

On the Shoulders of Giants

Creating a Faith-based Toolkit (Together!)

for Resilience, Revival & Resistance in this Age of Fascism.

Whitehorse Worship Arts Festival – July 2026 – Rob Shearer, ec

“the invitation of emergent strategy is to come together in community, build authentic relationships, and see what *emerges* from the conversations, connections, visions and needs.”

- 1) **Story / Storytelling** – Jesus told stories, so should we. Often in (leftist / progressive) faith circles our stories of ‘giants’ are about others – many of whom dead and even sanitized. To tell and re-member the stories of our ‘departed’ ancestors is good, but it is also good to recognize that some of our greatest ‘giants’ are younger, BIPOC, queer and / or non-binary folx of faith. Some of our greatest stories to tell are about us, each other – and our kinfolk (testify, Methodists!) Let us, therefore engage a multiplicity and diversity of stories across the eras, generations, cultures.

The word *story* is defined as “an account of past events in someone’s life or in the evolution of something.”² I think about this a lot when I travel and speak: How does our story evolve, change, and become? How do we ask questions, and what happens when our questions change over time? If a story is meant to evolve, then so are we. We get to examine our own stories and ask those questions; we get to acknowledge the ways we’ve changed over the years.

But often, this can be painful. The pain is why many of us choose not to go deeply into the work. If we understand how we got here, then we understand all that went wrong. We understand how people who should have loved us well didn’t. And we understand how institutions that should have protected us chose not to.

←
From Caitlin B. Curtice: *Living Resistance: An Indigenous Vision for Seeking Wholeness Every Day*

Part of storytelling is truth-telling about the traumas we are all absorbing (to varying degrees) – what are some of the story of these days?

If there are stories that you think of that can add to our toolkit as we go, please add them as we engage today.

Somatics (especially *Generative Somatics*) – Relating to the body, embodiment. Movement as trauma-release. Generative Somatics is a holistic, body-based methodology that integrates personal, collective, and systemic transformation. Rooted in social and environmental justice, it uses physical awareness, practices, and trauma-healing to help individuals and communities shift away from unconscious survival habits so they can align their actions with their values.

Quote: “We must first be able to feel grief, our own, before we can truly become an ally to anyone else.”

— Prentis Hemphill.

Practice: Centering Somatic practice via Prentis Hemphill

<https://insighttimer.com/prentishemphill/guided-meditations/somatic-centering-3>

[another version] <https://challengingmalesupremacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Centering-Practice.pdf>

Stories: My dad’s death day, running, somatic counselling.

Book: What It Takes to Heal: How Transforming Ourselves Can Change the World – Prentis Hemphill

What somatic practices have served you well you in this time?

What ‘embodied’ forms or prayer or worship / prayer have you engaged?

Next page - from Caitlin B. Curtice: *Living Resistance: An Indigenous Vision for Seeking Wholeness Every Day*

“To decolonize prayer, we have to learn to integrate it into all aspects of our lives until it shows itself as the embodiment of beauty that it already is. Decolonizing prayer also means embracing a queer spirituality that, as Mihee Kim-Kort writes, “challenges the compartments that we, not God, have created.”³ In other words, we reject colonial boundaries and rules forced on us, and we love one another, ourselves, Mother Earth, and the Sacred freely, wholly, fully. We pray with that freedom.

Embodying prayer as a practice, as a way home, leads us into a fluidity in our ways of being, encouraging us to let go of the boundaries we have set up around who is allowed to pray and how. We find intimacy with the Divine. Like prayer, spirituality is “the real deal,” as Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg writes. It is “the impulse undergirding every religious tradition out there. . . . It isn’t about the easy and sweet . . . but rather encompasses the anger and the frustration and the ambivalence.”⁴

So it goes with prayer, an embodiment of everything that we are, rejecting the boxes that are created from the toxic status quo of colonization, patriarchy, and hate. Instead, we breathe resistance in and out and realize it was prayer the whole time.

3) Satisfaction – aka Gratitude

Stories: Connie and the gratitude advice – Gustavo Gutierrez and the doll.

Practice: Breathe. What are you grateful for... in community... in people... in creation... in the big picture... Offer this as praise to God

Book: Radical Gratitude by Mary Jo Leddy

What gratitude practices have served you well you in this time?

How might we give praise to God collectively, individually, in creation?

4) Song, Sorrow, (P)salmody – Chanting the Psalms – the Psalms were Jesus’ prayer book; make it ours, lament, belly-ache, grief, release of trauma.

Story and Song of Lament / Practice – Chanting a psalm +

Rev. Thomas A. Dorsey – Voices United 670-
Precious Lord, Take My Hand

Book: Chanting the Psalms (with audio files) –
Cynthia Bourgeault

<https://www.shambhala.com/chantingthepsalms/>

Resource: Inclusive Language Psalter for chanting (ACC) <https://www.anglican.ca/resources/inclusive-language-psalter/> (also in “Pray Without Ceasing” – see below under ‘Service’)

Psalm 13 *Usquequo, Domine?*

¹ How long, O Lord?

Will you forget me for ever? *

How long will you hide your face from me?

² How long shall I have perplexity in my mind,
and grief in my heart, day after day? *

How long shall my enemy triumph over me?

³ Look upon me and answer me, O Lord my God; *
give light to my eyes, lest I sleep in death;

⁴ lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed over this one,” *
and my foes rejoice that I have fallen.

⁵ But I put my trust in your mercy; *
my heart is joyful because of your saving help.

⁶ I will sing to the Lord who has dealt with me richly; *
I will praise the name of the Lord Most High.

How might we equip ourselves and our communities to lament more fully and deeply?

5) Sabbath – the anti-capitalist notion that we are not work machines – rooted in Jubilee.

Quote: “There is a pervasive form of modern violence to which the idealist...most easily succumbs: activism and over-work. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything is to succumb to violence. The frenzy of the activist neutralizes his (or her) work... It destroys the fruitfulness of his (or her)...work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.”

I resisted meditation for so long. I said it just didn't suit my personality, or that I wasn't down to sit, that I could meditate while doing other things—active non-meditative things.

I was in good company with this, particularly in social justice spaces—everything we are working on is actually urgent—people are being hurt at every level, people and species are dying, the planet is being damaged. We are not making it up. Setting aside time from our work can feel violently selfish.

And yet! If we haven't cultivated mindfulness in our attention, how do we ever expect to break out of the cycle of crisis response? How will we ever put our attention onto solutions, put our attention onto the new practices we need?

Meditation kept waiting for me, around every corner, in every room. Grief was the gift that finally let me understand meditation.

Book: Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto by Tricia Hersey (founder of The Nap Ministry).

Your body is a site of liberation.

It doesn't belong to capitalism.

Love your body.

Rest your body.

Move your body.

Hold your body. (Hersey)

What sabbath and / or jubilee and / or 'nap' practices have "saved" your life / ministry / community / family / the planet?

6) Silence and Surrender – posture of reception, listening – much prayer, especially is Protestantism, is us talking to (or at) God and/or virtual signaling to the congregation. What does it mean to enter into a contemplative space of silence to receive / surrender agenda / know that God is God (and we are not)

Practice: Sit in x minutes of silence. Centering prayer to bring mind back.

Book: Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church by Barbara A. Holmes.

Small is good, small is all. (The large is a reflection of the small.)

Change is constant. (Be like water.)

There is always enough time for the right work.

There is a conversation in the room that only these people at this moment can have. Find it.

Never a failure, always a lesson.

Trust the People. (If you trust the people, they become trustworthy.)

Move at the speed of trust. Focus on critical connections more than critical mass — build the resilience by building the relationships.

Less prep, more presence.

What you pay attention to grows.

To honour / embody the silence, we won't discuss this one 😊

7) Scripture / Sacred Texts

Story: Chun Hyun Kyung story.

<https://lifeasspiritualadventure.org/2014/11/11/connection-is-the-key/>

How might 'hiding sacred texts / scripture in our heart' (Psalm 119:11) and or learning scripture through song give us a tool of resistance for survival in the ages to come?

8) Strategize – Emergent Strategy and Subsidiarity.

Rooted in Black feminist thought, science fiction, and the natural world, *emergent strategy* proposes that complex, large-scale societal changes arise from small, intentional, and adaptable interactions rather than rigid, top-down planning.

Subsidiarity (a central component of Catholic social teaching) says that matters should be handled by the smallest, most localized authority capable of resolving them effectively rather than large institutions.

Book: Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds - by adrienne maree brown

9) Subversion (aka Holy Mischief / Creativity / / D-I-O [do-it-ourselves])

Story: Dorothy Day about the national anthem at mass.

Story: Dorothy Day and the grave diggers.

Quote: "Dysfunction of the institution / Should give a frame to working / got to find our own solutions"

– Bruce Cockburn

*What creative (joyful?) strategies of subversion have you done or seen at work?
Let's share some stories!?*

10) Sacrament – Eucharist / Holy Communion – to 're-member'

Story: Dorothy and the farmworkers

Quote: "I had thought this [daily communion] was only for the old or the saintly, and I told him so.

"Not at all," he said. "You go because you need food to nourish you for your pilgrimage on this earth.

You need the strength, the grace, that the bread of life gives."

What might it mean to reclaim a sacramental imagination and rhythm in our lives and communities?

11) Services - Daily Offices including recalling the Saints – daily uniting of praises and prayers with the global church as an act of praise, gratitude, confession, scripture, meditation, lament, silence, remembering our spiritual ancestors– and embodying silence.

Practice: Daily Prayer - St. Thomas – Voices United – 907 - Hebrews 10:35—11:1; Ps 126 (VU 850)

- Anglican: <https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/pray-without-ceasing.pdf> or check out the podcasts "A Morning at the Office" and "An Evening At Prayer" (Episcopal Church / Forward Movement)
- Methodist: <https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/mwb-daily-prayer-20231223.pdf> or Methodist Daily Prayer by Matt Miofsky (<https://www.amazon.ca/Methodist-Book-Daily-Prayer-Deluxe/dp/1791036538>)
- United - Voices United – VU906-915 (also here: https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/d86e27e6/files/uploaded/OUM_DailyPrayer%20VU.pdf)
- Lutheran – ELW 295ff
- Roman Catholic (with text, recordings) <https://divineoffice.org/>
- Celtic: Celtic Daily Prayer from Northumbria - <https://www.northumbriacommunity.org/offices/how-to-use-daily-office/>
- Lectionary – including daily for AM, PM Prayer - lectionary.anglican.ca
- Many traditions have books / calendars of saints – All Saints (activist catholic), For All The Saints (ACC), Holy Women, Holy Men (Episcopal), etc.

Which daily or regular prayer practices sustain you / your community at this time? How might we, as leaders in the Beloved Community call our folk to prayer in solidarity with the global church and for the sake of the common good, the whole world and all of creation / the cosmos?

How can we, as Beloved Community, hold each other in the use of the tools?

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