

Go and...!

Notes from 3/31/2022 Gathering on Zoom – 30 participants on screen

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Theme: Go and Lament

Lament (v.): to feel, show, or express grief, sorrow, or regret. To mourn deeply.

Lament (N.): a crying out in grief: wailing

- Lament is both individual and communal
- Lament as a form of speech has been lost in our society and churches
- A relationship with God can and should include lament
- Lament is not a sign of “lack of faith” but rather is a sign of a full relationship with God
 - o We need to embrace and release grief, pain, and hurt so it doesn’t destroy us
- Lament draws us into connection with God and others
- Lament allows our pain to become the substance of our prayers

Psalm 146

- Hymn of praise
- Begins and ends with praising God
- In spite of our laments, we can still proclaim that God is faithful and trust in God
- We can (and are allowed to) cry out to God to pay attention
- 2/3 of the Psalms are laments
- Laments are “in the meantime” prayers
 - o Reminder that God works in the midst of our pain, that our final prayer is praise
 - o Our story does not end in sorrow, it ends with praise to the Lord

A Prayer of Lament by Rev. Jay Berry

God of promise and hope,
You who promised descendants to Sarah and Abraham,
You who promised life abundant through your Son, Jesus;
Holy One, why do your promises exhaust my soul?
My words seem empty as I speak of your promises.
I long to hear your voice speak peace into being.

What would you have me say to bring peace to your children in Ukraine?
In what way might I help to bring sense to a world of chaos?
What words of armor would you have me speak to those who are oppressed for the color of their skin, the language they speak, or who they love?
What would you have me do to calm my own heart and the hearts of others?
I long to hear your voice to still my quaking heart.

Forgive me Lord for distractions that crowd my mind.

Have pity on me for my inability to discern your voice in the midst of a cacophony of voices demanding my attention.

I pray that you will help me to hear your voice with more clarity.

I seek only the direction you would have me go.

I pray that I might passionately console others who are also frightened and troubled.

As you promised Sarah and Abraham, their progeny continues to fill our planet.

So too do you fill me with hope.

When I am fearful, it is to you that I seek solace.

When I am without words, it is your voice for which I yearn.

You are holy and immortal. Your love has spanned the ages,

And will continue through eternity.

I praise you for being God, the only God.

I thank you for loving me and your whole creation.

I promise Lord, that I will try listening - for it is your voice for which I yearn.

AMEN.

***This prayer was written by Rev. Jay Berry using the same lament exercise that was led during the workshop later on. Pastor Jay was gracious enough to share his prayer during the workshop and provide the written words to be shared with all of you.*

Lamenting Racism – All Creation Sings

- Rev. Danielle McCleary led the group in this prayer of lament
- It was emailed to all participants and is available in the new hymnal, All Creation Sings
- This is a powerful exercise

Lamenting Longings and Losses

- Laments comprise of 6 parts
 1. Address God: use whatever address feels appropriate to draw God into conversation with you during your lament
 2. Complaint: voice your complaints about God (“you”), yourself (“I”), and others (“they”)
 3. Confession: confess your need for God’s forgiveness and grace
 4. Ask God for Help: name what you want God to do, your longings and losses
 5. Affirm Trust in God: imagine the shape God’s faithfulness will take
 6. Promise to Praise God: for what has been done and what God will do
- None of us are free from everything, but some us will have more to lament than others
- Lament is vital to deepening our relationship with God

Participants were led in the exercise of writing a lament

- Follow the six steps listed above and below
- Give lots of time to sit in the silence as you write out or think through your thoughts of lament to God

Writing a Lament Exercise: Participants were led through the exercise

Breakout Groups: participants answered the following questions, reflecting on the lament exercise

- How was this experience for you? Have you learned something new about yourself in this practice?
- How do you see this practice being applied in your congregations?

Reflection: participants shared what they talked about in the breakout rooms

- There is a blessing/permission giving to express lament filled complaints and negative feelings
- Comfort and hope knowing that God listens
- Cathartic and refreshing
- Steps are helpful for expression, understanding, and processing
- Unstructured complains sessions from God, but this gave order and conclusions
- Ends on an affirming note which helps us not get stuck in the complaint
 - o Reminder that God is at work
- Good template to use to express lament
- ACTS prayers: Affirmation, Confession, Thanks, Supplication
 - o Need a new acronym to include Lament
- You might think it's difficult to write a lament but using these prompts it was easy
- Permission: it is okay to complain to God
- It gives us voice when we have none
- How might we get the youth involved, could this help them find the words to express their feelings?
- It is okay to express how you are truly feeling
- Take time to engage in spiritual practice
- End with confidence in faith and in God
 - o God is there, God's got this, God's got this
- Think of it like we have gone down a rabbit hole and God is at the bottom kicking us back up to the light

Pastor Jessica Lambert, former pastor of St. Paul in Jersey City: What Keeps You Up At Night?

- Pastor Jessica shared her experience of providing ways for her community to engage in the question "what keeps you up at night" and use it as a way to connect one another
 - o Used a white board where people can write their prayer requests
 - o Work those requests into the prayers of the people
 - o Opportunity to hear and acknowledge people's deep emotions
- Creates compassion and healing when you hear other people with the same concerns and fears as you
- Builds trust and relationship, it will grow in ways you cannot imagine
- The more genuine our prayers, the better
- Tell God everything
- People think they cannot come to a church when they are a mess, but that is exactly where we belong, in God's hands

- Institutional church has created a toxic environment where people do not feel comfortable and that is sad
- Devotional recommendation: Good Enough by Kate Bowler

Video about Lament from Vicar Dianne Lewis: Vicar Dianne shared some powerful reflections on lament and the importance of using it as a spiritual practice

- Lament belongs to each one of us
- We would rather leave lament and racial justice at the door than engage in it
- It is a cleansing for each of us to help grow closer to God
- God liberates us from the wickedness of the world and society
- Lament comes from experiences and things we struggle with
- People turn away from one another, but God does not turn away from us
- Although we lament, we are not alone in the wilderness
- Lament opens us up to allowing the Holy Spirit to do her thing
- Until we lament, we are lost

Resources

- Rachel's Cry by Kathleen Billman
- Prophetic Lament by Chan Rah
- All Creation Sings (hymnal)