

MA Christian Formation

SCP Proposal

Shari Henry

Proposed Title:

When Sorrows like Sea Billows Roll: A Guide for Navigating and Narrating your own Grief Story

Thesis or SCP Description including a clear Thesis Statement

Western Christian culture tends to view happiness as something to seek and grief as something to avoid, but this binary robs us from the ability to look for joy while embracing lament.

This guide is designed for a grief group in a local church setting. The areas it will explore are grief in Scripture, grief around the world, grief in the body, and grief in and with community. It will be expanded as necessary to make room for introductory and wrap-up sessions.

Purpose:

The purpose of this curriculum is to provide a resource for gathering and learning to navigate grief as an individual in community with others. The Bible is full of stories of suffering and promises a Jesus who relates to us and to whom we can relate. We can trust God to be able to hear our lament and draw near to us. As we draw near to God, we walk forward finding joy as we carry our sadness. In II Corinthians 1:10 we read that we may, indeed, feel “unbearably crushed that we may despair of life itself,” but that we can trust God to rescue us. As God consoles us, we are able to carry that consolation to console others. In gathering to share stories, learn through the areas outlined in the Summative Capstone Project, and hear and encourage one another, participants will be able to narrate their stories of grief in an approach that helps them move forward in a healthy and resilient way with a church community to draw upon when needed.

Intended Audience:

The intended audience are adults who are experiencing profound grief. Grief appears and acts differently for individuals and everyone processing it differently. This curriculum is not intended for people with disorders related to grief but will offer a resource people can use in a local church community to build relationships they may develop for months or years ahead. The curriculum is not meant to provide answers but to allow questions, offering space for resolutions as people share. Grief is a process that will happen with or without the tools and learning a group can provide. The hope is that participants feel more supported and give space to grief by coming together with others on a regular basis.

Learning Goals

- To explore a biblical understanding of grief and lament
- To understand physiological and psychological responses to loss and reflect on global practices for processing grief
- To provide space to narrate personal stories of loss
- To design a curriculum to support those moving forward in grief in a local church context

Preliminary Outline

Introduction

When Sorrows like Sea Billows Roll – the context and story of grief and loss

I. An Exploration of Grief and Lament in Scripture

II. Physiological and Psychological Understandings of Grief

III. Global Practices for Processing Grief

IV. Responding to Realities of Grief in a Local Church: A Guide

VI. Conclusion

When Sorrows like Sea Billows Roll – moving with support through grief and loss

Foundational Bibliography

Blaine-Wallace, William. *When Tears Sing: The Art of Lament in Christian Community*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2020.

Carter, Marian. *Dying to Live: A Theological and Practical Workbook on Death, Dying and Bereavement*. London: SCM Press, 2014.

Chinula, Donald M. *Building King's Beloved Community: Foundations for Pastoral Care and Counseling with the Oppressed*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2009.

Conde-Frazier, Elizabeth. "Lamentaciones Voz del Alma," Ecos de Esperanza con Elizabeth Elizabeth Conde Podcast. Accessed February 25, 2026 <https://vts.brightspace.com/d21/le/content/10999/viewContent/79094/View>. Or YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1-C09qCKVM>

Davison, Andrew and Evans, Sioned. *Care for the Dying*. Eugene: Cascade, 2014.

Devine, Megan. *It's Not OK That You're Not OK: Meeting Grief and Loss in a Culture that*

- Doesn't Understand*. Boulder: Sounds True, 2017.
- Didion, Joan. *The Year of Magical Thinking*. New York: Vintage, 2007.
- Episcopal Church. *Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church*. New York: Church Publishing, 2015.
- Episcopal Church. *The Book of Occasional Services*. New York: Church Publishing, 2022.
- Farwell, James W. *This is the Night: Suffering, Salvation, and the Liturgies of Holy Week*. London: T & T Clark, 2004. (p. 120)
- Graham, Ellen. *Theological Reflection Methods*. London: SCM Press, 2019.
- Holinger, Dorothy P., Ph.D. *The Anatomy of Grief*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020.
- Kelley, Melissa M. *Grief: Contemporary Theory and the Practice of Ministry*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010.
- King, Martin Luther, Jr. "The Birth of a New Age." Address delivered on August 11, 1956 at the Fiftieth Anniversary of Alpha Phi Alpha in Buffalo. Accessed March 20, 2026. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/birth-new-age-address-delivered-11-august-1956-fiftieth-anniversary-alpha-phi>
- Kujawa-Holbrook, Sheryl A. and Montagno, Karen B. *Injustice and the Care of Souls: Taking Oppression Seriously in Pastoral Care*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2023.
- Jones, Serena. *Trauma and Grace, 2nd Edition: Theology in a Ruptured World*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019.
- Lee, Marissa Renee. *Grief is Love: Living with Loss*. New York: Legacy Lit, 2023.
- Levine, Stephen. *Unattended Sorrow: Recovering from Loss and Reviving the Heart*. Rhinebeck: Monkfish Books, 2019.
- Lewis, C. S. *A Grief Observed*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2001.
- McClintock, Karen A. *Trauma-Informed Pastoral Care: How to Respond When Things Fall Apart*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2022.
- O'Connor, Mary Frances. *The Grieving Body: How the Stress of Loss Can Be An Opportunity for Healing*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2025.

O'Connor, Mary Frances. *The Grieving Brain: The Surprising Science of How We Learn from Love and Loss*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2022.

Peterson, Cathy. *Call Me If You Need Anything. . .and Other Things Not to Say: A Guide to Helping Others through Tragedy and Grief*. Danvers, Massachusetts: Chalice, 2005.

Rambo, Shelly. *Spirit and Trauma*. Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.

Ramshaw, Gail. *Pray, Praise and Give Thanks: A Collection of Litanies, Laments, and Thanksgivings at the Font and Table*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2017.

Rohr, Richard. *Breathing Under Water: Spirituality and the Twelve Steps*. London, SPCK Publishing, 2017.

Saliers, Don and Saliers, Emily. *A Song to Sing, A Life to Live: Reflections on Music as Spiritual Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005.

Smith, Clare Bidwell. *Anxiety, The Missing Stage of Grief: A Revolutionary Approach to Understanding and Healing the Impact of Loss*. New York: Balance, 2020.

Swinton, John. *Becoming Friends of Time: Disability, Timefullness, and Gentle Discipleship*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016.

Proposed Schedule for the work

Summer 2026 Preparatory Reading

Fall 2026 Advanced Theological Writing Course. Establish schedule of meetings with Advisor and writing Editor. Further reading. Completion of written sections as agreed with Advisor

January and February 2027 completion of first full draft

March of 2027 Edit and respond to first draft feedback. Submit to Reader.

April 2027 Final edit and completion