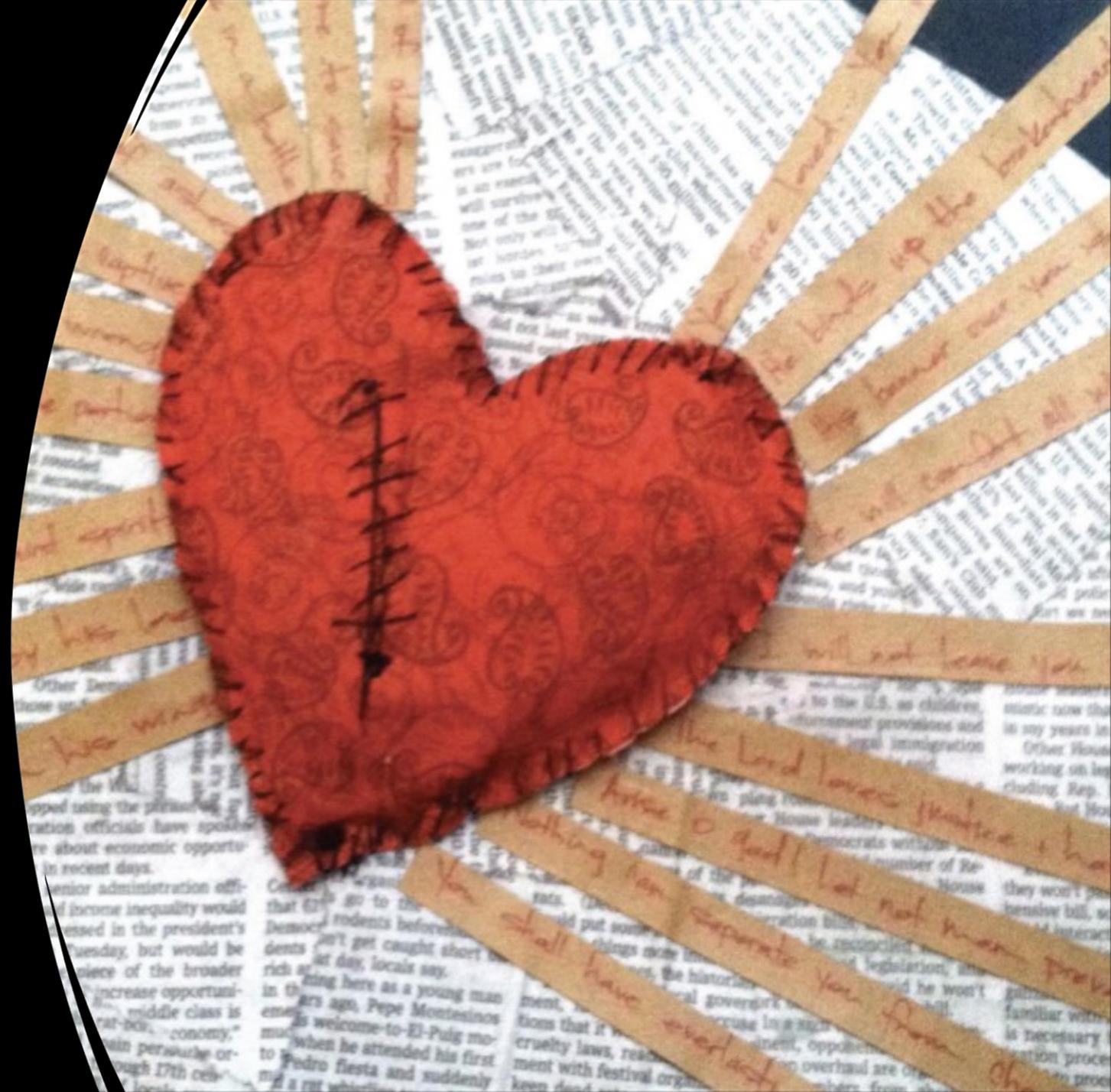


Healing for the wounded heart

Recovery from trauma
within Christian
communities



One Sabbath at the Nazareth synagogue

- Luke 4:16 - 22
- Jesus back in his home-town
- He stands to read from Isaiah 61
- All are eyes fastened on him as he declares
“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”
- Jesus outlines his mission in terms of bringing hope and healing to those who are suffering deep injury, adversity and wounds.



Isaiah 61:1-4

- The Spirit of the Lord is upon the one who is sent:
 - To the poor
 - To the broken-hearted
 - To those held captive
 - To those in darkness
 - To those who mourn
 - To those who sit among the ashes
 - To those who feel despair



What is a traumatic event?

- A sudden, shocking and highly disruptive event or situation
- Outside the normal expected or anticipated range of events (we don't prepare for it)
- Deeply distressing impact on the whole person (physical, emotional, mental, relational, and spiritual)
- This kind of event and the terrible losses associated with it are universally feared
- Trauma is not simply the event but it is also (more importantly) the response we have to the event – trauma is what happens within us.



The experience of trauma

- Trauma is a deep wound of the heart and mind that takes a long time to heal. It hurts every part of us: our relationships, our bodies, our thoughts, and our faith.
- When a community experiences a traumatic event, the responses people have can be quite different in intensity, over time, where and how the distress is felt, and how they cope. These differences come from different personalities, different life experiences, different resources, and different family and relational supports.

Common longer term responses to trauma

- For many there is a deep sense of fatigue, exhaustion and depletion. So much energy has been taken up in coping and managing that there is little left to do more than survive – Depletion (Ashes)
- For many there is a sense that important and valued elements of life have come apart and can't easily be put back together - Disintegration (Broken hearted) (Think Humpty Dumpty)



Common longer term responses to trauma

- For some the experiences of trauma are spiritually and emotionally unsettling, painful and difficult to understand or comprehend. It is sometimes too hard to talk or to reach out to others, and people withdraw, becoming isolated and cut off – Disconnection
- Finally for some there is a deep inner discouragement, a loss of hope and a feeling that recovery is not possible – Despair (Spirit of heaviness, despair)



How does God bring transformation into distress? Isaiah 61:4

- **A crown of beauty for ashes**

- We are loved by God in the midst of our emptiness and depletion.
Romans 8:28

- **Oil of joy for mourning**

- We are welcomed into relationship with God in the midst of sadness and loss
Psalm 23

- **Garment of praise for the spirit of despair**

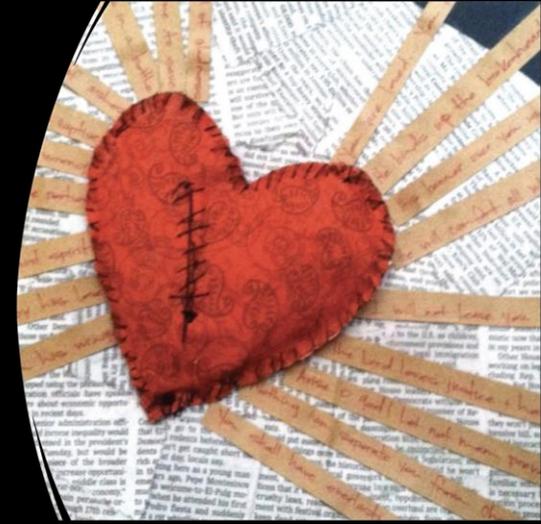
- We are invited into worship and thanksgiving in the presence of God even in the midst of despair 2 Corinthians 1:3

Healing a wounded heart: 3 things we can do

- Be aware of the different ways trauma impacts us and accept that we will experience pain in different ways and at different times
 - Watch for indicators, be aware of the potential to get stuck
- Do continue to share the distress and pain with God and also with others
 - Don't be afraid of doubts and distance
 - Cultivate the practice of 'lament'
- Over time allow the trauma to grow you
 - Trauma does change people – as healing takes place it can become a catalyst for significant personal and spiritual growth



Healing a wounded heart: 3 things we all can do for others



- Do reach out to others
 - Trauma puts up barriers, it isolates and distances people
 - it takes courage to gently seek others out
 - Don't be invasive but do reach for opportunities to connect and care
- Do welcome the hard questions and encourage open discussion
 - When people are ready
 - There are no simple answers
- Do join with others in responding in prayer, worship and praise to God
 - Reading Psalms, Prayer together, Reading scripture
 - Services of prayer and healing