

# From Lament To Action

Pershore Abbey Iona Service 5pm Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2022

## WELCOME

GATHERING SONG: 🎵 **God welcomes all, strangers and friends.**  
**God's love is strong and it never ends. (x3)**

INTRODUCTION: This service is adapted from '*We Will Tread the Earth Lightly - A service of lamentation to liberate us for action*' by Chris Polhill

'When it comes to addressing the environmental damage we are inflicting on the planet, many of us freeze, feeling powerless in the face of the enormity of it all, or deny the problem, or take a tiny action, hoping that it will do. The value of lamentation is that it can unfreeze us, and lead to action. Lamenting, well-recognised in the Psalms, allows us to grieve together and offer our sorrows to God. Lamenting so often gets left out of our worship, but it is as powerful as praise, and necessary for our souls to grow.'

This service provides a space for lament, a chance to speak out our sorrow, trusting that in being open to God we can be free from the guilt that binds us and open to change.

## OPENING RESPONSES:

**Leader:** Before God, who loves us with great compassion,

**ALL:** **We come with our sorrows.**

**Leader:** For the damage to this planet,

**ALL:** **We are weeping, Creator God.**

**Leader:** For the unequal consequences for the poor,

**ALL:** **We are weeping, Shepherding God.**

**Leader:** For the refugees fleeing war and injustice,

**ALL:** **We are weeping, Travelling God.**

**Leader:** For children alone, abducted or astray,

**ALL:** **We are weeping, Mothering God.**

**Leader:** For the denials and fears within us,

**ALL:** **We are weeping, Holy God.**

**Leader:** Loving God, take away the fears that freeze us and give us the courage to live your compassionate justice.

**ALL:** **Amen**

BIBLE READING: *Lamentations 5:1–10, 19–22 The psalmist voices to God, the suffering and fears of the people.*

**Reader:** Listen now for the word of God.

<sup>5</sup> Remember, Lord, what has happened to us; look, and see our disgrace.

<sup>2</sup> Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our homes to foreigners.

<sup>3</sup> We have become fatherless, our mothers are widows.

<sup>4</sup> We must buy the water we drink; our wood can be had only at a price.

<sup>5</sup> Those who pursue us are at our heels; we are weary and find no rest.

<sup>6</sup> We submitted to Egypt and Assyria to get enough bread.

<sup>7</sup> Our ancestors sinned and are no more, and we bear their punishment.

<sup>8</sup> Slaves rule over us, and there is no one to free us from their hands.

<sup>9</sup> We get our bread at the risk of our lives because of the sword in the desert.

<sup>10</sup> Our skin is hot as an oven, feverish from hunger.

<sup>19</sup>You, Lord, reign forever; your throne endures from generation to generation.

<sup>20</sup>Why do you always forget us? Why do you forsake us so long?

<sup>21</sup>Restore us to yourself, Lord, that we may return; renew our days as of old

<sup>22</sup>unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure.

**Reader:** For the word of God in scripture,

**ALL:** for the word of God among us, for the word of God within us, thanks be to God.

**SONG:** 🎵 *God our Maker, hear our cry (Tune – Forty Days and Forty Nights)*

**God our Maker, hear our cry, sorrow for our lack of care.**

**We have used your gifts for life, without thought and without prayer.**

**Gifts unfairly shared around, though you gave enough for all.**

**We preferred to store up wealth; fear and greed has us in thrall.**

**We regret our carbon use, now we know it hurts the earth;**

**caught in systems hard to change, lead us on a wiser path.**

**Breathe forgiveness over us, free our souls to pay the price,**

**serve creation day by day, follow Christ in sacrifice.**

**Leader:** May the forgiveness of Jesus be ours; the strength of the Creator be ours; and the Spirit inspire our living. **Amen**

**MEDITATION:** *The public voicing of pain, by Kathy Galloway from A Heart for Creation (abridged)*

‘People in pastoral ministry learn about the stages of grief: the shock, the denial, the anger, the deep sadness. In the West, perhaps we are somewhere between denial and anger. But the sadness will come, as it has for those who have either experienced or studied in depth the scale of what is happening. Such immense sorrow can have a paralysing effect. The biblical tradition of lamentation – the public voicing of pain – is one important way in which people in huge crisis have responded and sought to find a way through their disempowerment. The Book of Lamentations, sitting firmly in the middle of the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible, laments the fall of Jerusalem and the beginning of the Babylonian captivity. Its poems are still used today in Jewish liturgy. It has allowed people to name their loss, their complicity and their fear, to turn passive despair into active mourning and to release the energy trapped in maintaining denial into energy for action and change. Lamentation has been an important aspect of all movements for justice, peace and freedom.

In a culture which is terrified of failure, loss and grief, finding the appropriate spaces for lamentation is not easy, but I think it is essential. We need ways of remembering and naming, in sorrow and anger, what we have loved, even as it is under threat. To release these is also to release our power for repentance and change.

Now is time for anger and sorrow that liberates us for action.’

**TIME FOR REFLECTION AND PRAYER AT THE THREE STATIONS:**

Move to which ever Stations you wish and reflect on the pictures and words there. If you would like to, write down your feelings or thoughts. Some music will be played during this time of reflection, and the time will be rounded off by the song “Don’t be afraid”.

Station 1: Consequences – suffering, refugees, loss of biodiversity, balance of eco systems upset

Station 2: Causes – greed, waste, disconnect from nature, economic systems built on ‘growth’, lack of thankfulness and respect, denial and fear of change

Station 3: Discipleship – honesty, being open to change, being ‘counter-cultural’, speaking out, taking action

**SONG:** 🎵 Don't be afraid. My love is stronger,  
my love is stronger than your fear.  
Don't be afraid. My love is stronger  
and I have promis'd, promis'd to be always near.

**THE LORD'S PRAYER:**

**ALL:** Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven,  
Give us today our daily bread,  
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us,  
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil,  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,  
Now and for ever. Amen

**AFFIRMATION:**

**Leader:** With the whole church,  
**ALL:** We affirm that we are made in God's image, befriended by Christ, empowered by the Spirit.  
**Leader:** With people everywhere,  
**ALL:** We affirm God's goodness at the heart of humanity, planted more deeply than all that is wrong.  
**Leader:** With all creation,  
**ALL:** We celebrate the miracle and wonder of life, the unfolding purposes of God, forever at work in ourselves and the world.

**DISCUSSION:** In what ways can we: Tread lightly / Live as part of creation,  
Be changed,  
Transform our communities?

**SONG:** 🎵 'Christ be our light' (Common Ground 21)

1. Longing for light, we wait in darkness.  
Longing for truth, we turn to you.  
Make us your own, your holy people,  
light for the world to see.  
*Christ be our light!*  
*Shine in our hearts,*  
*Shine in the darkness.*  
*Christ, be our light!*  
*Shine in your church gathered today.*
2. Longing for peace, our world is troubled.  
Longing for hope, many despair.  
Your word alone has power to save us.  
Making your living voice.
3. Longing for food, many are hungry.  
Longing for water, many still thirst.  
Make us your bread, broken for others,  
shared until all are fed.

4. Longing for shelter, many are homeless,  
Longing for warmth, many are cold.  
Make us your bread, broken for others,  
shared until all are fed.  
*Christ be our light!*  
*Shine in our hearts,*  
*Shine in the darkness.*  
*Christ, be our light!*  
*Shine in your church gathered today.*

5. Many the gifts, many the people,  
many the hearts that yearn to belong.  
Let us be servants to one another,  
making your kingdom come.

**CLOSING RESPONSES:**

**Leader:** We will tread the earth lightly:  
**ALL:** **Scattering God's blessing.**  
**Leader:** Our hearts changed by love:  
**ALL:** **The love of the Living God.**  
**Leader:** Working to transform the world –  
**ALL:** **Inspired by the Holy God. Amen**

**BLESSING:**

**ALL:** **May the peace of God –  
the demanding peace of emotional engagement  
the dangerous peace of imaginative action  
the dynamic peace of Holy Dreaming –  
fill our hearts with joy, our lives with courage,  
and our world with change. Amen**

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'Come All You People'  
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The next Iona service will be at 5pm on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> October in Pershore Abbey