

The Methodist Church – Ministries: Vocations and Worship Team

Some resources to support mental health and well-being, April 2020

We are conscious that, during this time, you are supporting people through all kinds of difficulties, challenges and unprecedented anxieties. Though you're used to being with and alongside others in illness, bereavement, the end of life, and amid mental health difficulties, the scope and scale of Covid-19 are new, and challenging, and potentially overwhelming. We're also aware of the cost to those who care right now, including clergy, as we seek to be alongside others, to offer support and comfort, and to minister the peace of Christ, "which passes all understanding". It's not an easy time. Nor do we know yet what sort of reality or 'normality' we'll be returned to when we move into the next phase of the outbreak, or the kinds of resulting questions – grief, anxiety, challenges to faith and to well-being – which we'll be facing.

The following is in two parts: firstly, a list of resources and signposts to them which we hope might be helpful to you in your ministry. It isn't comprehensive, and we hope to continue to add to it. It isn't a set of endorsements or approvals either: but rather a collection of a varied suite of resources which others have found useful, and recommended. We hope that they'll offer some wisdom to people of every theological conviction and ministerial approach and context. As you engage with them, we also hope they'll offer insight and wisdom, but also foster some core *practices* which help to ground and orient you and those you care for in life and ministry. It's important in this not to despise what may seem obvious – things like:

- ✓ Getting outside: obviously for daily exercise, but also simply to ensure that you have fresh air and on sun on your face (weather permitting!). Those with a little outdoor space of their own at home are finding themselves, often to their own surprise, enjoying gardening more and more. Jill Baker, former Vice President of the Conference, has written a specially commissioned reflection on this which you can find on her [blog here](#) (there's lots of other wonderful material there, too!).
- ✓ Poetry, as a way to allow your own experience to be reflected in and refracted through others' insights and perspectives. There are some suggestions for that in the booklist. You may also find writing poetry helpful.
- ✓ Music: making it, listening to it, singing a hymn every morning – one consultant in compiling this wrote: "If Methodism was born in song, isn't it also natural that music might be a vital part of our coping mechanisms? It may mean joining some of the excellent online singing groups which are leaping into action now, it may just be singing a hymn aloud each morning: but it might really help!"
- ✓ And, of course: prayer. Again, there are some helpful resources for that below, but also a growing wealth of online resources to help us to pray together, or to join in with others' prayers when we feel we need carrying in that way. Cliff College offer daily prayers every morning on Facebook; Wesley House Cambridge are live-streaming their daily prayer too. If you need other suggestions, get in touch.
- ✓ One minister said how helped he'd been by this piece of wisdom, seen online: 'You are not working from home: this is a global crisis so you are staying home and trying to work. Don't work longer hours to compensate for a feeling of lower productivity, and don't set unreasonable targets'. It's really important not to place ourselves under too

much pressure, or to expect too much. *Be kind to and gentle with yourself!* Just as you need to boundary your space, to make room for work and rest, be mindful of your time too: you can't be permanently 'available'. Could you work with colleagues in circuit or nearby, or ecumenically, to publish an 'on call' rota, or to ensure ample space for check-in and mutual care (as you do already in 'normal' times)?

One set of questions we're facing in these days, of course, is *vocational* in nature: things which go to heart of who we are, and how we understand ourselves and our work. Some of the theological reflection to which those questions lead might include:

- ❖ Our understanding of our calling to Word and Sacrament may have come almost instinctively, although honed over time, and now when we cannot express that calling in ways we always have done, we can feel adrift. This may have a significant impact on our sense of self and therefore it is important that we can find ways to create some space to *be* as well as do, to *contemplation* as well as action: there are some ideas and resources for that below.
- ❖ What kind of God called you to ordained ministry? Is your picture of God the same as this now or different? If different in what ways?
- ❖ Remembering that God created you and loves you, as God gazes at you now, what does God see? Can you see yourself as God sees you? What is your response to God, knowing that God sees you as you truly are?
- ❖ What are the images of God which you are currently connecting with? Might there be time and space at the moment, or in coming days, to re-engage with books and writers whose ideas have helped you here?
- ❖ Ignatian spirituality teaches us about spiritual reflection on, and pathways through, times of consolation and times of desolation. This teaching shares with us that it is best not to make major decisions in times of desolation. There's a wealth of material available on this, and the books in the list below by Margaret Silf and Timothy Gallagher particularly reflect this tradition and its wisdom.

The second part is a set of theological reflections and resources on ministry in a time of trauma, created by Deacon Eunice Attwood out of her own significant experience in charge of an ICU, as a Methodist Deacon and pioneer minister, and as a pastoral theologian and teacher. Eunice is currently on the faculty at The Queen's Foundation in Birmingham.

Above all, we want you to know that you're not alone. If you need something else, or different, let us know and we will try to help. In the days ahead, we will all need to be kind and gentle with ourselves, to draw on our own wisdom and self-knowledge about how best to care for others and ourselves, and to draw boundaries where we need to. It's important to know when to refer others to those with more specialist skills and training in this area, and it's important too to know when we need to step back and spend time with God, and in rest and renewal. We hope that something in what follows is useful to you in the coming season.

Part One: Resources

Spiritual Direction and Retreats

There's a guide to finding a spiritual director in the UK [here](#), on the Prayer Eleven website.

The London Centre for Spiritual Direction (<https://www.lcsd.org.uk>) offers resources and spiritual directors for those located in the South East.

The Cenacle Sisters specialise in spiritual direction: <http://www.cenaclesisters.co.uk/spiritual-direction>

The ecumenical Retreat Association (<http://www.retreats.org.uk>), of which the Methodist Church is a member group via Reflect (Methodist Spirituality) have a page of online Spirituality resources for use at this time (<http://www.retreats.org.uk/online-resources>).

The Jesuit retreat centre, St. Beuno's, has a number of offerings, including that of speaking directly to a spiritual guide: see <https://www.pathwaystogod.org/org/st-beunos>

Online Community

If you're a Facebook user, you may find their material on using Facebook for churches and faith communities useful. You can find that [here](#) and [here](#), on the Signposts webpage.

The Sheldon Community offers all manner of resources for those in ministry, especially in times of crisis. You can sign up for their work at <https://www.sheldon.uk.com> and it includes the Sheldon Hub, an online forum-based community: <https://www.sheldonthub.org>.

The Sheldon Hub is a mature ecumenical online community of practice for people in ministry. It includes a range of forums and an easily searchable bank of shared resources. There are lots of conversations sharing everything from Anxiety to Zoom: because no-one should have to do ministry alone. It's a confidential space for mutual support – your identity is checked when you join but then you can post anonymously if you wish. Give care, take care, share care.

Church, Denominational and Faith Community Resources

The Arthur Rank Centre has a long history of working alongside rural churches and communities, and offers many resources, including some aimed at loneliness and isolation: <https://arthurrankcentre.org.uk>

Rev. David Alderman, Superintendent of the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Methodist Circuit, has collated some very valuable advice and guidance on his blog, [here](#). The circuit workplace chaplain, Matt Albury, has created mindfulness meditations, available [here](#).

There are some helpful guides on The Church of England's website, including a 13-day set of reflections with 'have a go' exercises: <https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-action/mental-health-resources>

Local community organisations are offering a wealth of examples, wisdom and varied approaches, often under the umbrella and through the shared energy of groups like Citizens UK. [Here's one example](#) of a local interfaith response. And [here's work](#) being done by Citizens on creating Mental Health Champions during the pandemic.

Methodist ministers in particular (but others too) may find valuable resources and information produced by the Church's well-being team. These are more about ministerial well-being, but some will also be applicable to the support we're offering to church members and those in our communities: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/wellbeing>. Don't forget too the Churches' Ministerial Counselling Service: <http://www.cmincs.net>

In addition, supervision is now a key resource, and a critical place to have room to reflect on ministry, especially in the midst of this. Don't forget the extra training materials and guidance available on [the Supervision page](#) of the MCB website, and also the various models and tools available in *Responsible Grace*, the Connexional training pack.

Spring Harvest have offered [this interesting conversation](#) about Church leadership in these days and [this one](#) about self-care and caring for those in caring roles.

The Susanna Wesley Foundation is curating some thoughts, including Emma Pavey's reflection, *Fruits of the Lockdown*, [here](#). Their research associate Dr. Kathryn Kissell is producing a series of videos on 'A Differentiated Life'. Kathryn is a counselling psychologist and researcher. You can find her 'online therapy sessions' [here](#).

Take Time (<https://taketime.org.uk>) is facilitated by Clive McKie, a Methodist minister, and is a project of Reigate Methodist Church and the Redhill & East Grinstead Methodist Circuit. The site offers access to a wealth of Biblical meditations.

The World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM) are worth visiting at <http://wccm.org>. There is an online retreat offering a contemplative path through the crisis, and also an online school of meditation. You can also download a WCCM app for a mobile phone, and have the WCCM send 'Daily Wisdom' articles via e-mail.

The YourNeighbour.org website seeks to connect local churches to those in their communities most in need of help and support, and with other local Christians. <https://yourneighbour.org/>

General (non-Church) Resources

Anxiety UK are able to provide guidance on and access to some therapeutic help, among other things: <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk>

The Blurt Foundation works alongside those suffering from depression: lots available on their website: <https://www.blurtitout.org>

Headspace (<https://www.headspace.com>) offers a wealth of material on mindfulness, meditation and dealing with stress, including simple exercises and programmes.

Mental Health at Work offer lots of ideas, approaches and strategies with wide applicability: <https://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk>. It also draws together a wide range of pieces of advice and guidance about the current crisis.

The Mental Health Foundation may be a good, all-round, first port of call. Information, help, connections and resources are all on their website: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk>

For over 60 years, MIND have been offering support and help to those all over the UK with mental health challenges: <https://www.mind.org.uk>

The NHS's *Every Mind Matters* website is a very helpful, interactive, tool, accessible and clear: <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters>

The NHS also offers a set of webpages, guides and pathways for its own personnel, but which they are more than happy for clergy to access too and register for: <https://people.nhs.uk>. Most of the online content is accessible for non-NHS staff. We are grateful to them for sharing this resource.

There may also be ways in which you can partner with your local NHS Mental Health Trust, perhaps as a consortium of community groups: they are currently being encouraged to form and/or deepen such collaboration. You can find a list of all 58 trusts in England [here](#), of the 7 NHS Trusts in Wales [here](#), the Community Mental Health Teams in Wales [here](#), and the 14 Scottish regional NHS boards [here](#).

Outside Online may seem like an unlikely source of help and advice: but try [this article](#) about creating a "Psychological First Aid Kit".

The Royal College of Psychiatrists has a very helpful website (<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk>). Most of it is closed to non-members, but there are some parts which are freely available. The section on mental health (www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health) gives accounts of different problems and disorders as well as a section on support, care and treatment. In the News and Features section (from the top menu) there is a podcast on Coping with anxiety and OCD during COVID-19, and also a blog for Stress Awareness Month: (<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/news-and-features/blogs/detail/covid-19-blog/2020/04/01/stress-awareness-month-with-dr-adrian-james>)

The Royal College also has a Spirituality Special Interest Group, which is a source of fascinating articles - too many to list here, but a good resource for ministers wanting to learn more: (<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/members/special-interest-groups/spirituality/publications-archive>)

In Scotland particularly, the [Scottish Association for Mental Health](#)'s website is well worth a visit.

Short Annotated Bibliography

Catherine Bird, *The Divine Heart of Darkness* (Sacristy Press, 2017) – a thought-provoking exploration of the ways darkness, and experiences of it, can inspire and re-orient us towards God.

Marion Carson, *The Pastoral Care of People with Mental Health Problems* (SPCK, 2008)

Stephen Cherry, *Beyond Busyness: Time Wisdom for Ministry* (Sacristy Press, 2012) – a short but compelling book of practical wisdom.

Joanne Cox-Darling, *Finding God in a Culture of Fear: Discovering Hope in God's Kingdom* (BRF, 2019) – a timely and beautiful reflection on hope, theologically-grounded and pastorally written.

Timothy M. Gallagher, O.M.V. has written widely and accessibly on the Ignatian tradition. His books are published by Crossroads, and among them *The Examen Prayer* and *The Discernment of Spirits* may be especially useful.

Jim Green, *Giving Up without Giving Up: Meditation and Depressions* (Bloomsbury, 2019) – this is billed as 'a simple and intelligent guide to meditation and contemplation for those dealing with depression and anxiety' which is exactly what it is! This is a well-researched and written book, and also offers prayers and an introduction to meditation in which the reader is gently guided through the first steps.

The excellent, and ever-growing, [Grove Books catalogue](#) offers short introductions from well-qualified authors in a whole range of fields and topics relating to ministry and pastoral care, among other things.

Malcolm Guite, *Sounding the Seasons* (Canterbury Press, 2012) – a wonderful collection of sonnets reflecting on the seasons of the Christian year. Malcolm is a prolific poet, and others of his collections are also highly recommended (e.g. his latest, *After Prayer*), as is his [blog](#), from which you can also sign up for daily poetry, and reflections on it, direct to your inbox. A great treasure-trove.

Nicholas Peter Harvey, *Death's Gift* (Epworth Classics, 2007) – a stunning set of reflections on death, resurrection and bereavement.

Vanessa Herrick & Ivan Mann, *Jesus Wept: Reflections on Vulnerability in Leadership* (DLT, 1998) – a helpful meditation for those trying to lead whilst also dealing with their own sense of being overwhelmed and challenged.

Gerard Hughes, *God of Surprises* (DLT, 2008) – the classic spiritual text, offering an updated evaluation of the beauty and usefulness of Ignatian spirituality.

Belden Lane, *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality* (Oxford, 1998) – referenced by Jill Baker in her reflection (above), a stirring, moving, illuminating book on the spirituality of the wilderness, drawing on his own memoir of his mother's long struggle with terminal disease, meditations on his experiences of the desert, and commentary on the Christian theological tradition.

Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend: Spiritual Direction in the Modern World* (Morehouse, 2001) – another classic text, containing some helpful connections too between spiritual direction and mental health, therapy and counselling.

Henri Nouwen, *The Inner Voice of Love* (Doubleday, 1996) – from among the many of Nouwen’s books which could be recommended, this one, written from the midst of a period of mental illness, and its companion, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (Doubleday, 1992), seem especially relevant here. And the little gem, *The Way of the Heart* (Harper, 1981) is valuable guide to the life of prayer in ministry, drawing on the wisdom of the Desert Mothers and Fathers.

Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness* (Jossey Bass, 2004) – a compelling meditation on resisting the ‘divided life’, and on how to allow ‘soul’ and ‘role’ to live together.

Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs* (Crossroad, 1999) and *Silent Compassion* (Franciscan Media, 2014) – two classics on contemplation, from among many other helpful writings and daily meditations, available online at <https://cac.org>

Margaret Silf, *Companions of Christ: Ignatian Spirituality for Everyday Living* (Eerdmans, 2005) and *Landmarks: An Ignatian Journey* (DLT, 1998)

Nicola Slee, *Sabbath* (DLT, 2019) – drawing on the wisdom of Wendell Berry, Nicola re-imagines the practice of Sabbath and Sabbath-taking for contemporary life and ministry.

Barbara Brown Taylor, *When God is Silent* (Cowley, 1998) – the 1997 Lyman Beecher Lectures on preaching, containing some theological reflection on times of difficulty, challenge and aridity.

J. Neville Ward’s work never really goes out of usefulness, even if it goes out of print. A modern classic is *Five for Sorrow, Ten for Joy: Reflections on the Rosary* (Epworth Classics, 2007), but any of his books you can find will certainly be a rich mine of wisdom for the contemplative life and spiritual growth. Among them also is *Friday Afternoon* (Epworth, 1976), “a sensitive and practical meditation on the seven last words of Jesus, showing how they mark the route to be travelled by any sufferer who wishes to discover...the meaning that Jesus gave to pain”.

Fraser Watts, Rebecca Nye and Sara Savage, *Psychology for Christian Ministry* (Routledge, 2002) – more of a ‘textbook’, but containing useful bibliography and insight from three experienced practitioners.

If you have materials you’d like add to this list, including books, weblinks, and other resources, or need further advice, please contact Jonathan Dean in the Ministries Team on deanj@methodistchurch.org.uk

Part Two: Pastoral Ministry and Trauma

Reflections and Resources by Deacon Eunice Attwood

To live in and through a pandemic is to journey in and through trauma. This trauma is experienced in many ways as it impacts every aspect of our lives as individuals, communities, national and global life.

The physical, emotional, and spiritual impacts of trauma are well-documented as multiple disconnections and disorientations. It is unsurprising that we feel a dis-ease in every way. Some people describe symptoms of an acute response to a threat, the well-known brain responses of ‘flight, fight, freeze, flop or friend (the five F’s).’ Feeling anxious, irritable, angry, unable to focus or concentrate and a deep sense of fatigue are common responses to a perceived threat or trauma. Some of us will have become hyper-productive, feeling the need ‘to do something’; others might withdraw and retreat. As time goes on, we may find ourselves oscillating between several phases struggling to find any kind of balance point.

Two definitions of Trauma:

‘Trauma is not just an event that took place in the past; it is also the imprint left by the experience on mind, brain and body. It changes not only how we think and what we think about, but also our very capacity to think.’

Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma* (Penguin, 2014)

‘Psychological trauma is the affliction of powerlessness. At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. When the force is that of nature, we speak of disasters. When the force is that of other human beings, we speak of atrocities. Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning.’

Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (Basic Books, 1997)

Judith Herman identifies three stages of recovery from trauma:

1. The establishment of safety
2. Remembrance and mourning
3. Reconnection with ordinary life

In the course of a successful recovery, it should be possible to recognise a gradual shift from unpredictable danger to reliable safety, from dissociated trauma to acknowledged memory, and from stigmatized isolation to restored social connection.

Theological Reflections

In the text by Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (John Knox Press, 2009, p.55-67) she draws similarities between Herman’s three stages of healing and John Calvin’s analysis on the three different functions of the Psalms.

1. **Establishing Safety:** Psalms of deliverance, providence and Divine Witnessing (e.g. Psalm 10)
 - The reality of God’s sovereignty, one is ultimately safe

- A space where trust ushers repressed voices into speech
 - An imaginative space for those who have felt helplessness in the face of violence to imagine themselves as having personal agency and control
2. **Remembering and Offering Testimony:** Psalms of lament and mourning (e.g. Psalm 22)
 - Encouragement to engage with ‘violent rage’, the sharp edges of feeling.
 - Allow the full range of human emotion to be expressed, the outrage and grief named
 3. **Reintegration:** Psalms of Thanksgiving and the scope of divine grace (e.g. Psalm 119).
 - Trauma survivor and witness undertake the task of telling the story in which a now articulated experience can be woven into everyday life.
 - This third stage of healing takes a lifetime to enact
 - Remembering God’s continued presence daily
 - God offers us a future. In that future violence need no longer be the determinative reality of our imaginative landscapes because God gives us food, sleep, daily work, and the bonds of human community. Praise emerges often in the midst of continued suffering (the traumas do not necessarily magically disappear)

“Christ’s compassionate, vulnerable love is the way of healing through death. The trust is that there is no depth of suffering, evil or death that cannot be plumbed by him. He and those who live and die with him are ‘balm for all wounds’. Instead of explaining our suffering God shares it.”

(David Ford, *The Shape of Living*, Ch 6, Knocked out of Shape, Evil, Suffering and Death)

Created to be in relationship: The early chapters of Genesis describe the importance of relationship: ‘it is not good for humankind to be alone’. We are made in the image of a Trinitarian God, made as embodied and relational beings. Physical (rather than social) distancing prevents us encountering one other as embodied fully relational beings. Meeting on-line is hugely valuable, but it is not the same. When we consider how much we communicate through body language (85-90%), how much we intuit with our bodies in gesture, timing, and intensity we recognise how different the experience of encounter is. The first time I had a Zoom call in which someone cried in desperation reminded me of the importance and profound significance of being with and present to one another.

Interdependent: The Connexional principle has been intrinsic to Methodism since its origins: ‘it enshrines a vital truth about the nature of the Church. It witnesses to a mutuality and interdependence which derive from the participation of all Christians through Christ in the very life of God himself.’ (*Called to Love and Praise: Conference Statement*, 1999). The pandemic has reminded us of the interconnected and interdependent nature of our global world. ‘In our global world we are only as strong as our weakest healthcare system’ (World Health Organisation, 2020). The biblical tradition persistently reminds us of this. In the Hebrew Bible’s many examples of care for the stranger and in the gospel’s response to the question, ‘who is my neighbour?’, the answer is consistent: we are not isolated individuals but a human community who are responsible for one another. The pandemic has revealed the

deep inequalities in the lives of people in the UK and across the world. The biblical tradition offers an honest portrayal of this humanity and includes accounts of people who were rendered marginal due to their gender, ethnicity, disease, age, slavery, and economic poverty. These conditions are sustained by the marginalising processes of patriarchy, sexism, purity laws, codes of honour and shame. Marginalisation was and remains a condition and a process, it can be a fluid or fixed position, and include multiple factors. It is these conditions and processes the Gospel of Christ continues to subvert, resist, and transform.

Rest and Refreshment: In the beautiful text by Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: saying no to the culture of now* (Westminster, John Knox Press, 2014) we are reminded of the importance of rest, and the sabbath command of Exodus 20 which recalls God resting on the seventh day of creation. The text challenges the idea of our worth only being found in consumption and productivity and resists us being defined by busyness. In God we discover we are enough; our self-worth is not dependent on providing or producing. Salvation history narrates the complex journey taken by the Israelites as they were led out of Egypt into the unknown (Exodus 13), to be swiftly followed by Pharaoh's army. The people cried out to Moses in desperation: and his response is, 'The Lord will fight for you, you only have to keep still.' Could this be a profound word for us? We must keep still, be quiet and let God be God.

Trauma and Grief: From the beginning of the new year we have seen stark daily warnings of the impact of the pandemic on human life. Before cases were known in the UK, we witnessed the impact of Covid 19 in many countries. The anticipation of loss, known as anticipatory grief, can be expressed as anxiety, deep sadness, and fear. Walter Brueggemann's reflections on the Psalms reminds us of the biblical tradition of lament which gives expression to individual and communal anger, grief, despair, and fear (e.g. Psalm 77, 44, 60, 123, 126). Offering to God in prayer our despair and anger, enables honest reflection with our own emotions. A pandemic leaves us with some deep questions of the nature of suffering. We might need to resist rushing to quick answers or fixes which might reveal more about our own need, 'to do something.' Perhaps we need to sit with the questions, sit with the pain and the suffering in the knowledge that in the midst of a pandemic God is with us and weeps for us. In the text *Rachel's Cry: Prayer of Lament and Rebirth of Hope* by Kathleen Billman and Daniel Migliore, we are offered some helpful reminders of biblical expressions of lament:

- They are bold & disturbing forms of prayer; they offer a language of pain.
- They refer to and value particular life contexts.
- They implicitly or explicitly reject the notion that sin causes suffering.
- They juxtapose trust and doubt, lament and praise in extreme combinations, revitalising praise, and prayer.
- They express raw emotions and call for vengeance, or justice and in doing so give permission to grieve and protest.
- They contain protest and intense or angry argument with God.
- They encourage new understandings of God.
- They acknowledge the freedom of God and the mystery of God.

Shelly Rambo (*Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*, Westminster John Knox, 2010), describes a theology of remaining and abiding. She resists the idea of 're': rebuilding, restoring,

recovering and a 'linear reading of cross and resurrection', suggesting death is behind and life is ahead. Instead, she describes an understanding of death *and* resurrection and looking between. 'If death remains, then life cannot be conceived apart from it. Life is not miraculously new but instead is a mixed and tenuous process of remaining.' In trauma, 'death persists in life'. Rambo quotes the work of Serene Jones in reflecting that suffering itself is not a source of redemption but, 'the persistence of love in the midst of suffering.' Rather than a life without struggle, or a quest for a redemptive ending, God offers life within the struggle. We stand together as God's people, in the face of unknowing, with the God, in whom we are fully known.

Multiple grief and loss: Alongside the tragic loss of human life, the pandemic has resulted in multiple forms of griefs and losses, 'the collective loss of the world we once knew' (David Kessler). The loss of school, college, university, shop closures, loss of jobs and plans can leave us with a profound sense of the loss of our 'normal' routines, it is a stark reminder that we are not in control. In many ways, we live with a false sense of control every day. A tiny portion of protein has reminded us that human life is deeply fragile. The biblical tradition is replete with reminders of the fragility of human life. In our fragile world we are suddenly very aware in the Global north of something the Global south has experienced for many years, our vulnerability as human beings, the myth of control and security. Do we need to face that we have made a God of control and security, and trusted and lived with the myth of and arrogance of our invincibility? How will we allow a 'new normal' to emerge that enables us to live with a greater reverence for each other and God's world?

Resilience: There is an extensive body of work on resilience from a variety of perspectives. A physicist might define resilience as a material's ability to resist de-formation or destruction. The psychological sciences often describe variations on what are commonly known as the 3 C's.

- a) Coping: good outcomes in the face of adversity and risk
- b) Constancy: sustained competence under stress
- c) Constructing: the ability to recover from trauma.

In reflecting on resilience specifically with reference to ordained Methodist ministry in our current context, being honest about our feelings will be crucial. Drawing upon our close relationships will be vital alongside ministering to others we will need to remember that we need to be recipients of ministry from others.

The on-line article at Theology Everywhere: Being Grounded by the President of Conference Barbara Glasson offers a thoughtful reflection.

<https://theologyeverywhere.org/2020/04/06/being-grounded/>

Grounding techniques

- Grounding is a practice that can help you pull away from negative or challenging emotions.
- These techniques may help distract you from what you're experiencing and refocus on what's happening in the present moment.

- You can use grounding techniques to help create space from distressing feelings in nearly any situation.

<https://www.healthline.com/health/grounding-techniques>

Short Bibliography on Trauma and Ministry

Reflecting on pastoral ministry during trauma

Allain, J., *Resilient Pastors: The Role of Adversity in Healing and Growth* (New Library of Pastoral, 2012) – drawing on the image of the desert and contemporary theology, particularly the insights of Rowan Williams.

Bonhoeffer, D., *The Cost of Discipleship* (SCM, 1959)

Ford, D, *The Shape of Living: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life* (Fount, 1997) – a thoughtful reflection, with insights on the impact of feeling overwhelmed.

Kelly, E., *Personhood and Presence: Self as a Resource for Spiritual and Pastoral Care* (T & T Clark, 2012)

Romero, O., *The Scandal of Redemption* (Plough, 2018)

Swinton, J., *Raging with Compassion: Pastoral Responses to the Problem of Evil* (Eerdmans, 2007)

Wells, S., *Incarnational Ministry: Being with the Church* (Canterbury Press, 2017)

Reflecting on mental health

Swinton, J., *Resurrecting the Person: Friendship and the Care of People with Mental Health Problems* (Abingdon Press, 2000)

Reflecting theologically on the nature and impact of trauma

Beste, Jennifer, *God and the Victim: Traumatic Intrusions on Grace and Freedom* (Oxford, 2007)

Jones, Serene, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (John Knox Press, 2009)

O'Donnell, K., Cross, K., (Eds), *Feminist Trauma Theologies* (SCM, 2020)

Rambo, Shelly, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (John Knox, 2010)

Warner, M., Southgate, C., Grosch-Miller, C., Ison, H., *Tragedies and Congregations: The Practical Theology of Trauma* (Routledge, 2020) – and see also:

<https://tragedyandcongregations.org.uk/category/blog/> Website of the project Tragedy and congregations looking at resourcing churches to respond in a healthy way to the impact of tragedies, local and global.