

A SERVICE OF LAMENT, THANKSGIVING & RESTORATION.

THE GATHERING

We meet in the presence of God

ALL: Who knows our needs, hears our cries, feels our pain, and heals our wounds.

LINK TO HYMN: GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS

LIGHT OUR CANDLES

Lord God, the maker and redeemer of all, as we come before you
in grief and praise this day,
comfort us with your presence,
make us attentive to your voice,
and sustain us with the hope of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Lament is what happens when people ask, "Why?" and don't get an answer. The older I get the more I realise that life is complex and full of ambiguities, loss and pain as well as joy and thanksgiving. These emotions are all part of what it means to be human. If we are to be anything before our God then we should at the very least be honest about our feelings and emotions.

Mistakenly, but with good intentions, our society promotes the happiness movement where people are encouraged to always be happy, where the solution to human restlessness is not a God to find our rest in, but rather is to be found within ourselves. We have much wisdom to offer our world. The Gospel is clear we do not merit happiness, and cannot earn it. It is a free gift a grace.

Lament helps us move beyond our self-centred worry and look more broadly at the suffering of the world. It's bad enough facing a pandemic in Newcastle but what about a crowded refugee camp on a Greek island? What about the overcrowded slums of India?

At this point the Psalms, the Bible's own hymnbook, come back into their own, Yes, these poems often come out into the light by the end, with a fresh sense of God's presence and hope, not to explain the trouble but to provide reassurance within it.

I find it interesting that many of you who sent in a completed questionnaire quoted the Psalms as scripture that has helped sustain you during this time. In a moment will hear some of the psalms that people have sent me, but first Judith will read a poem she created that sums up some of the many emotions we have all felt during this difficult time.

JUDITH RAMSAY: Fearful

Voices clamour for attention.
Images flash before our eyes.
Our minds are distracted
Fears flood in.
We grieve for lost things,
The lost ones,
The lives we once had,
the places we loved, and can visit no more.

Who can we tell?
Who will listen?
Our hearts are breaking, the future uncertain.
We feel trapped and fearful.
Who hears our pain?
Who holds the hands we cannot touch?
Who speaks the words we cannot say?
God's love is not bound by lockdown and quarantine.
He can reach those we love,
And reach and heal the depths of our pain,
And hold us in the palm of His hand, all our days.

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR LAMENT

1) ANNIE: During lockdown I have felt tired. Psalm 130 Out of the depths I have called to you, Lord, Let your ears be open to hear my voice. My soul is longing for the Lord, more than those who watch for daybreak.

2) JOHN DAWSON: During lockdown I have felt sad, sorrowful, peaceful. Psalm 91:14-16 "Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

3) JULIE HORTON to read for ROSIE CHILCOTT: During lockdown I have felt overwhelmed. Psalm 61:2 From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

4) RUTH DAWSON to read for BERYL ENTWISLE: During Lockdown I have felt sad afraid, lonely, exhausted, sorrow, peaceful, grateful, disconnected, helpless. Deuteronomy 31:6 Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.

4) IVAN WEIR Psalm 4:6-8 Many people say, "Who will show us better times?" Let you face smile on us, Lord. You have given me greater joy, than those who have abundant harvest of grain and new wine. In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, O Lord, will keep me safe.

Ivan will now read and then give a short reflection on the poem by A Studdert Kennedy "The Unutterable Beauty, Collected Poems, 1927

Blessed are the eyes that see the things that you have seen, blessed are the feet that walk the ways that you have been.

Blessed are the eyes that see the agony of God, blessed are the feet that tread the paths that His feet have trod.

Blessed are the souls that solve the paradox of pain, and find the path that, piercing it, leads through to Peace again.

SHORT REFLECTION BY IVAN

ANNIE: So Lord we lift to you all our loss and sorrow during this time. For relatives we have not been able to visit and hug, the loved ones who have died, whether Covid-related

or not, the church community and communal worship we miss, being alone with no one to hug us, the family events we have not been able to celebrate,

ANNIE: Father, we commend to your faithful love those who are crying from the depths; help them to watch and pray through their time of darkness. Be with all those who have suffered bereavement and loss during this time and bring them your peace and healing through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ALL: MY HOPE IS IN GOD. AMEN

ANNIE: Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned. Come, creator Spirit, source of life; sustain us when our hearts are heavy and our wells have run dry, for you are the Father's gift, with him who is our living water, Jesus Christ our Lord.

ALL: MY HOPE IS IN GOD. AMEN

[LINK TO HYMN: WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS](#)

THANKSGIVING

During times of trouble as well as joy we as Christians are called to give thanksgiving for all that is good. Research shows that thankfulness has all kinds of benefits, and perhaps helps us see these burdens we carry are shared by our Lord. Through this we can find that our trust in God's provision grows and we are led onwards towards restoration. We can express and find this in all kinds of ways, through prayer, dance, laughter, creating paintings or crafts. And as **RUTH DAWSON** added, "**Thankful for my husband sharing the shopping**".

PAULA: SHARING ABOUT THE QUILT SHE HAS MADE



1) **JUDITH RAMSAY** I am most thankful for linking up with friends on zoom, socially distanced dancing, in the open air, and learning to play my new keyboard. **Deuteronomy 33:27** The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

2) **IVAN WEIR** to read for **MURIEL WEIR** I am most thankful for supportive family and friends. Deuteronomy 31:6

3) **IVAN WEIR** will read for **BERYL ENTWISTLE** I am most thankful for, phone calls from friends, carers in The Willows Care Home, family bringing shopping, safe arrival of two great great nieces, the ability to be part of worship The occasional reminders that however bad it gets, God is always with me and always answers my prayers, even though they have been unspoken. Deuteronomy 31:6 Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

4) **SUSAN JOHNSON:** I am most thankful for my family and work situation. God for keeping us safe. The time to catch up with friends and relations that I don't normally have time to chat with. Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. Revelation 21:4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’

5) **IRENE:** I am most thankful for support from my friends and family and maintaining my connection with church. 1 Peter 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

6) **LOIS GARDENER** to read for **JOHN GARDENER:** I am most thankful for release from expectations and commitments, having a garden, walking more and the lovely spring weather. Matthew 11:28 Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

7) **LOIS GARDENER:** During lockdown I have felt thankful for our son being home with us during this time. Psalm 34:1-10 I will praise the Lord at all times; my mouth will continually praise him. I will boast in the Lord; let the oppressed hear and rejoice. Magnify the Lord with me. Let us praise his name together. I sought the Lord's help and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Look to him and be radiant; do not let your faces be ashamed. This oppressed man cried out and the Lord heard; he saved him from all his troubles. The angel of the Lord camps around the Lord's loyal followers and delivers them. Taste and see that the Lord is good. How blessed is the one who takes shelter in him. Fear the Lord, you chosen people of his, for those who fear him lack nothing. Even young lions sometimes lack food and are hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

LOIS GARDENER: PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

ANNIE God is our refuge and strength, ready to help whenever we are in trouble: To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; You are the God of my salvation, In you I hope all the day long. Faithful Lord, whose steadfast love never ceases and whose mercies never come to an end: grant us the grace to trust you and to receive the gifts of your love, new every morning, in Jesus Christ our Lord. **All O my God, in you I trust. Amen.**

RESTORATION

We are not promised an easy life, but we are promised that our God will walk with us through good and bad times and in this find rest and restoration, a God to rest in. We are told in Psalm 84, “Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion, who going through the barren valley find there a spring, and the early

rains will clothe it with blessing. They will go from strength to strength and appear before God in Zion". Yvonne Rose wrote of the comfort she felt watching a special purple rose, bought in memory of her daughter, grow.

TIM ROGERS: Many of you have said how you have been restored and refreshed by nature, the sunshine, wild flowers, birds, allotments and gardens. Spiritual writers such as Richard Rohr, Thomas Merton, and David Benner's book *Opening to God*, and the prayer *Footprints in the Sand* have sustained you, with many saying how they have spent more time reading scripture gaining fresh insights. Barbara Dawson says how "I am more awake than I ever have been to the love and revelation of God". Desmond said how he valued the time for reflection and getting to know his true spiritual state better and having more time with his family.

Technology has also helped, enabling us to be in contact with church, friends, family, book clubs and watching programmes such as *Gardeners World*. Elizabeth Brauns shared how she has joined in with radio/tv religious programmes and has looked up the bible passages used.

JACKIE COLLINS: I have read more books these last few months than in the past year! I have done a lot more baking and watching a lot more informative programmes/documentaries than I would normally have done. I even wrote to a letter page in a magazine and had it printed in a recent edition. Also searching the internet for services and resources on line has been very beneficial.

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR RESTORATION.

1) **ANDY to read for BARBARA DAWSON: I am restored by St John's video services, crafting cards. Psalm 30:2** Lord my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me.

2) **JANE to read for CHARITY OTIENO: I am restored by daily devotions, the bible, wildlife photography, Emmerdale, Coronation street, Vera, Goggle box, Netflix. John 1:16** Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given.

3) **JULIE HORTON: I am restored by You Tube recording by Graham Kendrick The Banner Flying High. Isaiah 40:30-31** Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint.

4) **ANNIE to read for ANNE MCGREGOR: I am restored by the kindness of friends and neighbours and going to the hairdressers. John 14:1-3** Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

5) **VALERIE CAMPBELL: I am restored by God's peace and modern technology which has kept us in touch with friends and family. Matthew 28:20** I am with you always even to the end of the age.

6) **ADELE reads for BENTLY EAPEN: I am restored by knowing God's protection over my family and the series The Chosen. Hebrews 10:23** Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for He is faithful.

ANNIE: Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and be not wise in your own sight. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths. **Amen.**

[LINK TO HYMN: BLESS THE LORD O MY SOUL](#)

CONCLUDING PRAYERS

Lord Jesus Christ, you taught us to love our neighbour,
and to care for those in need as if we were caring for you.
In times of anxiety, give us strength to comfort the fearful, to tend the sick, and to assure
the isolated of our love, and your love. God of love,
passionate and strong, tender and caring: watch over us and hold us
all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **AMEN.**

As Margaret Cutts has reminded us of that well known saying from Julian of Norwich, "All shall be well and all manner of things shall be well".

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and watch over you, the Lord make his face shine upon you and be
gracious to you, the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace. **ALL AMEN.**