign of "missing" the client. Because the life of a response is so short, the counselor must find an appropriate verb tense as soon as possible.

While working with time, the counselor must ask questions that develop that 1/10 of a second. These questions help to focus the traumatic moment and help to develop metaphors from the client's feelings that may be important for healing to occur. In effect, these questions tend to freeze time so that the client can do the work that needs to be done at the moment of trauma.

Finally, the counselor has a responsibility to move time along when the client's trauma has been frozen. Maturing questions are simple but important. Asking, "And what happens next when you can't move?" or, "And what happens after you've been asleep for a long time?" matures information. It is questions like these that allow the client to grow up through the traumatic experience and be released from the trauma of the past.

The Conjunction "And"

Over and over, Grove makes use of the conjunction, "and." It is a simple and efficient way of tying the thoughts and words of the client together. It is a word that enables the person to enter a trance state easily. It invites reflection and deepening of the move inward.

Three Types of Information Storage - Child within, Metaphor and Memory

Grove understands that information from a traumatic experience is stored physiologically in the body of the one traumatized. He has discovered that there are three main ways that this information is stored.

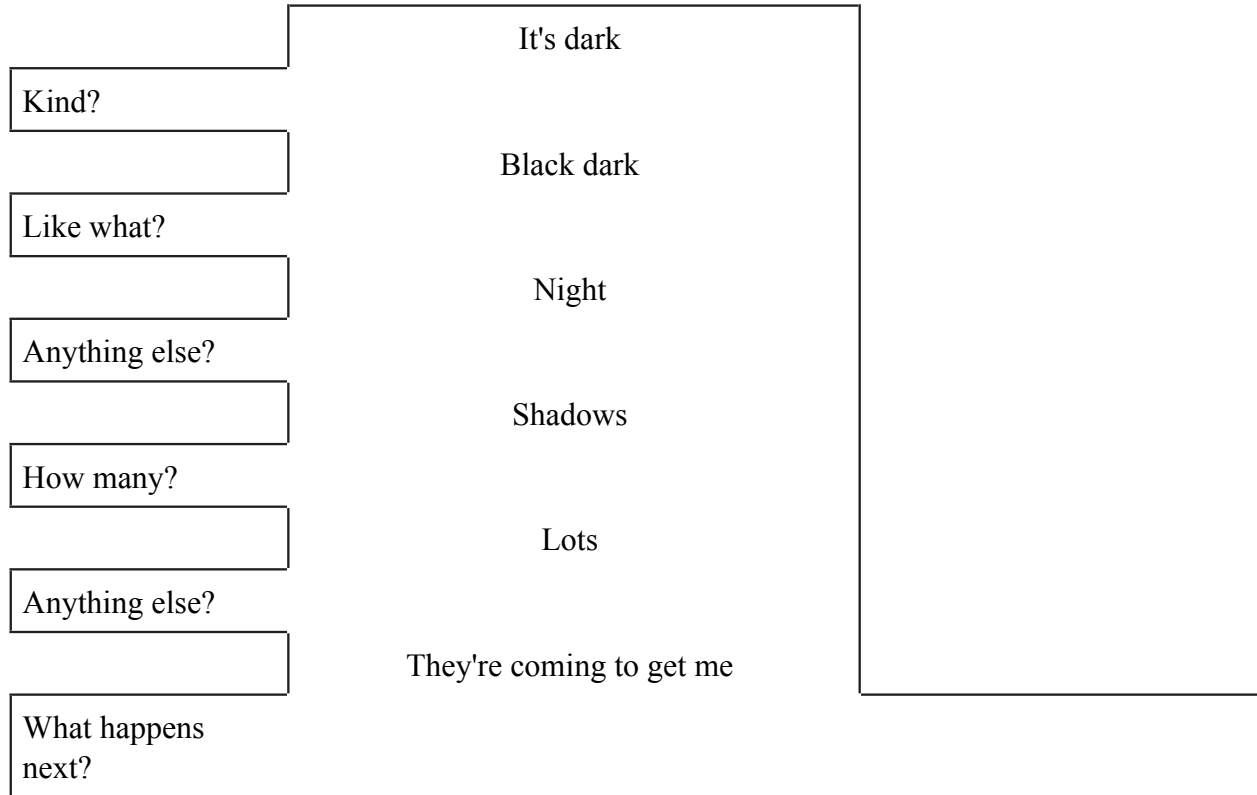
First, it can be found in a **child within**. The child within is a representation of the adult at the age when a trauma occurred. When the client uses phrases like, "I'm running but I can't get away," the one running is the child within. It is important to establish the age of that child, as well as any other information that will help the emotions of the trauma to be transported. Child-within is information that pertains to the presence of a child's body. An "I" pronoun followed by a body or body part denotes the presence of the child within at that moment. That child must be recognized and affirmed. Questions about appearance and age communicate recognition and affirmation. The following chart depicts the form of questions needed to reveal information contained in the child within:

Child Within¹⁰

	I'm frightened
How old?	
	Just little
Wearing?	
	A sun dress
Kind?	
	Pink with bows
Anything else?	
	Socks and shoes
Kind?	
	No
What would she like to do/have happen?	

The second storage method is **memory, ground or environment**. Memory, ground or environment is information that is outside the boundary of the body. It is possible for a person to have important information in these places. This information must be dealt with as it will have an important role to play in resolving the trauma of the past. The following chart outlines the form questions need to take to gather information from memory, ground, or environment:

Memory¹¹



Finally, information can be stored in metaphors. A **metaphor** is information that is contained within the body's boundaries, such as a thought, feeling or symptom. This metaphor (the knot) is a foreign object which inhabits the body. These metaphors do not belong in the body. However, it is serving a purpose of containing or controlling the traumatic experience. It cannot be assumed that the goal of a therapeutic intervention would be to remove the object. Rather, the object must be empowered to see what kind of healing force it can bring to the trauma. While the object does not belong in the body of the person, it must be respected. When the healing has occurred, the object often changes to something more pleasant. Thus, a knot in the stomach may become a rope that the child can use to make a swing. The following chart offers a form for questions that enable metaphors to reveal the information they store:

Metaphor¹²

	It hurts
Where?	
	In my stomach
Whereabouts?	
	Here
Shape or size?	
	Roundish
Like what?	
	Like a knot
Kind?	
	Hard, rough
Anything else?	
	It's getting tighter
And can it?	

Knowing these three data storage units is important for asking the right question. Whenever the therapist does ask the wrong question, the client will not respond with further information.

After reading the above, the reader may well wonder whether Grove's technique is a legitimate option for the busy pastor. It is my contention that this method offers an excellent model for reducing the amount of individual time needed to work someone through a traumatic past experience. While my own skill level with Grove's technique is limited, I offer the following verbatim as evidence of the viability of this approach in pastoral counseling.

The conversation took place in my office in February of 1994. Jim and I had known each other for about two years. Our relationship had developed through experiences in church leadership and educational small groups. While he was most pleasant, his affect was "flat." His willingness to try this technique revealed both his trust in me and his impassioned search for healing. He sat quickly and comfortably on a couch and stared straight ahead. His words appear in italics and my responses in regular print.

I appreciate you coming here, Jim. I'm wondering where we begin.

Well, I'm not sure. All I know is that when we talked this summer, I was aware of the emptiness I feel inside. I remember we were talking about it and I described it to you like a hard nut that I couldn't open. Somehow, that seems really important for me to deal with.

And so when it seems important for you to deal with that nut, whereabouts is that nut that you have to deal with?

It's in my chest.

And in your chest. And when it's in your chest and it's like a nut, how old could you be the first time you have a nut like that?

Nine or ten.

And nine or ten. And what could nine or ten be wearing when nine or ten has a nut in chest that can't be opened?

He's got a white T-shirt and jeans.

And a white T-shirt and jeans. And what could nine or ten in a white T-shirt and jeans be doing or what would nine or ten like to have happen?

He'd like to see his mother and father, but he can't.

And he can't. And how does he know he can't see his mother and father when he would like to see his father and mother?

There's something in the way.

And there's something in the way. And what kind of something could that something be?

It's black.

And it's black. And is there anything else about black that's in the way?

It's hard.

And it's black and hard. And black and hard like what?

Like a door.

And like a door. And so when it's black and hard like a door, what kind of door is that door?

It's a very high door. And it's in a room that doesn't seem to have any walls.

And so when that door is there and it's black and it's hard and there aren't any walls, what happens next?

I peek through the key hole and see my mom and dad fighting.

And you see them fighting. And as you see them fighting, what happens next?

I want to run, but my feet are stuck to the floor.

And your feet are stuck to the floor. And as your feet are stuck to the floor, what happens next? And how long are your feet stuck to the floor? And how could feet move?

Feet could move if mom would leave the fight with dad and come to me.

And so can mom leave the fight and come to you?

Yes.

And she can. And what happens when mom leaves the fight and comes to you?

She opens the door.

And she opens the door. And as she opens the door, what happens to feet when she opens the door?

They move.

And feet can move. And where would be the first place that feet would go when they could move?

They would go to the orange chair that's in the room.

And they'd go to the orange chair that's in the room. And after they get to the orange chair that's in the room, what happens next?

I sit down.

And you sit down. And what does mom do when you sit down in an orange chair?

She comes to me and kneels by me and tells me it isn't my fault.

And she tells you it isn't your fault. And is there anything else she tells you?

(Crying) She tells me it will be okay and that I don't have to worry about her. She tells me that I should go out and play and do the things that nine or ten-year-olds should do.

And as she tells you that, what happens to the door?

It isn't as dark anymore.

And as it isn't as dark any more, what happens to nine or ten?

He goes out to play.

And he goes out to play. And what happens to an orange chair and a Mom and a door when he goes out to play?

The orange chair takes nine and ten out to play. It stands guard over nine or ten as a safe place for nine or ten to go. And the door stands next to the chair so that it can protect me if I try to look back at mom and dad fighting.

And the chair and the door protect you. And "orange" you glad you have a chair like that and a protecting door like that so that you don't have to see mom and dad fighting and so that you can play and not feel so responsible anymore. And can nine or ten laugh and feel when he's playing with his friends like that?

Yes!

And does he like that?

Yes!

And did you get all that you need?

I did.

What happened with Jim was the beginning of significant change. But what exactly happened? At a later date, Jim shared some of the meaning of this conversation. What Jim felt in his chest began when he was about nine. What that nut represents is not immediately clear. It may be that there was a plate full of nuts in the kitchen of his house. Or, it may be that when Jim and I first met, there were acorns on the ground near the picnic table. It doesn't really matter. The point is that the nut became the container for an experience remembered from his childhood at an age of nine.

Jim's experience revolved around a severe fight his parents had in the kitchen of the house. Jim's father was alcoholic. It was not uncommon for Jim's father and mother to fight after his father had been drinking. For a nine year old, it is not clear whether a mother can protect herself and still give the nine year old the attention and nurturing that is needed. Thus, the door serves to protect Jim from rejection and to protect him from not getting the nurturing he needs. Even further, this door stops him from seeing if his mother is all right.

Jim was in another room at the time of the fight and only witnessed this traumatic exchange through the key hole of the door. Evidently, the fight was of such a magnitude that he was both afraid and concerned for the well being of his parents and himself. At first, Jim is not able to see his mother and father because the door is in the way. That black door seemed to be an awful barrier. Later, however, we found that the door actually protected him from any danger from within that room. While I thought it would be necessary for us to open that door or go around that door, Jim's wounded child within knew that the best thing he had going for him was that door. The door was an armor he had used to protect him from emotional trauma. Later, Jim said that over the years, whenever he faced stressful emotional situations, the door was with him. He couldn't deal with that door! Yet, the door allowed him access to his trauma. It was the key hole in the door that let him see the traumatic experience that had him stuck.

Jim was a latch key kid! It was the key hole that let this experience come to him and allow his mother to bring this nine year old some nurturing. What remains a bit of a mystery is the orange chair. Neither Jim nor I can explain it's meaning. There may be some religious significance to it. When asked at one point about some religious resources that would help him deal with this situation, Jim said that Christ might be in the room, but that he was distant, perhaps on a couch he couldn't see clearly. The chair, however, was comfortable. And Jim could not sit in that chair until he had comfort and assurances from his mother.

After the assurances from his mother, Jim is able to do the things that nine or ten year olds do. It is interesting to see that the door and the chair go with him to these new places of playing. In fact, at a later date, we discovered that the chair faced danger of slipping back to its old place in Jim's traumatic memory. It was then that this protecting door of his returned to brace the feet of the chair so that it could not slide back.

From the end of our conversation, Jim moved ahead to a new level of interaction with his wife and his children. He identified our conversation as a crucial turning point in his becoming "unstuck." He continues to demonstrate more spontaneous behavior around his family and around the church. It is clear to me that the trauma of the past stopped him from experiencing strong emotions. It kept him from the emotional rewards of being a husband and father.

What happened for Jim can happen for countless others who remain locked in time. The right questions invite new directions. Metaphors respected and valued become the tools for transformation.

Song Sung Blue

Song sung blue, ev'ry body knows one.
Song sung blue, ev'ry garden grows one.
Me and you are subject to the blues now and then;
But when you take the blues and make a song,
You sing them out again.

Song sung blue, weepin' like a willow;
Song sung blue, sleepin' on my pillow.
Funny thing, but you can sing it with a cry in your voice,
And before you know it, start to feelin' good-
You simply got no choice.¹³

Several years ago, recording and performing artist Neil Diamond recorded the popular song, *Song Sung Blue*. The theme of that musical offering is that everyone has a song of sadness to sing. Even more, the song suggests that it is in the singing of that song that healing comes.

Certainly, this is not a new concept. The Hebrews sang their "songs of blue" thousands of years before Neil Diamond. Repeated readings of the Old Testament over several years has confronted me with the boldness of the Psalmist and some of the prophets to sing the blues. There is nothing that cannot be said or sung to God. The deepest joys, to be sure, are included in the Psalter. But unlike much of our modern worship, the Hebrews also sang the blues.

Just how important is this difference in the styles of worship of ancient Israel and modern Christianity? In a word, critical. Yet, modern worship uses songs of

lament less and less. Where and when does corporate pain get healed? Does thinking positively resolve the pain? Do positive experiences cancel out negative ones? Though the intent of positive thinking ministry is good, I worry about those who cannot find any way, because of past traumas, to be positive. Does the Gospel speak to them? How does the healing ministry of Christ and his church work for them?

Walter Brueggemann suggests that an attempt always to be positive leaves us masking the deeper needs and hurts that are real. In his excellent book on the psalms entitled, *The Message of the Psalms*, Brueggemann says,

I think that serious religious use of lament psalms has been minimal because we have believed that faith does not mean to acknowledge and embrace negativity. We have thought that acknowledgment of negativity was somehow an act of unfaith, as though the very speech about it conceded too much about God's "loss of control."¹⁴

Brueggemann goes on to argue that the use of psalms of lament indicates a bold act of faith because it

insists that the world must be experienced as it really is and not in some pretend way...it is bold because it insists that all such experiences of disorder are a proper subject for discourse with God. There is nothing out of bounds, nothing precluded or inappropriate. Everything properly belongs in this conversation of the heart. To withhold parts of life from that conversation is in fact to withhold part of life from the sovereignty of God.¹⁵

In order for the church to reclaim the healing power of lament psalms, it is necessary to understand their form, structure, language and theological/psychological significance.

Lament Psalms Forms

The psalms of lament come in two forms - those of a personal nature and those of a corporate nature. The message, it seems, is that songs of lament need to be sung both alone and in community. Individually, we all face the horrors of life. The death of a child, the loss of a job, a broken relationship - these are the things that happen to a person. These are the things that a person must bring to God. Indeed, there is nowhere else to go with these pains of life. The psalms of lament encourage the individual to vent his or her pain to God.

That individuals do this is no doubt true. It is common for people to "cry themselves to sleep." While this private pleading before God happens far more than is acknowledged, corporate lament has gone the way of the dinosaur. The late rise of praise/worship services gives further evidence to the lengths the church will go to avoid being "negative." In such a service, music often goes from one up beat, fast-tempoed song to another. When the songs do get slower, they are the kind of saccharin songs of love that show little if any acknowledgement of disorientation.

This style is not necessarily bad. Indeed, many people think this form of worship is long overdue, as much of our tradition has been bereft of praise time. While true, it has been my experience that those who voice loudest their need for praise worship experience are those who live with the deepest pain. However, trying to approach that pain is next to impossible. It also appears that the last place these folks want to explore their pain is in the context of worship. This is, as Brueggemann suggests, an odd situation since over one third of the Psalter could be considered psalms of lament. The ancient community of faith seems to have been much more comfortable with lament than those of today's faith community who cry loudest for the protection of "biblical faith."

Structure of the Songs of Lament

There is a general structure to biblical songs of lament that has been identified by Gunkel, refined by Westermann, and affirmed by Brueggemann. The form is not rigidly maintained in each psalm, but the form does capture a progression that is common to most.

The structure contains two dominant parts and several secondary parts.

I. Plea - A complaint that God should correct a skewed situation.

- a) *Address to God*: The complaint is not spoken by one who is a stranger to Yahweh, but by one who has a long history of trustful interaction.
- b) *Complaint*: Often overstated, the point of this section is to convince God of the horribleness of the situation. There is an attempt to make Yahweh a part of the problem.
- c) *Petition*: Based on the complaint, the Psalmists make bold demands on Yahweh. There is the hint that the author believes the situation has resulted from God's lack of activity.
- d) *Motivation*: This is a most interesting part of the Psalm as it suggests that God acts for reasons that sometimes appear less than noble. Some of the reasons for which God is asked to act include:
 - * The speaker is innocent and so is entitled to help.
 - * The speaker is guilty, but repents and seeks forgiveness and restoration.
 - * The speaker recalls God's goodness to an earlier generation, which serves as a precedent for God's goodness now. God should once again do what was done in the past.
 - * The speaker is valued by God as one who praises. If the speaker is permitted to die, the speaker will cease to praise, and the loss will be Yahweh's.

* The speaker finally goes beyond self and appeals to Yahweh to consider God's own power, prestige, and reputation. Finally, the loss in death will not be to the speaker, but to Yahweh who will be perceived as unable to care for his own. (This may be analogous to the inability of a national government to protect its own citizens in a hostile country. Although the citizen may suffer, the key loss is that the government loses respect among the nations.) The appeal is "for thy name's sake," which means for the sake of God's reputation.

e) *Imprecation*: This is the part of the plea that shows a bit of resentment and vengeance that will not be satisfied until God works retaliation on those who have done the wrong. In commenting on the vengeance notion of Psalm 109, Brueggemann says:

But such rage is not only brought into Yahweh's presence. It is submitted to Yahweh and relinquished to him. In the end this psalm shows the way in which free, unrestrained speech of rage is given over to the claims of the covenant partner. And that may be done just because Yahweh is known to be the God of vengeance, who will work his way with such destructive people. This is not a soft, romantic god who only tolerates and forgives, but one who takes seriously his own rule and the well being of his partners. The raw speech of rage can be submitted to Yahweh because there is reason for confidence that Yahweh takes it seriously and will act.

Now in submitting one's rage as this speaker does, two things become clear. The submission to Yahweh is real and irreversible. It cannot be tentatively offered to Yahweh, and then withdrawn if Yahweh does not deal as we had hoped. Such a submission carries with it relinquishment, a genuine turning loose of the issue. When God is able to say, "Vengeance is mine" (Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:19), it implies, "not yours." The submitting partner is no longer free to take vengeance--may not and need not. So the submission is an unburdening and freeing from pettiness and paralysis for praise and thanksgiving. The

second fact is that submitting to Yahweh is submitting to Yahweh's free action. Yahweh will avenge, but in God's own way and in God's own time--and perhaps not as we would wish or hope. Yahweh is not a robot. Yahweh does not implement our violent yearning, but passes it through His sovereign freedom, marked by majesty, faithfulness, and compassion. Thus what could have been a barbarian lashing out against a neighbor becomes a faithful activity in which the venomous realities are placed securely in God's hands. God is permitted to govern as he will. And the speaker is again free to start living unencumbered.16

This is the psychological/theological power of singing songs of lament. They are a deep act of faith that brings to speech all that burns in the soul. And once spoken, the one who complains can leave the entire mess at God's feet.

II. Praise - The somewhat surprising shift in the psalms of lament is the movement to praise.

The Plea section is emotion laden with strong feelings of disappointment, fear, or anger. Yet in what seems to be an instant, the one praying is transported to praise.

A. *Assurance of being heard*: Those who pray are assured that they are heard. Where earlier in the Psalm there may be hints that God does not hear and thus does not care, the Psalmist now has a clear sense that God hears and cares.

B. *Payment of vows*: In response to God's attention, the Psalmist feels a renewed commitment to fulfill a vow made earlier. Whether that vow is to make offerings or to sing praise, the Psalmist is moved to fulfill that vow with renewed vigor.

C. *Doxology and praise*: The psalm of lament typically closes with words of praise to a God who can recognize the plight of His people, who can care about that plight, and who can do something to change it. This is now possible because God has been brought in on the whole problem. No longer does the Psalmist feel the weight of the problem on his shoulders alone.

It will be helpful to show the structure of a typical song of lament. For that purpose, I have chosen Psalm 13 as an example of personal lament. However, its structure is such that it best demonstrates the pattern of lament that is spoken of above.

Psalm 13 For the director of music. A psalm of David. How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look on me and answer, O LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death; My enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall. But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me. (NIV)

The psalms of lament, we recall, are built from two parts, the plea and the praise. The plea begins with the address to God.

I. Plea

A. Address to God: "How long, O Lord" (Psalm 13:1)

In Psalm 13, David begins by addressing his complaint to the Lord. He does not begin by asking, "Why me?" Nor does he mention his specific problem. He goes first to the Lord. Something is terribly wrong. There is no time for praise. While addressed to God, this is a short beginning to a song of lament.

B. Complaint: "Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?" (Psalm 13:2)

David then moves to his complaint, which is twofold. First, he feels forgotten by God. God does not seem to listen. It seems to David that God is hiding his face from him. Secondly, the result of God's distance is that David must wrestle with his own personal pain. He has sorrow in his heart and thus describes himself as losing to the enemy.

C. Petition: "Look on me and answer, O LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death;" (Psalm 13:3)

Next, David moves to the petition. With the urgency of a child begging for assistance, David begs God to "look on him" and to answer. If God does not answer, it may well end in death for David. And so David asks for light for his eyes. Of course this could mean different things. Either David is asking for the ability to see this situation as God sees it, or it is an appeal for a sense of security in a frightening time. Either way, God is the only one who can save David from destruction.

D. Motivations: "My enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall." (Psalm 13:4)

Boldly, David chooses to remind God that this is as much about God as it is about David. Of the five motivations presented above, David opts for a combination of the fourth and fifth. If other people are able to gloat over David's destruction, it will then be God who looks bad. David will certainly be embarrassed as well, but God too, will look less than omnipotent. It could be asked what difference it is to have God be a personal God if there is no protection or security.

E. Imprecation: "My enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall." (Psalm 13:4)

Behind David's comments about his enemies are feelings of resentment. It is as if David says, "How could you let this happen to me? How could a God who has led a people for generations and who has saved those people time and time again let the king of the golden age of Israel fall to such lowly enemies as these?"

II. Praise

- A. Assurance of being heard: "But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation." (Psalm 13:5-6)

Though not referred to specifically, the fact that David declares his trust in God and his willingness to rejoice in the deliverance he believes will come is a reflection of the assurance that he has been heard.

- B. Payment of vows: "I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me." (Psalm 13:6)

For David, that payment will come in the form of a song. Convinced that he will be rescued, he promises to sing God's praise.

- C. Doxology and praise: "I will sing to the LORD, for he has been good to me." (Psalm 13:6)

The Psalm concludes with a singing David declaring God's goodness. Who David envisions hearing him sing remains a mystery, but his recorded words remind us that David knew he had God's ear and that he believed God would deliver.

Language

Important to these holy songs of lament is the literary device of metaphor. Often, the writer and singer of these psalms invokes metaphors that carry the meaning of their experience. While other psalms have many rich and varied metaphors, Psalm 22 offers an outstanding example of the use of metaphors. Here, the "enemies" of the psalmist are described as dogs, lions and bulls. For discussion purposes, I will quote verses 12-21 of the Psalm:

Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. But you, O LORD, be not far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me. Deliver my life from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen. (NIV)

These metaphors have power in that they are all visual symbols taken from personal experience. The psalmist has seen lions and dogs. He knows about the sword and the horns of the wild oxen. Perhaps the melted wax of a temple candle reminds him of the way he felt his courage melt at the sight of a hungry lion. But who exactly are these enemies? Bernhard W. Anderson offers the common explanations. Some have said that these dogs and strong bulls are evidence of party strife within the Israelite community. Others have suggested that these metaphors describe the enemies of an accused person during a legal investigation. Still others offer that these metaphors are descriptions of the magicians of this day who could cast spells that would cause physical illness.¹⁷

Does it matter if we know? We do biblical study to know as much as we can about the historical situation. Anderson makes it clear that who the enemy is will remain a mystery. The church is left, then, to ask in what way does a psalm like this become the Word of God? If the Word is God's word to us, how do these words to God become sacred? Anderson notes that this is the question Bonhoeffer asked about the psalms and it remains the question for the serious Bible student.

The answer may lie in the language itself. The metaphors and the vagueness of the language of the psalms of lament allow them to live in every generation. As containers for experience, these metaphors invite us to fill the ancient words with meaning from the now. The Word becomes flesh because it becomes the experienced-filled words of the one who prays. Perhaps it is better to say that the ancient words have become God's Word welling up from our soul and pouring out of our mouths even as it was God's Word pouring out of the mouth of David and later, out of the mouth of Jesus. A move to interpret the psalms of lament only in this time is "...a move in precisely the opposite direction from those interpretive efforts that will make the Psalms more responsive to contemporary appropriation."¹⁸

Theological Significance

A full understanding of Israel's theology must include an examination of the role of the psalms of lament. The sheer volume of laments in the Old Testament (over one-third of the book of Psalms is in a lament form) suggests that Israel's theology found significant expression in songs sung blue.

Israel's laments are laments of affliction. Different than laments for the dead, these songs look to the future. More than complaints, these musical poems are testimonies of faith in a God who acts to save. Remembering Noah, remembering Abraham, remembering Moses, remembering Egypt, remembering the judges God provided, Israel is bold to bring this suffering and this need to God.

As Westermann says,

In the lament of affliction the sufferer reaches out for life; he begs that this suffering be taken away. It is the only possibility in life left for him as long as he has breath.¹⁹

So it is that Israel reaches out to God for life. Yet their words of lament cannot explain completely the sense of God's absence experienced by God's people. Anderson rightly observes: "Laments are praises in the time of God's absence, or, stated differently, in the time when his presence is hidden."

The depth of Israel's faith is grasped as each song of lament is experienced. Though God seems hidden, still they pray. Though evil seems to be in control, still they trust. Though enemies surround like dogs and lions, still they praise God for a victory sign.

Perhaps nothing reveals their abiding hope in God like Israel's unwavering confidence in victories they "know" God will provide. It is not enough to ask for these things. Israel celebrates impending victory.

This bold act of faith is experienced fully in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For the Christian, the victory is sure. Still, life must be lived in the reality of disorientation. We can sing the praises of God because the victory is sure. Yet we pray for mercy. When will God bring about the fullness of the Kingdom? How long will God remain silent? In the tension of the already/not yet, God's still, small voice is heard. Faith is rewarded. Hope is reborn. This is the lesson of the song of lament.

So it is that the psalms of lament put us in touch with reality. Reality, however, often is not safe. Once one faces the truth of living, then what? The Hebrews brought their fears and pains directly to the One who had created and redeemed them. The theological power of these psalms is that there is a divine authority and power who is able to hear the screams of injustice and then do something.

Brueggemann says:

What we do know, both from the *structure of the text* and *our own experience*, is that grievance addressed to an authorized partner does free us. That is the insight behind Freud's theory of talk-therapy, that we do not move beyond the repressed memory unless we speak it out loud to one with authority who hears. In our culture we have understood that in terms of one-on-one therapy. We will have to learn that this is true socially and liturgically. These psalms provide important materials for that learning.²⁰

Patrick D. Miller, Jr. says it like this:

So the language is open and inviting. Or perhaps it is available and accessible to those who in any time find themselves in such straits. Indeed, it may be that only such poetic images as these have the power to give expression to the primal scream of pain that arises in the human cry to God.²¹

Here is the power of the psalms of lament. They offer us a form for dealing with the pain in our lives. They validate our experience. They force us to face the reality of our lives. They sweep nothing under the carpet. They open doors and windows to pain and allow the bad air of the experience to pour out. The church must reintroduce the psalms of lament into its life. Doing so invites the healing power of God into the pain of the past.

Psychological Significance

For years, I have contemplated the mystery and wonder of the creation accounts found in the opening chapters of Genesis. What has hooked me most is the gift God gives to humanity. It falls to humankind to name the "beasts." Among other things, the power to name enables humankind to organize experience. Names offer some sense of control. A name means there has been previous experience and some understanding of interaction. When similar "beasts" come along, there will be a past pattern to follow or to alter.

The task of naming is an excellent metaphor for part of the work of the pastoral counselor. When people come for help, often there are unnamed "beasts" in their life. It becomes the task of the counselor to guide a person into naming the beasts. These beasts are not necessarily good or evil - they just are. Sometimes, the person has the name on the tip of their tongue and good questions will help it fall. Other times, the person has no concept of the beast they are encountering. Then, the pastoral counselor can offer a name that may help that person.

The power of naming makes a difference in living. A skillful therapist helped me name the intense emotions I had following my father's death. I had given those feelings names like sadness, frustration, and grief. While all of those feelings were there, it was the anger that was consuming me. Naming that anger unleashed new resources for dealing with this powerful emotion. Trying to treat it as something other than anger left me frustrated.

The work of naming can be understood if we compare the differences of working with an elephant versus a lion. The trainer works differently with these animals because each has a certain way of living out its existence. If I were to learn how to train these animals or deal with them, it would be important to have someone name the animals so that I would have a frame of reference. With this frame of reference, I can begin to develop techniques of training that would be unique to each animal.

People are filled with unnamed beasts. As children, we have all kinds of feelings. But we are too young and too inexperienced to know what these feelings are, let alone deal with them. Early on, we deal with pain and fear by crying. Only as we develop communication skills can we begin to deal with these different sensations. Thus, we learn as we grow older that the pain that we feel in our stomachs is not going to destroy us. We do not need to be afraid of it. Rather, hunger can be addressed by letting our parents know we are hungry. Naming the ache in the stomach "hunger" helps us develop coping techniques that organize our own chaos and keep our beasts under control.

One of the tasks of parents, then, is to help the child name his or her beasts. When the child is small, it is easy to say to them, "You are O.K. You're hungry, aren't you? I know just how to fix that." The child learns that this sensation can be met easily and the word, "hungry," becomes an important part of beast control.

When it comes to the emotional issues of life, things get a bit more complicated. The ability to name emotional beasts may be limited by the parent's own journey into their emotional world. If the parent has a good handle on his or her emotions, he or she can be extremely helpful in naming the various emotions that begin to rage through the young body. If, however, the parent has had limited training in the area of emotional beast training, the child might be misinformed or unaware of the beasts that lurk in the dark recesses of his or her own soul.

Naming beasts, then, is a task of utmost importance. It is the power of language. It is as if the language leads the experience. This thought helps to explain the role of the psalms of lament. These bold, sometimes harsh passages can be seen as the way a person or a nation begins to name its animals. What has happened to the person or the nation is not always explainable. It is, however, nameable. To those who sing these songs of lament, there is a bold confidence that what has been experienced must be brought before the covenant God. Yahweh can hear these things and Yahweh can bring a change.

It is precisely this point that Walter Brueggemann makes in his excellent book, *The Message of the Psalms*. In a section where he discusses the role of the psalms of lament in the life of Hebrew worship, Brueggemann says,

The linguistic function of these psalms [psalms of lament] is that the psalm may evoke reality for someone who has engaged in self-deception and still imagines and pretends life is well-ordered, when in fact....it is not this way until it is said to be this way.²²

Psychologically, then, psalms of lament can bring trauma to the surface. Naming pain gives expression to feelings locked deep in the soul. Knowing an authority exists who will hear and heal allows the one who suffers an opportunity for wholeness. As pastors recognize the power of lament and as they pay attention to the language of those laments, windows to wholeness will open.

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And They Kissed

What is the relationship between the biblical Songs of lament and the therapeutic intervention of David Grove? In the previous chapter, I outlined the various parts of the psalm of lament. While not every piece is contained in every psalm of lament, the pattern is consistent enough to be used as a model for analysis and comparison. In this section, I will attempt to compare the structure of the lament psalms with the structure of the therapeutic model of David Grove.

The following structural parallels can be established:

Psalm of Lament	Grove's Technique
<p>Plea</p> <p>Address God</p> <p>Complaint</p> <p>Petition</p> <p>Motivation for God's action</p> <p>Imprecation</p> <p>Praise</p> <p>Assurance of being heard</p> <p>Fulfillment of Vows</p> <p>Doxology and Praise</p>	<p>Seeking help from therapist</p> <p>Making appointment</p> <p>"What is that like?" (T-1)</p> <p>"And What would you like to have happen?"</p> <p>"And does Jesus want to do that?"</p> <p>"And would a __ be interested in going to a __?"</p> <p>The Declaration</p> <p>"And 'nine' likes having a pencil instead of a knife. And he doesn't have to listen to radio anymore."</p> <p>"And what can nine do with __?"</p> <p>"And does she like that?"</p> <p>"And does she like that?"</p>

While the comparison is one of form, not content, it is possible to see how the content can match up.

First, the desire to heal a hurt is what the address is all about. While it may be dangerous to equate the role of the therapist with God's role, it is not uncommon for those who come to a therapist to expect them to have divine power! In a theological framework, the priesthood of believers can be seen here as the pastoral counselor represents God.

When the parishioner comes to the pastor for the first time, there is a short time of information gathering that focuses on the complaint. "Why are you here?" is a question that is asked in an attempt to find out why the person needs the skills of the pastoral counselor. The length of this time depends on the pain. Some people need to describe their pain in great detail, while others may not be in touch with their pain at all. The role of the pastoral counselor, then, is to hear the complaint. Since the person may not be aware of how things are until they speak them, verbalizing their experience before an "authority" is important.

The next question the pastoral counselor asks is crucial. "What is that like?" This helps the client to name the complaint in a powerful way. It is obvious the client is stuck in a moment of time. As noted in earlier chapters, the metaphorical approach of Grove invites a person to expand that 1/10 of a second of time where the individual may be frozen. By relating detail and giving birth to a metaphor, they are able to discover more about the hurt, and to name what is real for them.

The next question, "And what would you like to have happen?" is a question of petition. If this question of petition is expanded, it may sound like this: "Knowing what you know about that past situation, what would need to happen to make it different and better?" In the religious community, it is natural at this point to ask the question that Grove himself sometimes asks, "And do you have any spiritual resources that could make a difference?" This question is an invitation to the person to pray for God's intervention. If naming the hurt is part of the prayer, then invoking God's activity is certainly a logical next step.

Here, it may be asked if this is a compromise of Grove's prime directive: non-interference. It must be said that this is a bit of a departure from the norm. However, the therapist realizes that if this question is inappropriate, the client will be quick to point it out. In experimenting with this question, I have never found a negative response. I have had a person say, "Jesus is in the room, but he stays in the back ground - watching. I know he cares and wants my best, but he needs to stay there." In another situation, it was Jesus who walked into the bedroom of a frightened six year old to bring relief from fear.

The next part of the plea is the question of motivation for God's action. Often, the person dealing with a metaphor will offer a reason why something will change. It takes various forms, but is usually something like this, "Because little girls shouldn't have to have their daddies touching them that way, Jesus comes and ties up a daddy's hands with rope that's in a knot and that's in my stomach." The client has a sense that what has happened should not have happened. It is this sense of motivation that comes from an internal sense of God-placed "oughtness" that calls the person to offer a reason for change. Because these things should not have happened, God, in a variety of forms of strength, will intervene and change the traumatic memory.

The imprecation section can be understood as the crucial moment in metaphor therapy. This is T, the traumatic moment, and in T, some kind of change or resolution must come about. There is usually a good deal of emotion during T. Though there are often tears, these are cool tears of resolution. But tears they are. A crying person is usually going through a profound psychological moment when the metaphors that contain the healing resources they need are working to "bind" or "heal" what has happened. The Psalmist invites a divine action that would be equivalent to a Grove question, "And would Jesus be interested in taking a rope that's in a knot and in a little girl's stomach and tying up a daddy's hands?" Usually, the response is an emotional "Yes!" Often,

there are tears but frequently there is laughter. Because such a profound sense of change and release is happening, the emotions flow freely. This may be the effect of the imprecation. From here, the lament moves to the time of praise. Coincidentally, Grove refers to T+1 as the time of "declaration." It is here that the metaphors declare their purpose, as they empty themselves of the feelings, memories and resources that have been bottled up for some time. As they declare their work, there is a deep sense of gratitude that something which has bothered the person for years is now released and changed.

It seems that the "assurance of being heard" section of the lament psalm is the moment when the metaphors combine to accomplish their task of healing. Because the therapist has listened so well, the response during this point of intervention is a repeated sense of "yes" and a strong emotional reaction. Suddenly, in the midst of the pain the client is remembering, there are new resources to deal with the woe.

"The Fulfillment of Vows" would seem to reflect the question, "And what can nine do now that daddy's hands are tied?" This is a chance to indicate that change can come and that the nine year old who has been frozen in time can now be free to grow up. Here the client often says things like, "I can leave that house and go outside to play and do what nine year olds should do." It is this sense of being free to do what a nine year old should do that seems to be a fulfilling of the vow of childhood - to experience life and to grow up.

The lament psalm ends with a doxology of praise. Thanks is offered by declaring the plan to sing to God for God has been good. In Grove's model, a similar thing happens at T+1. Having had resolution to a trauma, the client can now talk about what he or she likes. Grove asks specifically, "And does she like that?" and, "And do you like that?" The answer amounts to a declaration of praise and thanksgiving. Of course if the client answers any other way than "yes," the work of the therapist is incomplete and an attempt must be made to finish the work.

What I have attempted to do in this section is to show a structural parallel between the psalms of lament and the therapeutic model of David Grove. While Grove did not base his model on the structure of the lament psalms, there are some striking parallels. What David was doing, what Israel was doing, and what the church today is failing to do, is to sing out the pains of the past in the past so they can be healed in the past by a God who is not limited by time.

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And What Happens Next?

That I have been profoundly impacted by my association with David Grove and my study of the use of biblical songs of lament is obvious. The question that remains concerns the practical application of technique and lament in pastoral work. Knowing that the parish pastor cannot ask everyone he/she sees everyday, "And what would you like to have happen," it has become important for me to find other ways to tap the power of metaphors to help God's people describe and express their faith experience. Knowing, too, that the church resists singing the blues, it seems that the key to this goal is found in a subtle use of metaphors and symbols in all aspects of pastoral ministry.

Worship Experiences

For me, the most exciting place of metaphor and symbol use can occur in the planning of a unique worship experience. In worship, the pastor has a unique opportunity to enliven the metaphors and symbols presented in the Scriptures. In September of 1994, Peace Reformed Church in Eagan, Minnesota, recognized the diversity within its walls. With approximately 750 adults forming the membership, it was decided that different expressions of worship might help all of us grow in the faith. One of the worship expressions is an 8:00 a.m. Sunday service that works to emphasize the symbols and metaphors found in the lectionary passages for the day. Working with a worship planning team that has been "trained" to take special note of symbols and metaphors, services are designed that present the passages in a unique form. What follows are a variety of examples based on the lectionary passages of year B. These services began in the middle of September and continue to provide a unique alternative form of worship for a small but faithful group of worshippers.

- 1) On the seventeenth and eighteenth Sundays of Pentecost, the passages for the day invited people to wash their hands and come before God. Before participating in the supper, people were asked to stop at the communion table where a pitcher of water was poured over their hands. As worship leader and "priest," I dried their hands and encouraged them to celebrate the Supper in the peace that comes in the awareness of God's cleansing presence. Some worshippers eagerly waited for me to dry their hands. Others showed their discomfort by their body language and eye movement. I recognized that for many folks, this represented an act of humility that was difficult to live out.

2) On the twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost, the passages for the day included the story of the restoration of Job's life and fortunes. I had not noticed before that the seven new sons of Job are not named. However, the three daughters have powerful and significant names (One name means "dove," the second one means "cinnamon," and the last one means "precious metal"). The committee decided that these names needed expression in the service. When worshippers entered the sanctuary, they found the table dressed with olive branches (Since the dove symbolizes peace, we felt olive branches made the appropriate transfer from dove). Set in the middle of these branches were two pewter candle stands - symbols of precious metal. In the candle stands were cinnamon scented candles. As a part of the prayer of confession, I noted that Job, upon realizing the greatness of God, repents of his arrogance in dust and ashes. To help the image come alive, we had a container of cinnamon scented "dust" that I poured into a dish as I named categories of sins that we might need to confess. Worship proceeded to communion when to the delight and surprise of the participants, they found the bread was a loaf of cinnamon bread. As an unplanned extra, the tearing of the bread was nearly impossible. It allowed me the chance to talk of the body of Christ being held together in Him and that what God has joined together, the world cannot easily tear apart.

3) The twenty-fourth Sunday confronted us with the story of the widow's mite (Mark 12:38-44). In an attempt to experience the contrast between the widow's gift and those of the Pharisees, we used a funnel shaped metal container. Throughout the service, I repeatedly tossed two coins into the container. The sound was mesmerizing. In the meditation, I talked about the meaning of our two cents. I talked about how the widow no doubt slipped the coins into the offering box as quietly as possible. After sliding two coins in quietly, I took a handful of coins and dropped them slowly and loudly into the container. We marveled at the sound. Following that demonstration, I talked about the sounds of money for us today. We had an old credit card machine on the communion table and I slid the imprint mechanism back and forth. We also

had someone tear out a check. In response, as people came forward for the supper, we invited them to put their offerings for the day and any coins they might have into the container. It was interesting to notice how people put their money in different ways. They carried with them a new sense of the sound of our money.

- 4) On the fourth Sunday of Advent, the Psalm for the day (Psalm 80:1-7) included the phrase, "drink tears by the bowlful." As a part of the prayer of confession, we set bowls of warm salt water around the communion table. We intended to celebrate the supper while sitting around the table, so people were all in a place of easy access to the table. As we entered into the call of confession, I talked about the things that have and ought to make us weep in confession. I invited the worshippers to think about those things in their lives that have caused pain to God and God's people. I asked them to confess in silence and as they did so, I invited them to "taste the tears of confession."

- 5) Perhaps the most dramatic symbolic service we held involved fire. The texts for the third Sunday of Advent introduced us to John the Baptist declaring that the one who would come after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. John also declares that the wheat will be separated from the chaff and burned with an eternal flame. To dramatize and symbolize this powerful passage, we placed the baptismal font near the communion table. On the communion table was a large amount of wheat still in the stalk. In the homily, I spoke of my earlier understanding of the chaff as the "bad" people in the world, but that now I was seeing the chaff as those parts of me that need to be burned away. John speaks to three groups in this passage (Luke 3:7-18) and says, in essence, if you have wealth, share it; if you have power, don't abuse it; and if you have people's trust, honor it. I spoke of these three areas and named my awareness of violating those three things. With each mention of violation, I crumpled up a large piece of tissue paper and put it in the baptismal font. We had placed tissue paper in the pews. At the invitation, worshippers were invited to crumple up tissue that

reflected their own violation of John's guidelines. They came forward and placed them in the baptismal font and returned to their seat. After a prayer, I took fire from the Advent wreath and ignited the tissue paper. It burned for nearly two minutes. The moment was powerful. Unbeknown to the participants, we had placed some incense in the bottom of the font. As the tissue paper burned, it ignited the incense and the fire became a sweet smelling sacrifice.

6) Passages for the second Sunday after the Epiphany in year C bring together several powerful images. Both the Old Testament and the Gospel (Isaiah 62:1-5, John 2:1-11) revolve around the image of a wedding celebration. Playing on that, we set up a worship "celebration" that was full of surprises. The communion table was covered in cloth and place settings were there for all worshippers. Flowers adorned the table and gifts were placed all around. A brunch was prepared and after using the psalm of the day for a call to worship, we sang joyful, children's songs and talked about the celebration of the kingdom. The service continued as we invited people to move from the pews to the table where multi-colored candles were spread around. From the Christ candle in the center, people lit their candle as families, couples or individuals and placed them in the wedding candelabra. While this was being done, a member of our worship team left to get a birthday cake lit with all the candles for another worship team member's birthday. We sang "happy birthday" to her and then to another worshipper whose birthday was a week away. Seated now around the table, we began to eat the brunch. I pointed out that Jesus' first miracle was at a party and that his miracle reflected the abundant joy of the kingdom. With that, we ate and talked and laughed. During the eating, I stood up and spoke the words of institution for the bread. We ate while we finished our brunch. After we had eaten, I took grape juice and filled everyone's juice cup and gave the words of institution. We participated in the cup, remembering that whenever we are together in all the common things of life, it is time to remember and celebrate our Savior's life, death and resurrection. Worshippers were then encouraged to open the gifts scattered around the table. These were books in different languages, a can of mustard seed, dictionaries and thesauruses, and a copy

of a grocery store gossip paper that had predictions for the new year. As they unwrapped them, they realized that these are symbols of the gifts Paul describes in I Corinthians 12, also a part of the passages for the day.

7) At a recent "seeker sensitive" service, the worship leader had people write down things they wanted God to change in them. These uniform pieces of paper were collected and placed on a nail that protruded from the center of the intersection of a small wooded cross. After all pieces had been placed, the worship leader spoke of how God took care of these things on the cross and will transform them in our lives. As he spoke, he lit the paper and let it burn. It smoldered for some time as there was a good deal of paper tightly packed. Within a few minutes, however, it was obvious that this collection of paper had been transformed into what appeared to be a rose. The "ah hah" was heard throughout the sanctuary.

Highly symbolic worship is not for everyone. Our version at 8:00 a.m. rarely has more than 20 people in attendance. Nevertheless, it has become a vital part of the life of the church. Our intention is to invite more of the worshippers to join us in the planning of these services. We believe that living with the texts and then expressing them in worship helps the Word become flesh in us. We have found that planning such services does not take a great deal of time. The planning does, however, invigorate. The symbols from these services enable us to carry the worship with us both before and following the services.

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Prayers

Prayer offers a unique opportunity for pastors to model the use of metaphorical language. The words of a prayer can go with people for the rest of their lives. In a worship service during the visit of a senior pastor candidate, I lead the congregational prayer. In it, I said, "Lord, let this family wrestle with our call and yours. May they realize that there are no winners or losers, even if they leave this time with a limp." Those words struck a cord. Months later, the pastor identified them as being "helpful in the process." Prayers that heal, prayers that lift the spirit, prayers that move people from here to there use the language of the poets. For this reason I usually write my prayers. They are poems that need to be written before they can be shared. What follows is a short collection of prayers for various occasions. Though I may not pray these prayers as they are written, they may provide the reader with some seed of thought for writing prayers that offer containers for the experiences of the worshipping community.

Natural Disaster:

God, you who are a mighty wind and a still small voice, speak to us in the midst of the storm that rages all around us. With the devastation known to many of our church family this week, we have found little time to feel the gentleness of your Holy Spirit blowing in our hearts. Open the windows of our soul, and breathe in us once again the breath of life.

Job Shortage

Holy God, you labored six days and then rested. Many in this room have rested six days and worked only one. The times of our lives are such that while we pray for our daily bread, we experience daily dread. Our families are hungry and our hope is nearly gone. Pour out your mercy on us like a soothing salve to a wounded soul. Heap up hope in us like mounds of fruit from our labors.

Offertory

We bring these gifts to you, O God, knowing that you are the giver of all gifts. Your abundance is like the piles of freshly fallen snow we see all around us. Like that snow, we do not always know where to go with your blessings. The abundance is overwhelming. Give us wisdom to take these gifts and use them to brighten a drab world.

Confession

Lord, our hearts are heavy like rocks. We know the weight of our sin and we feel the load of our guilt. Our backs are bent from carrying this load too long. We need a helping hand. We know our responsibility, but we are not able to bear the burden of our own behavior. Remove this load from us and give us a yoke that fits perfectly and a load that is just right.

Confession

From the wilderness of our sin, we call to you, O God. For we wander aimlessly looking for you. Our mouths raise complaints when we should praise. Our eyes see only what we do not have and miss the splendor of being in the wilderness. Our sacrifices and our acts of piety do not satisfy us and do not impress you. Shine your holy fire in the sky once again so that we can move into the promises of life you have in store for us.

Confession

O Christ, you who came to set the captive free, we are ensnared by our sin. Our hands are bound and our legs cannot move. Everywhere we go, we drag a burden of guilt. Yet you call us to run and not get weary, to walk and not grow faint. You promise that we will soar with the eagles. Unshackle our feet and untie our arms. Give us a vision that sets our spirits free to fly.

Invocation at a funeral

The grief we know today, Lord, chokes us like the hands of the enemy. We cannot breathe and we cannot swallow. There is no where to go to escape this threat but to you. With your strong arm and your sure hand, remove the strangle hold from us. May our own weak hands that hang at our side like string become straight and raised up to praise you for your goodness once again.

Invocation

Lord, increase our faith. We feel so frail in our trust. The bridge between us is strong in Christ. The dividing walls of hostility have been removed. Yet we fail to live the truth. Come under us to lift us up. Come beside us to steady us. Come from above us to guide us. Come from behind to catch us when we fall.

At a graduation

God of knowledge, these young people before us have filled their minds with the things of this world. They know and understand more than they ever thought they could. They can unravel mysteries in seconds. Their dreams for the future are filled with images of success and triumph. We ask you to bless them richly today. May this graduation mark not the end of their learning but a critical first step. May they reach for the highest star. May they not be afraid to fail and fall, for it is these things that teach us more than anything. May they learn that all knowledge is a gift from you and that there is a huge difference between knowledge and wisdom. As their knowledge grows, so may their wisdom. In the garden of life they find themselves in today, may they not be surprised by the thorns yet undiscovered. May they cause a light to shine on the dark parts of humanity through the accomplishments they have made and will make. May the chests of the parents and family that are nearly bursting with pride today be ready to be a chest to be leaned on when future challenges cause them to rethink their future. May you be praised through it all. Amen.

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Life Transitions in the Church

At the closing of a church

We have planted.

And we have watered.

There has been an increase.

And there has been a harvest.

The weeds of life have reared their heads.

And we have been patient to let them grow until the end.

The storms of life have risen against us.

And we have held secure.

But the sun has set on our vision.

Our ears no longer vibrate with the sound of call.

Our hearts no longer beat to the needs of this community.

Our hands are weary.

Our heads ache.

Our feet no longer carry good news to this place.

We are tired.

We rest from our labors to join others in labor for the kingdom.

From this death, O God, bring resurrected life.

From this ending, bring a new beginning.

May your kingdom come. Amen.

At the ending of a ministry program

It is here that many of us first felt the power of your Word.

It is here that we have lifted prayers for your kingdom.

It is here that we have blessed our gifts.

It is here that we have prayed for new gifts.

Here, the foundation of our faith was laid.

Here, the work of the kingdom was reviewed and renewed.

Here, the children of the kingdom saw the miracle of grace in action.

Here, we broke bread together.

Now, O God, these things end.

We move on, with some pain and with some joy.

We delight in the past and cast a vision for the future.

May your work rise like a phoenix from the ashes of this program now burned out.

May new methods and new enthusiasm be found for the workings of your kingdom.

At a divorce, the pastor might pray with one or both parties

Lord, what you have joined together has been torn asunder. Like a fragile twig, our marriages face the buffeting of the wind and the attacks of the world. Sometimes we are not able to endure the pressure and we snap like dry twigs. The pain cuts like a knife. There is hurt by the bowlful. And we have come to remember this relationship that was once blessed by you.

Bless these two as they are no longer one. Work your surgery to untangle the tumors of hate that still may be wrapped about them. Help them to release each other and themselves from the tentacles of guilt that so often follow a broken relationship.

Lord, no couple gets married expecting to get divorced. So for the loss of a dream, for the loss of a hope, we pray for new dreams and new hope. Help them soon to come to a time when they

will see the joy of their past as well as their pain. May they know healing in their minds and in their hearts. May they find, if it is in your will, a new chance to love again. Having learned from this relationship, may new relationships and new friendships be filled with the love they once dreamed about together.

We know that their memories will always be filled with thoughts of their relationship. And we know that they will love each other in ways and places for the rest of their lives. Let them celebrate the gift of that love even as they fill their hearts and minds with new gifts of love. Amen.

(The pastor, with a stick in his/her hand, then breaks the stick and invites one or both to say:)

We have loved and we have shared our lives, but the relationship we dreamed of has not materialized. Our vows we break and our lives we separate before God and before our families. Remembering the pain but also remembering the joy, we release each other to love again.

At a baptism

In the beginning, your Spirit hovered over the waters. In the midst of chaos, you called for the security that light can bring. We ask that your spirit brood once again over the water in this font. The world of darkness has often blocked your light from our lives. We would ask that you would speak your word of light now and always in the life of this child we bring before you. Wash the darkness of sin away. Remove the stain of sin that covers the brightness of life in you. May your Word become a lamp to his/her feet and a light to his/her path. May his/her parents reveal new colors of that light throughout his/her days. May the church be the rainbow of promise that reveals your abiding presence and continuing peace now and always. This we pray through Christ our Lord, Amen.

And

God of promise, you called Abraham and placed on him the mark of your marriage to humanity.

For generations, your people have marked themselves with the symbol of your love. Today we gather with your people once again to place upon this child your mark of love. Place that mark deep in his/her soul. May s/he always remember his/her baptism. May it guide him/her like a lighthouse on a foggy morning. May it comfort him/her like a warm blanket on a winter's night. May it inspire her like the songs of the angels at the birth of the Christ child. May it give her rest like the rest a child knows in the arms of a loving parent.

The arrival of a new pastor

Lord, we are people without a leader.

Here am I Lord, use me.

We are sheep without a shepherd.

Here am I Lord, use me.

We are potential needing guidance.

Here am I Lord, use me.

We are branches on the vine of life producing little fruit.

Here am I Lord, use me.

We are voices that need a choir director.

Here am I Lord, use me.

We are eyes that no longer have a vision.

Here am I Lord, use me

As the pastor leaves

I have tried to love you as Christ has loved us.

And we have felt that love.

I have tried to lift your burden when it was heavy.

And we have felt that burden shared.

I have tried to impress on you the honor of your call.

And we have heard it.

I have tried to share with you the strength of the Spirit.

And we have felt our arms strengthened.

I have tried to comfort you when thorns afflicted you.

And we have known relief.

I have tried to fill your minds with the fruit of the Spirit.

And we have tasted the goodness of our God.

I have tried to model the most excellent way.

And we have seen your example.

As you leave us, may the wind always be at your back. May you find light for your journey, food to strengthen you, and joy to lift you when you fall.

I take many memories with me. Your secrets are locked in my heart and your joys will be shared like flowers on a hillside.

TOGETHER: MAY THE GRACE OF CHRIST OUR SAVIOR AND GOD'S BOUNDLESS LOVE REST UPON US FROM ABOVE. AMEN.

At a funeral

Giver of life, Lord of the resurrection, we gather with eyes swollen and backs bent. Our lungs burn with grief. Our eyes do not turn and our feet do not move. Our hearts are broken. God of healing and God of hope, you who brought back to resurrected life your Son, Jesus Christ, bring back to us the spark of life and the spark of hope of resurrected life.

We remember our loved one as one who stitched bold marks into the tapestry of our lives.

Written on our minds and hearts are memories colored with his/her love. We live our lives surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. Today, that number has increased by one that we know well. We give thanks for the clear picture of the kingdom we have seen in _____ . May we hold that image before us and others as we seek to live out your kingdom today and always.

Personal Counseling and Pastoral Care

One of the surprising things about metaphors is that often just giving them life helps the person who is stuck. In this section, I will offer some actual brief contacts that produced metaphors. These metaphors offer a transport for pain. What is named and imbedded in the body has now found an avenue for escape.

Marsha

After a long conversation, she said, "I just have so much guilt." I responded with, "This may seem like an odd question, but can you tell me where you feel that guilt?"

Well yes, it is in my chest...in my heart. That's weird. I never thought of it that way before. It's just a heavy burden that keeps my heart from beating freely.

And how is that different from where you believe that you are forgiven.

That's in my head. But it isn't very connected to my heart.

Its interesting to think about the ways that the blood vessels from our heart can go to our head and the ones from our head go to our heart so that we can begin to trade information....and maybe you just need to think about that for awhile.



Bob

When that business deal went bad, where, in your body, did you feel it?

It was right in my stomach. The lower part. It was just like a black long egg. It was there and I couldn't do a thing about it. But I never thought of it that way until just now.



Frank - following a biopsy

When it hurts, where does it hurt?

Right here where they did the surgery. But it hurts on the other side just as much now. It is like a fire.

A fire?

Yes. I don't know what will put it out. The Doctors keep giving me this medicine that I think makes it worse. So I quit. He said it may take a year for the pain to stop.

I hope that as the medicine drains out of your body, the fire goes down and down.



Patty

What is that fear like?

It's like a big cloud that hangs over me all the time.

How old are you when you have a cloud like that?

About nine.

What would you wish that cloud would do?

I wish it could become a blanket. But it would be a scratchy blanket and I couldn't turn out the light with that blanket on.

So what would help?

Jesus could bring a light like a candle and set it in the window and that would help me sleep.

And will Jesus do that.

Yes!

(Following this encounter, I purchased a small candle for her and gave her a note that said, "I'm not Jesus, but I can bring some light.")



Rick

When you think about what is stopping you, where are you stopped?

In my chest.

When it is in your chest, what is it like?

Like a finger or a fist pushing on the middle of my chest.

(This discussion lead us to a more formal session that followed Grove's protocol. We found that the fist that pushed in the middle of his chest belonged to his father. As that fist moved, it became a loving, encouraging hand on his shoulder.)



Joyce

I have so much anger inside. It's just a fireball, that's what it is.

And what would that fireball like to do?

It would like to burn up everything that is near it.

And what would be the first thing that it would like to burn up?

The bridge! It could burn up the bridge.

And can it burn up the bridge.

Yes! And that's just what needed to happen!

And what happens next?

I turn away from the bridge for the first time and I'm able to look to my future instead of always looking back at the past. But it is dark and cloudy in the future.

(She continues to move away from that bridge. As time has passed, she can barely see the bridge but recognizes how important it is for her to move away from it.)



Grove is fond of saying that giving birth to metaphors is sometimes all we need to do. Each of the encounters above gave birth to metaphors. Whether these metaphors brought any kind of change, I cannot be sure. I do know, however, that the response to these questions was immediate. There was an urgency in their contact with me that makes me believe each person had a new container for his or her experience. If that container helps them carry their load with more ease, than I consider the contact highly significant.

Pastoral Calls

The pastor making hospital or in-home calls has a chance to help those with physical pain give a description of that pain that connects to their experience. The Apostle Paul is famous for his description of some form of malady that he termed "a thorn in my flesh." What that thorn was has been the subject of great discussion and debate. The truth is that we will never know. What is also true, however, is that we have a helpful image of Paul's pain through his metaphor. A thorn in the flesh is his way of describing an experience that continues to torment.

The pastor will want to be sensitive to such metaphors when making calls. What follows are a few examples of the metaphors people have used when I have visited them. While it may seem difficult to measure what difference reference to these metaphors makes, I believe that work in metaphors is often subversive. We can plant, but we may not be able to water. We can give birth to the metaphor, but we may not be able to watch it grow. Nevertheless, I am convinced that these descriptive phrases can help parishioners who have become patients manage their pain.

Hospital Visits

Recently, I visited an elderly woman in the hospital who was being checked for kidney stones. When I asked her what the pain was like, she said it was, "just like someone took a knife and stabbed it right in my side and it went all the way through."

I was faced with a choice. Normally, I would have said little about her description and would have tried to move the conversation along to what the doctors intended to do next. This time, however, I decided to take a risk. So, I said, "Wow, what kind of knife causes pain like that?" She responded immediately with, "It's just like a big, black handled butcher knife."

With that response, I faced another choice. Do I pursue such a comment or do I let the birth of that image suffice? I decided that for the time being it was enough. I let the moment linger and not long after I ended the visit with a prayer that God would "dull" that "stabbing pain."



A man who had been run over by a tractor described the pain as being "like having a house sitting on your lap." Had I been more aware, I would have said, "How glad I am that you can be in this healing house. I hope that you can soon be sitting in your home and getting some good old cooking. "



From time to time, those we visit are fighting fevers. It is interesting to hear the various ways those fevers are described. Some say, "I'm on fire." Others say, "I'm burning up." I've also heard, "It's just like someone has dipped me in boiling oil." What does the pastor say to such comments? In the person's experience, there are memories of times when he/she was very hot. No doubt they are connecting the fever in their body with the burning they have once felt on the outside of their body. So, it seems appropriate to affirm that kind of heat. "That sounds like a very hot fire (oil)." It would be appropriate to follow up that comment with a phrase like, "And whereabouts do you feel that fire when you're on fire?" If the patient does not respond, it is clear that the metaphor does not "take." However, more times than not, the person will know exactly where it is.

Localizing the pain and giving it dimension can be helpful. It could be helpful to ask someone who has had serious stomach problems, "How big is that pain in your stomach?" Or, "Would pain like that have any color or shape?" Or, "About how big would a pain like that pain be?" Here again, the patient will be the guide. If they are responsive to such questions, it is the responsibility of the visitor to follow up. Interrogating the metaphors may help the sufferer find the resources necessary to cope.



When there is anxiousness waiting for a surgery or for a biopsy, it can be very helpful to ask good questions of the patient. It may be necessary to explain to them that the questions you ask may seem unusual, but that they are a way to help pass some time. Often, people are most anxious for anything that will help the wait go faster. On one occasion not long ago, I sat with a woman who was facing a biopsy. In her nervousness, she told me she had a huge knot in her stomach. She knew of my interest in such metaphors, but I had not explained in detail. I asked her if she thought it would be helpful to talk about the knot. She said she didn't think it could hurt. I began the conversation by asking her to think about that knot. As she did, I asked what kind of knot that knot could be. It turned out to be the kind of knot that is on a Christmas present (It was the season). It was located in the middle of her stomach and it had ropes that reached all over her stomach so that it pulled things tight. I asked if there were any resources that could come to her aid. At first there were none. Then, I asked if Jesus could help. Jesus could! He brought a big pair of scissors that could cut only three strands of the rope. But that was enough to help her relax. She could see those three strands on the floor and the rope had begun to loosen.

Education

Is there a way to use metaphors in education? Certainly so. The style will not be identical to what Grove does, nor will it always be in the form of a lament. However, I can see how a passage studied could include a time of reflecting on a group metaphor. Suppose, for example, the class lesson for the day formed around the theme of justification. Appropriate Scriptures from Leviticus and Romans could be read or shared in smaller groups. The meaning of justification can be fully explained by the teacher using charts and illustrations. However, if the experience of justification is going to become real, it may be a metaphor that helps it happen.

In a recent class, I asked people what they thought of when they heard the word "justification." I did this following an intense study of this subject. Those in the group came up with different metaphors. It was not long before someone said that they thought of a court room they had seen when they were a teenager. We went from that image to adding pieces of the court room. I asked about the size and shape of the gavel of the judge. I asked about the lighting and the sounds of that room. Someone pointed out the court recorder who read back everything that had been said by the "defendant." After the courtroom description was complete, I asked them how the concept of being justified changed the picture. Someone immediately volunteered that though they had been standing before the judge with their hands hand cuffed behind their back, Jesus just walked into the room, unlocked the cuffs, and put them on himself. Not only was the person now free, but they ran out of the courtroom and never looked back! That is a new image of justification that none of us will forget.



My suspicion is that metaphors would be most effective in young peoples' meetings. My own teenagers regularly demonstrate active imaginations. I would think that using the parables with them could be especially effective. For a resource (perhaps for the teacher only), I have found John Timmer's book on the parables, *The Kingdom Equation*, to be excellent. Timmer helps us think about the meaning of the metaphors used in the parables. In fact, he refers to parables as "story metaphors."²³ Equally helpful is the study guide written by Andy DeJong. For example, in the study guide on the parable about the messianic banquet, DeJong sharpens the focus of this lesson by asking, "Who, in our culture, are the poor, the lepers, the oppressed women, the diseased, the 'least of these' to whom Jesus often referred in his teaching? Who are the powerful, the prestigious?"²⁴

Later, De Jong asks good questions about the metaphor of the kingdom as a party. Here is the spring board for a youth meeting. What images come to kids' minds when they hear the word "party?" Having the kids visualize one of their favorite parties and describing or drawing a symbol of it might be very powerful. If the transfer could be made that the Kingdom of God is somewhat like a huge party, the appeal of the Kingdom might greatly increase. It could be powerful to ask the kids to describe what things about their favorite party need to be at the party God throws for the people of God.



One of the more powerful experiences I have had with a teaching metaphor occurred during one of the worship services at Western Seminary during orientation to the Doctor of Ministry program. At that service, Sonja Stewart told the parable of the mustard seed. As she did, she rolled out a tree and asked us to think about what that tree might look like. She continued to talk about the way a seed grew and became a tree and how birds could come along and make a nest in it. As she did, she placed several nests in the tree and talked about the different birds that might come and make a home in that tree. As the time for worship ended, I was high into the tree! That experience happened nearly six years ago, but the power of it remains with me. This is the kind of teaching that involves both sides of the brain and allows more than one or two senses to be involved with the learning. When a teacher considers the power of this technique, it might be important to allow time after each presentation to let the students imagine the metaphors being mentioned. The psalms easily lend themselves to this technique. However, all parts of the Scriptures lend themselves to metaphors. Talking about the tree of knowledge of good and evil, talking about the crossing of the Jordan River, the ark of the covenant, the palace of King David - all of these things lend themselves to the imagination of the student. Letting that imagination work will cement these lessons to the minds of those who choose to wrestle with them.

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Sermonizing

The preaching of the Word offers a unique opportunity to present the hope of the Gospel in fresh forms. Well-crafted metaphors imbedded in the sermon will tap into unknown reservoirs of both pain and joy. I recall a sermon I preached entitled "Angry Prayers." In it, I identified the things that make me angry. I modeled how I sometimes lift my anger to God in prayer. In a way that caught some off guard, I yelled at God during the sermon as I named some of the personal and societal things that cause me to feel anger. Based on Habakkuk 1, I felt that echoing the words of the prophet made the sermon alive for those who were angry at God but felt afraid to express that anger. In the sermon, I talked about that anger as being like a burning fire in the pit of my stomach and an ache like a long sword in my heart. People experienced the model I provided and responded positively to that image. At a recent Elders' meeting, we received into membership a young woman who named that sermon as a time when she finally felt connected to God. It was, she said, my modeling of anger at God that gave her permission to feel what she had been denying. She came to confess her faith in a God who is big enough to handle her anger.



The rise of the symbolic/liturgical worship experience at Peace Church has affected the other worship leaders at the church. During the last week of 1994, our church building was vandalized. The vandals broke through a window with a brick that was left as a reminder. During the worship the following Sunday, the preaching pastor began his message by showing us all the brick and talking about how it could be used for good or evil. Because this was the actual brick that was part of the break in, he said it needed redemption, as did all involved with this violation. So, he placed the brick on the middle of the communion table and asked us to love and pray for vandals, for the Kingdom of God is made up of just such folks. I was surprised by the strong emotional response this action generated in me. It convinced me once again that symbolic action is important in worship.



At a child's funeral which I did a number of years ago, we took time to do several things. First, as friends of the child came to the funeral home, we passed them pictures and colors to use during the service. Then, during the meditation, we invited the children to color pictures that reminded them of Emily. We collected them later and gave them to the mother of the little girl as a symbol of the way her daughter had impacted other children. Then, (this was when the environmental impact was not as big of a concern) we took the children to the cemetery for the burial. Waiting for them at the cemetery was a large bunch of helium balloons. As we did the liturgy for the committal, we passed out balloons to each child. When we spoke of Emily's spirit finding rest in God, we invited the children to release those balloons as a prayer of thanks to God for the life of little Emily who had impacted us all. It was one of the happiest and saddest times I have experienced.



What I have attempted to do in this section is offer a few examples of metaphors in the day to day business of being a pastor. The world of metaphor awaits brave souls. Nestled in each one may be a key element for bringing hope and healing to a hurting world. Metaphors have and may again take the church to the plains of healing God intended. Metaphors are everywhere. If we have eyes to see and ears to hear, they are there. As Grove is fond of saying, with some apologies to George Lucas of *Star Wars* fame, "Metaphors be with you!"

May It Be So

It is my firm conviction that the church must reclaim its healing ministry. That ministry is deeply rooted in the Scriptures. The Bible still speaks to the anxiousness of people. In a form familiar to the faithful, our forbearers sang of their sorrow. It was the verbalizing of that pain that brought healing. It is the verbalizing of that pain that will bring healing. The pastoral counselor's challenge is to find a form of verbalization that invites healing rather than reinducing trauma.

I propose that the model defined by David Grove be coupled with the biblical songs of lament. As Grove suggests, wounds of the past need to be healed in the past. Childhood wounds can only be healed as the person revisits the past. To revisit the past without re-traumatizing the person, the sensitive pastoral counselor will be drawn to the use of metaphor - the language of a child. Once the source wound has been discovered, the lament needs to occur. As pain from the past is articulated, the words themselves bring healing into the present.

It is this form of healing that the ancients used to heal their wounds. As Israel gathered to worship, the painful memories were given life through metaphors. As these metaphors carried healing to the past, the people of God found new hope for the future.

The church of today, however, shies away from lament. Is it fear of the pain or fear of the healing? Have we covered our sins and our miseries so deep with positive and possibility thinking that the roots of our anxiety cannot be healed?

Pastors and pastoral counselors must rise up and call the church to sing a new song. It is a song of lament at night that in the morning becomes a song of light. We must resist the temptation to say "Peace, peace" when there is no peace. There are hundreds of "Jims" that sit in our pews week after week. They come looking for a word of life but rarely hear it. It may be that they cannot hear it because the speaker has not first heard the hurt. If the model offered in this paper is adopted, perhaps a new age of healing in the life of the church could be born.

Before this can happen, however, the pastors themselves must face their own pain. I have served on the Pastoral Relations Committee of two Classes. This experience has made me keenly aware of the wounded children living inside our leadership. Unequipped or unprepared to deal with these wounds, the pastors behave in ways often consistent with an abused child. New efforts must be made by pastoral relations committees and pastors themselves to find ways to bring these wounds forward.

In my years of ministry, I have been surprised by how often ministers' gatherings turn into seasons of lamenting. Pastors lament broken relationships with parishioners and peers. They are surprised by the "uncaring" of the congregation and are angry at apparent rejections. They feel lonely and unappreciated. Perhaps pastors are looking for healing from the congregation. Such a search is usually disappointing. Only as the pastor feels the healing that comes from within by the grace of God can s/he offer the kind of healing the parishioner seeks. Perhaps it is time for our clergy to attend a new education experience. Rather than learning "the seven secrets to successful church growth," maybe we need to send pastors to retreats of healing. At such a retreat, pastors could find new strength that would free them from the wounds of their own past.

As newly healed agents of healing, these pastors could then bring the gift of healing to the hurting masses.

The church must embrace its healing ministry. We must be convinced that there is hope for healing that is offered through God's Spirit and sealed through God's Son. Then, we will begin to know the kingdom here on earth. We will know the day in which there is no dawning and no sunset.

May it be so.

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