

Abstract

This dissertation seeks to answer the question *The Heart Cries to the Lord: How can the Book of Lamentations, in conjunction with trauma theory, work as a resource for pastoral care in post-troubles Northern Ireland?* with the aim of making recommendations for pastoral care of people who have experienced individual or collective trauma.

I researched trauma theory, in particular Erikson and Alexander, considered Baldwin's four primary commitments to constructing a trauma sensitive theology, and Herman's three steps to trauma recovery. In addition, I carried out a trauma reading of Lamentations 5 in order to consider it as a potential liturgical framework for the church to use to support the processing of trauma experienced by individuals and communities.

Research questionnaires completed by expert professionals provided helpful insights into pastoral responses to trauma and made suggestions about the care of both the person or community who have experienced trauma and the clergy providing pastoral support. These questionnaires also pointed out the vital step of both clergy and lay people accessing appropriate professional support when required.

I found that Lamentations 5 could be an effective and helpful resource in giving voice to bodily experience and emotions of people who have experienced trauma, it also highlights the helpfulness of prayer in the processing of trauma. Lamentations' lack of a tidy, hopeful conclusion is reflective of the experience of people who have experienced trauma but within a liturgical framework it could be more helpful to provide a hopeful conclusion without making any promises to resolve the past completely.