



The
Jim
Forest
Institute
for Religion,
Peace, &
Justice

A GATHERING FOR CORPORATE LAMENT

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WHY LAMENT?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

CANDLE-LIGHTING, BREATH PRAYER,
AND POETRY

CORPORAL INVOCATION

LECTIO DIVINA WITH SALT RITUAL

CORPORATE PRAYER FOR
PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

OPEN TABLE RITUAL AND POETRY

BENEDICTION

Gathering for Corporal Lament

Materials needed: a table with a candle for each person, matches, a common bowl of salt, a common bowl of water, bread, and wine. If doing this on Zoom, each individual should have each of these items ready.

In-person considerations - Share handouts, or be prepared to project, the Corporal Invocation, Prayer for Palestine and Israel, and Benediction so people can easily participate in the corporate aspects of the lament. Arrange seating in a circle but allow for people to move around the room as needed. Lament can be uncomfortable for people not accustomed to the practice.

Virtual meeting considerations - Provide guidance to participants regarding expectations for muting and unmuting themselves, camera on or off, etc. Be prepared to share your screen for the corporate reading portions and the art work.

Why Lament?

Celebrant: Lament, as a spiritual prayer practice, is found throughout the pages of scripture. Our time together for lament will create space for silence and for speaking; for reading scriptures, prayers, and poems; and space just to breathe...and maybe cry. Everything is welcome.

Walter Brueggemann, longtime biblical interpreter, author and speaker, says in his book *The Prophetic Imagination* - "Newness comes precisely from expressed pain. Suffering made audible and visible produces hope, articulated grief is the gate of newness, and the history of Jesus is the history of entering into the pain and giving it a voice. (p. 91) Tears break a barrier like no harshness or anger can. Tears are a way of solidarity in pain when no other form of solidarity remains." (p. 56)

Personal Reflection

Celebrant: First, take a minute of reflection to choose two words to describe how you come today and speak them out.

People: (Each person speaks forth their two words):

***Celebrant:** Imagine holding each of our two words in our heart-space together as an offering to each other and to God in silence. (Remain in silent contemplation for a few minutes)*

Candle-Lighting, Breath Prayer, and Poetry

***Celebrant:** We light a candle signifying the Holy Spirit's presence.*

*Reflection - After candles are lit, play the poem written by **Jan Richardson**, "How the Light Comes," for reflection, to bring us into this space. Alternatively read this poem aloud below.*

<https://www.janrichardson.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/shepherdofthelake/videos/how-the-light-comes-poem-by-jan-richardson/636022947826513/>

*I cannot tell you
how the light comes.
What I know
is that it is more ancient
than imagining.
That it travels
across an astounding expanse
to reach us.
That it loves
searching out
what is hidden
what is lost
what is forgotten
or in peril
or in pain.
That it has a fondness
for the body
for finding its way
toward flesh
for tracing the edges
of form*

*for shining forth
through the eye,
the hand,
the heart.*

*I cannot tell you
how the light comes,
but that it does.*

That it will.

*That it works its way
into the deepest dark
that enfolds you,
though it may seem
long ages in coming
or arrive in a shape
you did not foresee.*

And so

*may we this day
turn ourselves toward it.*

*May we lift our faces
to let it find us.*

*May we bend our bodies
to follow the arc it makes.*

*May we open
and open more
and open still
to the blessed light
that comes.*

Celebrant: As we move into Lament, remember that His light is with us, in us, and through us.

Inhale: As you breathe in, imagine being filled with God's light. Feel the warmth inside your body.

Exhale: As you breathe out, imagine God's light filling the world.

Corporal Invocation

All: We call on you, O God, to tell you of these griefs that cause us to suffer. We call on you to break our hearts open. May we not bury our faces from the truth of our lives, of this world...and of your love. May we hold the weight of these things even as it brings us to our knees. We say these things not to escape the thickness of suffering but rather to say, "All of this belongs to God". Weep with us, O God of Tears.

May we draw near to each other's hearts. Let us move through grief together. Let us witness You, our Weeping God, weeping with us as we weep with and for each other's griefs. You are acquainted with grief... Your own and ours. Jesus, you are safe in that way. You have spoken: "Blessed are you who mourn, for you will be comforted."

Lectio Divina: Psalm 6 with Salt Ritual

(Psalm 6 read aloud, interspersed with salt/water ritual)

Celebrant: We will spend some time lamenting while reading through a psalm of lament, Psalm 6: 2- 9. Honor the suffering ones you know, including yourself. For each cry of your heart, name it and memorialize it by putting some salt in the water to represent your tears for yourself, for others, and for the world. Let the silence do the heavy lifting.

Celebrant:

Verse 2: Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am faint;
heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony.

** What are you in agony about? What needs healing? Who do you know that needs healing? Use your voice, or silently pray, to offer your lament to God and memorialize it by putting some salt in the bowl. *(Allow time for all to do this.)*

Celebrant:

Verse 3: My soul is in deep anguish.
How long, Lord, how long?

****** What is your soul in anguish about? What have you been waiting a long time for?
(Repeat the salt ritual above.)

Celebrant:

Verse 4-6: Turn, Lord, and deliver me;
save me because of your unfailing love.
5 Among the dead no one proclaims your name.
Who praises you from the grave?

6 I am worn out from my groaning.

All night long I flood my bed with weeping
and drench my couch with tears.

****** What is wearing you out? What do you cry about when you are alone? *(Repeat the salt ritual above.)*

Celebrant:

Verse 7: My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes.

****** Where are you feeling weak? What evils do you particularly abhor right now?
(Repeat the salt ritual above.)

Celebrant:

Verse 8-9: Away from me, all you who do evil,
for the Lord has heard my weeping.
9 The Lord has heard my cry for mercy;
the Lord accepts my prayer.

Celebrant: Let us wait in silence on the Lord who heard our weeping and listened to our cries for mercy. The Lord accepts our prayers of lament as he seeks worshipers who do so in spirit and in truth. (Wait in silence for a few minutes.)

Celebrant: Now let us offer prayer now together for that chosen place in the world where Christ's advent first took on flesh:

Corporate Prayer for Palestine and Israel

<https://mcc.org/resources/prayer-palestine-and-israel>

All: (Pray prayer corporately, pausing at the end for any additional laments or specific prayers for Palestine and Israel)

Oh God of life and love and peace,
We witness the violence and injustice in your Holy Land
And our hearts break.

Our hearts break for the people of Israel—
For the victims of violent attacks by Hamas
For those who live with fear and insecurity
For those who suffer from the inter-generational trauma of violence.

Our hearts break for Palestinians—
For the victims of violent attacks by the Israeli military
For those being denied water, electricity and medical care
For those who are refugees, long displaced from their homes.

We especially pray—
The weapons of war be laid down
The walls of separation be dismantled
That prisoners be released
That demonizing of “the other” cease
That political leaders seek the good of all people in Palestine and Israel.

O God, whose heart breaks for the world,
May your justice dwell in the land
May your righteousness abide in fruitful fields
May the effect of righteousness be quietness and trust forever
May the effect of justice be peace—enduring peace. Amen.

*** Pause for anyone to pray any additional laments or specific prayers for peace in their communities or in the world.*

Open Table Ritual with Poetry-reading

Celebrant: (Passes bread and wine; then reads “And the Table Will be Wide” – Jan Richardson) <https://www.janrichardson.com>

And the Table Will Be Wide by Jan Richardson

*And the table
will be wide.
And the welcome
will be wide.
And the arms
will open wide
to gather us in.
And our hearts
will open wide
to receive.

And we will come
as children who trust
there is enough.
And we will come*

*unhindered and free.
And our aching
will be met
with bread.
And our sorrow
will be met
with wine.
And we will open our hands
to the feast
without shame.
And we will turn
toward each other
without fear.
And we will give up
our appetite
for despair.
And we will taste
and know
of delight.
And we will become bread
for a hungry world.
And we will become drink
for those who thirst.
And the blessed
will become the blessing.
And everywhere
will be the feast.*

This art piece can be projected for silent group reflection during the ritual or used as a visio divina exercise to facilitate prophetic imagination for a hopeful future.



<https://paintedprayerbook.com/2008/10/03/the-best-supper/>

Benediction

Celebrant: “May there be such a oneness between us, that when one cries, the other tastes salt.” (Kahlil Gibran)

May you be filled with lovingkindness.

People: May you be filled with lovingkindness.

Celebrant: May you be safe and protected.

People: May you be safe and protected.

Celebrant: May you be well in body and mind.

People: May you be well in body and mind.

Celebrant: May you be happy and at ease.

People: May you be happy and at ease.

All: “Let us hold fast to the hope set before us which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm—this Jesus, who has gone before us into the inner hiddenness of all things.” Amen. (Paraphrase of Hebrews 6:19)

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