

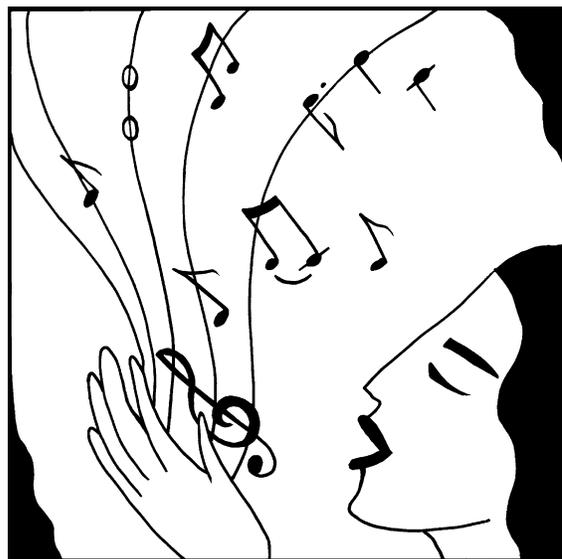
Light in the Darkness: A Service of Lament and Hope

marking one year since the pandemic lockdown and moving us forward in hope

7:00 pm 21 March 2021

We gather on zoom via this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84436179501?pwd=Smw0TzJXYUh2ZUNySDhIZWpNRlRqdz09>



Joining Together

**Genesis Gospel Café
Jeanette Harris, Lay Licensed Minister**

**Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Fairfield, CT
Mark Christoffersen, Pastor**

**Saint Andrew's Lutheran Church, Ridgefield, CT
Beth Anderson, Pastor**

**Saint Michael's Lutheran Church, New Canaan, CT
Derrick Fallon, Pastor**

**Salem Lutheran Church, Bridgeport, CT
Marjo Anderson, Pastor**

Light in the Darkness: A Service of Lament and Hope

marking one year since the pandemic lockdown and moving forward in hope

+ GATHERING +

Welcome

Welcome to Light in the Darkness, a Service of Lament and Hope!

With Job of old we cry out:

Everywhere the innocent suffer.

Our desires and efforts achieve us little.

O God, are you good, yet do nothing to help us?

Our answers have holes, and we fall through.

The book of Lamentations teaches us 3 things:

We cannot avoid suffering and pain; it is part of the human experience.

Our first instinct is to avoid pain, and yet ignoring it allows wounds to fester.

By naming aloud our pain before God and in the presence of one another,

we expose our wounds to air, to the wind of the Spirit, and we begin to heal.

And so, with the psalmist we cry out:

Our help is in the name of the Lord,

who made heaven and earth.

The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?

The Light shines in the darkness!

And the darkness has not overcome it!

Lighting of the Christ Candle and our own candles

Music

Christ Be Our Light

ELW # 715

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,

Refrain: Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through 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 pow'r to save us, Make us your living voice. *(Refrain)*
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. *(Refrain)*
4. Longing for shelter, many are homeless, Longing for warmth, many are cold,
Make us your building, sheltering others, walls made of living stone. *(Refrain)*
5. Many the gifts, many the people, Many the hearts that yearn to belong,
Let us be servants to one another, signs of your kingdom come. *(Refrain)*

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

O God, where hearts are fearful and constricted,

we trust you will provide courage and hope!

Where anxiety is infections and widening,

we trust you will provide peace and reassurance!

Where impossibilities close every door and window,

we trust you will provide imagination and resistance!

Where distrust twists our thinking,

we trust you will provide healing and illumination!

Where spirits are daunted and weakened,

we trust you will provide soaring wings and strengthened dreams!

We pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Spirit!

Amen

+ WORD +

Words of Lament



We begin by singing the Taizé refrain, "O Lord, Hear My Prayer".

*After each Word of Lament,
fabric is torn, and we join in silent prayer while this melody is played by an instrument.
Then a bell is rung.*

At the end of the Laments, we sing new words to the tune, "The Lord Is My Song".

Song

O Lord, Hear My Prayer / The Lord Is My Song

ELW # 751

**O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: when I call, answer me.
O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: come and listen to me.**

I. THE IMMEDIATE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Words of Lament from Scripture

A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field.

The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass.

[Isaiah 40.6-7]

Words of Lament from our Hearts

God, we rend our garments as we cry out in lament for those who have been touched by the corona virus: those who have suffered through it at home or who have been hospitalized, those who have fully recovered, those who are still recovering, those who have died, and those who have been left bereft and grieving.

Hearts and lives have been torn apart....

Lamenters may tear fabric.

~SILENT PRAYER~

A bell is rung.

II. THE ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Words of Lament from Scripture

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

²O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest. *[Psalm 22.1-2]*

Words of Lament from our Hearts

God, we rend our garments as we cry out in lament for those who have been touched by the economic shut down: those who have lost their business, job, or income, and those who have lost medical care, housing, food, and the opportunity to thrive.

Hearts and lives have been torn apart....

Lamenters may tear fabric.

~SILENT PRAYER~

A bell is rung.

III. THE RELATIONAL EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Words of Lament from Scripture

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?

How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long? *[Psalm 13.1-2a]*

Words of Lament from our Hearts

God, we rend our garments as we cry out in lament for all who have been touched by losses in relationship: physical connection, travel, family gatherings, handshakes, hugs; and even smiles; those for whom domestic abuse and neglect and conflict have been exacerbated; those who have experienced increased substance

Hearts and lives have been torn apart....

Lamenters may tear fabric.

~ SILENT PRAYER ~

A bell is rung.

IV. THE LOSS OF RITUALS & ROUTINES DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Words of Lament from Scripture

By the rivers of Babylon — there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion.
On the willows there we hung up our harps....
How could we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land? [*Psalm 137.1-2, 4*]

Words of Lament from our Hearts

God, we rend our garments as we cry out in lament for those who have been touched by the loss of rituals and routines: for those who have not been able to touch new babies, celebrate graduations, get married, sit at the bedside of a dying loved one, have funerals, or be held in their grief; and for our inability to gather in person to worship and pray and sing your praise.
Hearts and lives have been torn apart....

Lamenters may tear fabric.

~ SILENT PRAYER ~

A bell is rung.

V. THE INJUSTICES THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS REVEALED

Words of Lament from Scripture

Do not, O LORD, withhold your mercy from me;
let your steadfast love and your faithfulness keep me safe forever.
For evils have encompassed me without number; my iniquities have overtaken me, until I cannot see;
they are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails me. [*Psalm 40.11-14*]

Words of Lament from our Hearts

God, we rend our garments as we cry out in lament for all those injustices that have been brought into the light this past year: overt and covert racism, oppression and the growing disparity in wealth and opportunity, violence & murder, and the lack of accountability of some and the complicity of all, divisiveness and partisanship in government and social unrest, and the increased frequency and severity of natural disasters.
Hearts and lives have been torn apart....

Lamenters may tear fabric.

~ SILENT PRAYER ~

A bell is rung.

Song

O Lord, Hear My Prayer / The Lord Is My Song

ELW # 751

**The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: all my hope comes from God.
The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: God, the wellspring of life.**

Words of Hope



Scripture Shower of Hope

We give you thanks and praise for your word reminds us

The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want!

Yea though I walk through the valley of death I will fear no evil for you are with me. [Psalm 23]

We give you thanks and praise for your word reminds us

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear. [Psalm 46]

We give you thanks and praise for your word reminds us

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. [Psalm 91]

We give you thanks and praise for your word reminds us

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? [Psalm 27]

We give you thanks and praise for your word reminds us

Do not fear, 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;

and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;

when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. [Isaiah 43]

Word of Hope and Prayer

Hear these words, receive their power:

The majesty of God the Father undergirds all that is.

The mercy of God the Son accepts our despair.

The comfort of God the Spirit embraces us in communities of care.

Let us join in saying, "Thanks be to God!"

Thanks be to God! Amen

+ SENDING +

Lord's Prayer

Sharing of Peace

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

And also with you!

Now, we will share peace in a different way!

*The leader speaks the name of a participant, saying, "NAME, I send you God's love and light!"
That person says the same to a new participant, and so on, until all have been so blessed.*

Blessing

God says: "For I know the plans I have for you ... plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." [Jeremiah 29:11]

As we conclude this time of worship and prayer, we know that always, God goes with us: through the presence of the Spirit and the presence of one another.

Hear these words of blessing:

May the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all now and forever.

Amen

Hymn

My Life Flows on in Endless Song / How Can I Keep from Singing?

ELW # 763

1. My life flows on in endless song; above earth's lamentation,
I catch the sweet, though far-off hymn that hails a new creation.
No storm can shake my inmost calm, while to that Rock I'm clinging.
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?
2. Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear that music ringing;
It finds an echo in my soul. How can I keep from singing?
No storm can shake my inmost calm, while to that Rock I'm clinging.
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?
3. What though my joys and comforts die? The Lord my Savior liveth.
What though the darkness gather 'round? Songs in the night he giveth.
No storm can shake my inmost calm, while to that Rock I'm clinging.
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?
4. The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart, a fountain ever springing!
All things are mine since I am his! How can I keep from singing?
No storm can shake my inmost calm, while to that Rock I'm clinging.
Since Christ is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?

CREDITS

Resources for this worship were drawn from the following:

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's "Service of Prayer in Times of Violence"
https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Service_of_Prayer_in_Times_of_Violence.pdf

re:thinkworship.com's "Lament Service"
<https://www.rethinkworship.com/LAMENT-SERVICE/>

Faithward's "Service of Lament Liturgy" by Sarah Van Zetten-Bruins and Darla Olson
<https://www.faithward.org/service-of-lament-liturgy/>

The Institute for Congregational Trauma and Growth's "A Guide to Planning a Service of Lament".
https://www.ictg.org/uploads/1/2/9/5/12954435/ictg_guide_to_planning_a_service_of_lament.pdf

HYMN: "Christ, Be Our Light", Evangelical Lutheran Worship # 715

Text: based on Matthew 5:14, John 1:9, 3:19, 8:12, 9:5, 12:46, 2 Corinthians 4:6,
by Bernadette Farrell, b. 1957, Meter 9 8 9 6 and refrain

Music: CHRIST, BE OUR LIGHT, by Bernadette Farrell, b. 1957,

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Performance by Alice Caldwell, organist, and Sharon Horvath, songleader, Our Saviour's

HYMN: "O Lord, Hear My Prayer", Evangelical Lutheran Worship # 751

Text: based on Psalm 102:1-2, Isaiah 12:1-6, John 4,

by Psalm 102:1-2, Taizé Community, adapt., Meter 5 5 6 D

Music: HEAR MY PRAYER, by Jacques Berthier, 1923-1994,

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Performance by Alice Caldwell, organist, and Sharon Horvath, songleader, Our Saviour's

HYMN: "My life Flows on in Endless Song", Evangelical Lutheran Worship # 763

Text: based on Matthew 14:22-33, 2 Corinthians 5:14-17, by Robert Lowry, 1826-1899,
Meter 8 7 8 7 and refrain

Music: HOW CAN I KEEP FROM SINGING, by Robert Lowry, 1826-1899, alt.

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