Episcopal Parish Network
Where the Church Gathers

Summary and Transcript
Transforming Churches into Trauma-Informed Spaces
Originally presented June 17, 2026

Summary

Miguel Bustos and Julia Matallana Freedman discuss how congregations can become trauma-informed spaces. They define trauma broadly, share personal stories of healing within the Episcopal Church, and outline practical steps for making churches safer and more supportive. The conversation covers how to recognize signs of trauma, what to do when someone discloses a painful experience, the boundary between pastoral care and clinical support, and the value of building local networks and support groups.

Key Takeaways

- **Understanding Trauma** Trauma isn't only catastrophic events ("big T") like war or disaster. It also includes chronic, cumulative stress ("little t") that often goes unseen but profoundly affects how people relate to God, worship, and community.
- **Recognizing Trauma in Church** Trauma rewires how people experience safety. Leaders should watch for subtle signs: body language, sitting near exits, or reactions to seemingly benign things like the word "prayer," closing eyes, or guided breathing. Good intentions can inadvertently cause harm without awareness.
- **Becoming a Trauma-Informed Congregation** Three foundational steps: (1) educate leadership on trauma responses and what to watch for; (2) build a network of local clinicians and crisis counselors before a crisis hits; and (3)

start simple, low-barrier support gatherings centered on embodied ritual like Compline.

- **Hospitality vs. Trauma-Informed Practice** Welcoming gets people through the door; being trauma-informed asks what they need to feel safe once inside. Without genuine safety, welcome can become a gentler version of harm. Group norms, even in Vestry meetings, help build that safety consistently.
- **Holding Disclosures with Care** When someone shares trauma, the best response is presence, belief, and non-judgment. The church's lane is spiritual accompaniment, community, and ritual—not clinical care. Know your local referral network and don't hesitate to use it.
- **The Church's Healing Role** The Episcopal Church already has the tools for healing: inclusive language, embodied liturgy, prayer book rhythm, and resurrection theology. By facing outward and sharing this good news, churches can become sanctuaries of liberation in a time of collective trauma.

Transcript

Steven Lee: Hi, everyone. I'm the Rev. Canon Steven Lee, Vicar of the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine in New York City and Secretary of the Board of the Episcopal Parish Network. On behalf of EPN, I'm very glad to welcome you to today's webinar on transforming churches into trauma-informed spaces. This, I know from personal experience, is a very important and timely conversation, and we're so grateful that you could be here with us. We also hope that you'll take advantage of many of the learning opportunities available through EPN.

Although our 26th conference is now behind us, know that all the keynote recordings are available on our website, and we encourage you to watch and share them. We're also offering follow-up webinars like this one, designed to help you go deeper into some of the most important topics facing our church today. And, of course, please mark your calendars for EPN 2027 in Denver, February 23rd to 26th.

A couple of procedural notes before I turn things over to our panel. First, I know this session is being recorded. You will receive an email with a link to the recording, along with any additional materials provided by the panelists once they're posted to our EPN

webinar library. Second, note that the Q&A function is disabled for our webinar, so please put all your questions in the chat, and the panel will respond to them during and after the session as time allows. A transcript of the chat will be available alongside the recording.

Again, thank you for being here. And it's now my pleasure to introduce Miguel Bustos, a fellow EPN board member and the Senior Manager for Mission Programs and Equity Integration for the Episcopal Church. Miguel will begin today's conversation with Julia Matallana Freedman, the author of *Sanctuary of Healing: Transforming Churches into Trauma-Informed Spaces*. Miguel and Julia, welcome.

Miguel Bustos: Thank you so much, Steven. It's a delight to be here with all of you. I'm Miguel, and this is my first EPN event, so I'm really excited to be part of the Board of Directors and part of this organization that is truly there to provide practical tools for all of you. Those of you who are running parishes and caring about the communities you all live in — this is going to be a treat today. I am so grateful that Julia has decided to join us for a conversation about trauma.

Julia, I am so grateful that you're here. When I think of parishes and congregations, of course we want to make them welcoming spaces, but sometimes we don't know what we don't know. Having read your book really gave me insight into questions I need to ask myself and things I need to be aware of. But before we get into the nitty-gritty of your book and this topic, Julia, introduce yourself. Tell us a bit about your journey.

You're a member of the clergy. You're part of the church, but you're also part of this movement to inform people about what trauma is and how we can be better prepared. So, Julia, thank you for being here. Please share.

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yeah. Thank you, Miguel. I am so grateful to be here and really excited to get into talking about something I'm very passionate about: trauma and the church. As they mentioned, I was ordained an Episcopal priest in 2025. I am the friendly neighborhood parish priest here in Warwick, Rhode Island, in the Hoxie neighborhood.

As mentioned, I'm the author of *Sanctuary of Healing: Transforming Churches into Trauma-Informed Spaces*. And I can say upfront, Miguel, that this work is not something that's merely academic for me. It's very much lived. I hope it's okay if I bring in a little bit of my own personal story about how I came to this work as we talk.

Miguel Bustos: Please do. It's going to give it life. So yes.

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yeah. I feel like we should start with defining trauma. Is that okay? I think it's so important to start with defining what I mean when I say this, because we hear the word trauma used all over the place, and we sometimes don't know what is meant by that. One of the ways I talk about it is big T, little t.

Big T is what people immediately think of when they hear the word trauma: war, a catastrophic event, a natural disaster. But I'm really most interested in lowercase t trauma.

The trauma that is chronic, cumulative, and often invisible. And what I really want fellow clergy to pay attention to is that lowercase t. Let me tell you a little bit of a story around this. One thing I noticed in my own child: when she was in kindergarten, she had a lockdown. It wasn't an active shooter or anything, but it was a real lockdown.

And it carried all the emotional weight. You could see how it impacted the teachers. We could really see this event as sort of a lowercase t trauma. I've seen how that is lived out for folks. And those are the folks that are carrying things into our parishes, right, into our pews — the folks carrying that lowercase t chronic stress and trauma.

I've seen this play out in my own child's life, that even having a lockdown drill can be cause for alarm because of that one experience in her kindergarten classroom. Right?

Miguel Bustos: So I'm glad you brought that up, because folks wouldn't have thought that something like that happens, and we don't know, again, what we don't know. A person's trauma really also affects their relationship with their God.

It affects how they pray, how they worship, and how they participate in the life of the church. What signs might church leaders notice or be aware of as they're putting together liturgies, as they're creating events? This is not just for clergy. This is for lay leaders as well.

Right? What are signs that you think people should be aware of?

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yeah. What I want folks to remember is that trauma rewires how we experience safety. And the difficult thing about this work is that church is full of things that can activate the wiring for someone, and we don't always know what all of those things are. I'll give you an example. I was just speaking to someone yesterday, Miguel, who shared with me that the word prayer is a spiritual harm trigger for them.

And I realized offering prayer — because of that spiritual harm that I was not aware of — was actually feeling harmful to this person. It's a great example of how good intentions may actually be causing harm when we're not aware, and we don't even realize it. For this person, I'm assuming prayer could have been misused in their life and past spiritual harm. So prayer was not even a category that felt safe to them. You may see that in your parishes.

Even closing your eyes in a public space can be triggering for some people, depending on what kind of lowercase t trauma they've experienced. When church leaders ask me what signs to look for, I would say: someone who maybe sits near an exit. How are they holding their body? Their body posture might give you some clues. Someone who flinches at certain language. The person who disappears after a heavy topic.

I think those are signs we could pay attention to.

Miguel Bustos: Okay. So we say prayer a lot. We close our eyes a lot as a church. So how do we work around it? How do we build trust with the person who may be triggered by people's eyes being closed, or being asked to close their eyes, or hearing the word prayer?

How do we work with that, and how do we help them to see that this is safety now? In this space, in this community, it's safe to close your eyes because we're here to — what do you do? Because we —

Julia Matallana Freedman: Use — yeah. What do you do? It's a good question. It's a really good question. I think the thing I do in my practice is bring us back into our bodies.

When somebody is experiencing a traumatic trigger, what we can do is help people come back into their bodies. I'll tell you how we do this, because it's actually part of our tradition already.

Miguel Bustos: Okay. I'm going to take some notes because this is —

Julia Matallana Freedman: Something that you spoke. So liturgy, when it's embodied and predictable, can actually be profoundly healing.

The rhythm of common prayer, the physicality of putting your body before the altar to receive communion, repetition of the psalms — these are all grounding practices that we see used in mental health spaces. Even something like incense triggers your body to be

more present. And in the moment, it's engaged with a different sense. Then it's not just mental.

It's actually activating your nervous system and calming it down when we use embodied action. I think of, in my personal prayer life, I use incense. I use Anglican prayer beads. Anglican prayer beads are great because, again, it's a textile sensory activity that contains repetition. That repetition, much like a mantra in other mental health spaces, can be soothing to the body and signal: calm down.

You are safe. It can signal safety. Predictability. The fact that our liturgies are predictable is actually really healing for folks because they know what to expect.

I oftentimes will try to share a bulletin if something changes, or if a new season is starting. Sometimes I will share that bulletin early with my folks, with my parish, so they can actually see it and view it ahead of time. Because if that's something that can be predictable for them, that can also calm the nervous system. Right? Does that kind of make sense?

Miguel Bustos: Yeah. Those are practical things I think we can do. And when we think about how to create a trauma-informed congregation, what other things are sort of the most — if someone wants to get started in trying to make sure that their congregation is trauma-informed, where would you recommend people begin? What are the practical steps? You mentioned a few others, but if someone just says, "I don't know what — what do I do?"

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yeah. Where do I start? Totally.

Miguel Bustos: Practical steps that a parish can take?

Julia Matallana Freedman: I have three that I recommend to everybody. No matter where you're starting out: educate your leadership and become educated. What is trauma? What are the four trauma responses?

What do the trauma responses look like? What are some things you can look for? Which I do write about in my work. So: education. The second thing: build your network.

This is so important. Right? Because we're not in the clinical setting. Right, Miguel? And so people come in with their weight, and we want to hold it and bear witness to it, but we aren't clinical people.

And so building out your network of therapists, social workers, crisis counselors directly in your community before you need them — so networking to be able to refer folks — can be really powerful. And I just want to say one more thing about that: we get to be a bridge. We get to be a bridge to these other professions.

There are people in my life who have spiritual harm around becoming medicated for mental health issues. Right? People have said — leaders have said to them — "You know, pray more, and your anxiety will go away." These sorts of spiritually harmful things that we sort of know are not the right way, but we get to be a bridge to those helping professions.

Right. And then the final thing would be to start a support group.

I really want to say this simply. This is the low-hanging fruit. It doesn't require a clinical framework. It doesn't require a big budget.

You can center it around something simple like Compline once a week, light candles, light incense, and have that weekly community where people can talk about the weight of the little t's in their life. All of the research shows — and all of the research I did for this work — it shows that if you have a network of support, emotional support, you're able to weather these lowercase t's completely differently than if you're doing it completely alone.

Miguel Bustos: Yeah. You know, it's so interesting you say that because we all are affected by trauma to one degree or another. And if we weren't, then many of us would say, "Well, then why even go to church?" But we go to church because we need that sense of healing.

We need to be able to come together to ask our Creator to heal us, to love us. Because we're not superhuman beings. We're not God.

We are people who are just walking each other home on this journey, and we need our God, and we need each other. So that's why we go to church. The fact that we go to church, the fact that we walk into a community says that no one of us is perfect, and we need each other. But I love in your book when you talked about — and I'm going to quote it — normalizing the reality of how trauma impacts humans can open up conversation, create safe space...

Julia Matallana Freedman: ...foster deeper belonging, and allow individuals to face their own trauma with bravery.

Miguel Bustos: A supportive community coupled with the structure of validation makes for a powerful recipe toward being more trauma-informed. I like the way that you took something that we could sort of intellectualize and say it's something out there, and you brought it and said, no.

This is about all of us.

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yes. Yes. You know, Miguel, I have a story to tell you about this because this is really the heart of it, at least for me. In 2008 — you remember 2008.

Miguel Bustos: The banks collapsed. I was a college kid, no cosigner, trying to get private loans. When the banks went under and the money just disappeared.

Julia Matallana Freedman: I was sort of left, had to drop out for a semester. That was my little t trauma. It wasn't war.

It wasn't natural disaster, but it was financial instability that really derailed everything and left a mark. And while I found myself homeless at the time, it was because of Christian community around me that I was never on the streets. And I remember my professor, my professor of theology at this small Christian school in Santa Barbara, saying, "I have a room. I have a room for you." And so I wasn't on the streets.

I was able to be in a room and was able to get my first job, my first full-time job. And I brought home — I literally could not pay them anything for rent at that point in my life. But I would bring home a one-pound bag of coffee because I worked at Starbucks, and I'd bring home that one-pound bag of coffee, and that was what I could give.

And they gave me what they could give, which was this spare room so that I could get on my feet. And, yeah, I mean, if that's not the whole gospel of meeting a need when we see it, I don't know what is. Like, that's the Christian community.

Miguel Bustos: Now, do you think that that person who offered that space would have seen their action as being trauma-informed?

Julia Matallana Freedman: Interesting. I don't know that they would have. I don't know. That's a good question. I'd have to ponder it.

Miguel Bustos: So maybe they thought that they were just doing —

Julia Matallana Freedman: You know, it's interesting. I do think people around me knew that I was a vulnerable student. I think part of why it worked out the way it did for me, and I was able to get across the finish line and graduate, was because folks knew I was in a vulnerable situation, if that makes sense. So I don't know if maybe trauma bumps up against that vulnerability, maybe.

Miguel Bustos: So we pride ourselves on being hospitable folks. We say all are welcome. We have signs, "The Episcopal Church welcomes you." But beyond hospitality, how can we couple the thing that we do naturally with maybe more intention around being trauma-informed in that hospitality?

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yes. I think welcoming — this is how I see it, Miguel. Welcoming is about the front door. Trauma-informed is about what happens after someone walks through the door.

I think welcome without genuine safety — and I talk a lot about safe group rules and boundaries around these shared support groups in the book — but without safety, it's just a nicer version of the same harm.

But a trauma-informed church doesn't just say, "We're glad you're here." It asks, "What do you need to feel safe?"

And then actually tries to provide that when they can.

Miguel Bustos: Do you think — when you ask those questions, whether in small group individually or in a broader group — how can we do it? I remember facilitating a group, and I talked about the need to create group norms.

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yes.

Miguel Bustos: I saw some people's eyes roll. Like, "Oh, here we go again with this stuff." And I remember thinking, okay, there's some stuff going on here.

And to me, there may be some small t stuff on why would that bother you. So what would — how would —

Julia Matallana Freedman: — do with that? What do we do when we bump up against that? You know, it's funny. In my own work, I sort of roll my eyes back. I don't really know what else to do.

When I find that when I make it a norm to have norms — like, it becomes so habitual, even at our Vestry meetings. I do it at Vestry meetings even. Set those norms.

It becomes so habitual that it's just part of the cadence of the gathering.

Miguel Bustos: I mean, because it's interesting. The work that I do for the Episcopal Church's Office — a big chunk of what I do is around racial justice work. And so we have Sacred Ground, and we do all these incredible things. And sometimes, whether we do regional gatherings or we're working with dioceses and we talk about the need for racial justice work, you almost get the same eyes rolling back like, "Oh, here we go."

And I've had people say, "Oh, you're trying to be politically correct." And one, I say, "No. I'm trying to be more like Jesus." And two, there is beauty in doing this work. There is a liberation.

And so the same situation when you have people who say, "I don't want to — you know, I don't need trauma-informed anything, and I don't need to do it because that doesn't concern me." How would you turn that around to say, "No. This is trying to be like Jesus, aware of everybody, because Jesus was aware"? Saint Luke's is awesome. The Gospel of Luke is awesome about that. Right?

But how would you also say how being this way, or having this way of thinking, also benefits you? What would you do with that? How would you do that?

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yeah.

Miguel Bustos: Yeah.

Julia Matallana Freedman: You know, it's one of the things that I realized about myself in this work: that I often come to my parish work with a collectivist lens, from my collectivist culture. And there's a difference between collectivist and individualist. If you're coming at this conversation as an individualist, I think it's going to be really hard.

Miguel Bustos: Mhmm.

Julia Matallana Freedman: It's real. It's going to be really hard. If you're coming at this conversation from a collectivist culture...

Miguel Bustos: Yeah.

Julia Matallana Freedman: It's a lot easier because if the group — if the corporate is safe, then we're all safe.

Miguel Bustos: Yeah. And isn't there a beauty in even as an individual to be aware of the other, to be aware of other people's feelings?

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yes.

Miguel Bustos: Traumas, joys, because that also helps us be more like Jesus. Right? That's right. So by me taking the extra step, not only am I helping people, but I'm also helping myself be a better person. Right?

Julia Matallana Freedman: That's right. That's right.

Julia Matallana Freedman: The other thing I also think of, Miguel, is this wounded healer. Like, for the folks who are really resistant in saying that they have trauma —

Miguel Bustos: Mhmm.

Julia Matallana Freedman: — that reminder that wounds don't disqualify us from the work. Right?

Miguel Bustos: Right.

Julia Matallana Freedman: They become the very place from where we serve one another.

Miguel Bustos: Right.

Julia Matallana Freedman: One another. Okay. Yeah.

Miguel Bustos: So here's a question. When — not if, but when — someone discloses a traumatic experience to either a member of the clergy or a lay leader, what are the most helpful responses, and what common mistakes should we avoid? Because it's going to happen.

Julia Matallana Freedman: It's going to happen. I think presence.

Miguel Bustos: Okay.

Julia Matallana Freedman: Presence in the moment, not fixing. Because at least for me, that's a temptation, just to try to go straight to fixing. Not fixing the person necessarily, but maybe trying to fix the situation. I also think presence with people through what they're carrying, and telling folks — if they bring something to you — "Thank you for sharing this with me."

"Thank you for entrusting this to me. I believe you." I have seen trauma melt away when somebody with authority says, "I believe you." That can be profound.

Miguel Bustos: You know, let me add — if — I am not an expert. You're the one that wrote the book. But I would also add: don't assume.

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yeah.

Miguel Bustos: Yeah. Don't assume someone else's story.

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yeah. Don't assume someone else's story.

Miguel Bustos: And with that comes, don't judge.

Julia Matallana Freedman: That's right.

Miguel Bustos: Because we have not walked in that other person's shoes, just like people haven't walked in our own. That's right. So —

Julia Matallana Freedman: A nonjudgmental posture is definitely —

Miguel Bustos: Yeah.

Julia Matallana Freedman: — one of the first things. Absolutely.

Miguel Bustos: Yeah. And remember too that they're sharing with you — especially if you have the collar on — and it could be that the healing thing they needed was somebody to listen. Somebody to hear them.

Miguel Bustos: Now, that then takes us to another rabbit hole. How do we differentiate between a proper relationship with pastoral care...

Julia Matallana Freedman: Mhmm.

Miguel Bustos: ...and professional mental health support? Because there is a line that we should not cross. And you say this in the book: we're not therapy centers.

So how should we approach that, or what should we be aware of when someone says, "Hey. This is my story, and this is how I'm feeling"? Pastoral care and mental health professional care.

Julia Matallana Freedman: I use the phrase a lot. I often tell people, "I'm not a therapist." And I will say that at the outset, at the very beginning. So I think repeating it often is okay.

Obviously, it's important. I want to reiterate what you're saying, Miguel, which is that the church is not a clinical setting, and I really don't think that we should try to be. I really believe our lane is community, ritual, belonging, and spiritual accompaniment.

Those are what we can offer. And I think those things are genuinely healing. If we are able to live into that alongside them, they can be healing.

Miguel Bustos: And we could sort of point people in a direction to go get some professional help and encourage that. Right?

Julia Matallana Freedman: Exactly. Refer well. Refer. Refer.

Refer. Build that network of support so you have the local community members that offer clinical help for folks.

Miguel Bustos: Yeah. Yeah.

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yeah. Yeah.

Miguel Bustos: So you write about churches becoming sanctuaries of healing, and that's literally part of the title of your book. What gives you hope in congregations, and how can they play a meaningful role in healing trauma in today's world? And what have you seen churches do particularly well?

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yeah. I mean, this does come out of my own story, where I found community in Christian circles. On such a deep level, it's personal for me. Not a lot of people think about the Episcopal Church as a liberating movement. But from where I grew up in these kind of oppressive religious contexts — pretty fundamentalist Christian

childhood that I had — being in a tradition that gives you the Book of Common Prayer and says you belong and welcomes all forms of queerness and equity and inclusion in our church spaces is profound, I think.

And I know liberation for me, finding a place like the Episcopal Church that does all of those things has been liberating. I do believe the church has everything it needs to do these things. Like I said, just to reiterate: community, ritual, and, of course, we have this theology of resurrection that says the wound is not the end of the story.

Miguel Bustos: Amen to that.

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yeah. Yeah.

Miguel Bustos: You know, I grew up here in San Francisco in a very traditional Mexican American household, so we grew up Roman Catholic. I knew I was gay when I was five years old. I didn't know what to call it or who to talk to about it, but that reality of who I am and my cultural traditions and my religious tradition made for a very harmful way of seeing myself. And it wasn't until — fast forward, God, forty years — that I found the Episcopal Church. I tell people that I wish I would have found the Episcopal Church sooner.

Julia Matallana Freedman: Because I think it would have saved me so much heartache.

Miguel Bustos: Oh, so much heartache. That's right. I know.

Julia Matallana Freedman: It's a funny thing, but I think both of our stories — we have found liberation here.

Miguel Bustos: And what was really cool is, as you know, two weeks ago I was ordained to the priesthood. I was a vocational deacon for several years and then felt a call within a call and went through the whole process over again. And at the ordination here at Grace Cathedral, there were about over 800 people there. A lot of the folks from the community that I live here in the Mission District of San Francisco were there, and they were amazed to see how embracing the church is. I was so happy that they got a glimpse of all the reasons why I fell in love with the Episcopal Church.

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yeah. You know? What —

Miguel Bustos: a gift.

Julia Matallana Freedman: What a gift.

Miguel Bustos: The scriptures —

Julia Matallana Freedman: — with inclusive language. We had one of the readings in Tongan. We did Psalm 23, but in the Bobby McFerrin style where it says she, her.

Miguel Bustos: Nice. Nice.

Julia Matallana Freedman: And the sermon was amazing. I'm sitting there like, this is what I hear and know all the time. But for the people that were sitting there, including my kindergarten teacher from the seventies — she just turned 80 — I spoke to her the other day, and she said, "Miguel, I've always been traumatized by church." Now she's just 80. Right?

Miguel Bustos: She just turned 80. And she said she's carried that pain most of her life. And next week, we're having lunch because she wants to share with me how healing it was for her to attend this one service in an Episcopal church.

Julia Matallana Freedman: Wow. And I really hope that people can listen to this and realize that maybe you're doing it. Like, you're already doing it. Somebody has walked into that Episcopal setting and felt like trauma was relieved somehow.

Miguel Bustos: Right. And I had a similar experience. I can't put it as eloquently as you, Miguel, but I had a similar experience at my ordination in December. I remember the bishop using incense, and the sensory experience I had was so healing. It was genuinely a healing experience for me as well.

Julia Matallana Freedman: So I'm so grateful that you shared that story with us. I really am. And, you know, we're doing it. I mean, I think that's the thing.

Miguel Bustos: You know, I like to tell folks that I think the Episcopal Church is better than sliced bread. I mean, it is something that we should be sharing with the world. And often, my only criticism is that we only speak to ourselves.

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yeah.

Miguel Bustos: And we don't — and maybe this is the deacon in me — we don't face outward. I think for people who are in the trauma-informed space, for them to know that

there's an Episcopal church that is nearby that is doing its best to be welcoming and that it is open to the experiences of others, that can go a long way.

Julia Matallana Freedman: That's right.

Miguel Bustos: Right? And I mean, in a sort of offshoot way, that also helps us grow our church, not for the sake of just numbers, but for the sake of building a healing world. At this point in time in our history, not only as a country but as a world, we are all in trauma. And so we need to do this type of work. If we call ourselves Christians and followers, then we need to be proactive about this and not just wait for it to drop on the front steps or come in our doors.

No. We need to be out there letting people know that there's good news for us to share and that they're part of it. And whether we invite people in or we go out, I think, is an important thing for us to do as a church.

Julia Matallana Freedman: I think that's so true. Yeah. I feel like I have a lot I could say about the times we're living in. I don't know if I want to go down that rabbit hole or not.

Miguel Bustos: But Lord, let me tell you.

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yeah. There's a lot there.

Miguel Bustos: Yeah. There's a —

Julia Matallana Freedman: — lot there. We —

Miguel Bustos: — are almost ready for some questions from folks who have been patiently listening to us. Elizabeth Bow from our office, from EPN, is on the line. Elizabeth, how should we handle questions?

Elizabeth Bow: If people have asked questions in the chat, I would definitely recommend looking there.

Miguel Bustos: Okay.

Elizabeth Bow: I haven't seen any questions at the moment, but there are a couple helpful comments from Andy, whose name I recognized from some previous webinars. So welcome back, Andy. I think when you were talking, Julia, about triggers, Andy commented that another trigger most people don't expect would be breathing exercises

or anyone telling you when and how to breathe. Andy also mentioned that increasing predictability in our context so that people can prepare for change is also immensely helpful for many who are on the neurodivergent spectrum. Don't have any more questions at the moment, so people can definitely feel free to add those.

But I wonder, Julia, you mentioned that there are sort of different types of trauma and different things. I wonder just as you explained big T trauma and little t trauma, maybe just delve a little bit into some of the types of trauma and the work that's come from your research.

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yes. So I have an excellent outline on the different types of trauma. What I do in my book is I actually tell a story around these different categories of trauma because I really do think story helps us unpack what's happening in a different way than just understanding the categories. I'll give you the categories really quickly.

And if you want to know more about one of them, I can expand. But these are the categories. They come from a clinician. So this is acute trauma, chronic trauma, complex trauma, secondary or vicarious trauma — which I do tell a story about in my book — and then historical and intergenerational trauma, which I share a story of in my book as well. Those are the main categories, and can be helpful when you are talking with folks in your ministry context to have a working knowledge of what those categories of trauma are and what some of them look like for folks.

Miguel Bustos: I tell you, people need to get your book, but we will talk about that in a minute.

Julia Matallana Freedman: Okay. Okay.

Miguel Bustos: You know, let me — I have one final question that I want to ask you. There are people on now, and there are people who will be watching this later. So if every clergy person and parish leader listening today could leave with one practice or one mindset or even one principle to help make their congregations a safer and more healing space, what would you want it to be?

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yeah. That's a great closing question. I'm going to reiterate something I've already said. I hope that's okay.

But build the network before you need it. I think that's really important. I also think a really practical thing is to start a support group. And when people come to us with trauma, with their stories, believe them.

Miguel Bustos: And that could be so simple as maybe saying, "Wednesday night, let's get together for a check-in."

Julia Matallana Freedman: Check-in. I also think the Daily Offices are a great way to center it, to all gather for Compline or all gather for evening prayer. Yeah.

Miguel Bustos: Or maybe even talking about it during —

Julia Matallana Freedman: — and then talking, and then having a support group after. Yep.

Miguel Bustos: Or I mean, I'm just thinking in real time, but how can we get together to pray for the state of our world?

Julia Matallana Freedman: Yep.

Miguel Bustos: Right? So do some sort of prayer thing and light candles, and then afterwards have a discussion. Yep. Say, you know, what are —

Julia Matallana Freedman: — you carrying this week? Right. What are you — how are you arriving?

Miguel Bustos: Then maybe end with lighting more candles or doing something physical. It's always good.

Julia Matallana Freedman: That's right. Embodied ritual — I'm a huge proponent of repetition, Anglican prayer beads, grounding, spiritual grounding.

Miguel Bustos: No. This is all good. Well, Julia, thank you so much. This is her book, *Sanctuary of Healing: Transforming Churches into Trauma-Informed Spaces*.

And what I love about not only your storytelling, but how you include so many different ways in which people have experienced or can experience trauma — through domestic violence, spiritual trauma, religious trauma. I mean, you have it all here. We are going to drop a link or a code for all of you. If you order the book from Church Publishing, you will get 20% off. That's a great deal, because I didn't know that before I bought the book.

So you'll get a good — there you go, Elizabeth. We have the link right there. I would say order it, use it as a reference, and you provide some really cool opportunities to even take notes in this book and share your thoughts. You could also use it maybe as a book club type of discussion for the church, so that everybody can be informed.

Trauma-informed, but just be informed in general so that you could be the best Christian, the best follower of Jesus that this world has ever seen. That's right. And we are so grateful for you, Julia, and we're so grateful for all of you for being part of this journey as we try to be church together, but also, as you said, build those networks. So how can we be church outside the doors of our buildings and out into the community? So with that —

Julia Matallana Freedman: Amen. Miguel, thank you so much. What a meaningful conversation. Thank you to everybody who joined and shared comments and feedback, and I'm very grateful.

Miguel Bustos: All right, everybody. Until next time. We will see you all again soon. Take care. Many blessings. Bye-bye.