

***The Scottish Episcopal Church
St Magnus' Church: Lerwick
14 Greenfield Place***

A Good Friday liturgy of lament: feeling our sorrow, leaning into hope



Welcome to the Scottish Episcopal Church in Shetland, at home in Tingwall.

My name is Helen Randall and I am one of the Lay Readers in the Ministry Team.

This Good Friday liturgy seeks to offer time and space for grieving.
A liturgy of lament: feeling our sorrow, leaning into hope.

We will reflect on the violent death of Jesus, the suffering of people around the world today in this time of Covid19 and our own woundedness.

But we will also acknowledge that ...Life is stronger than death. Good is stronger than evil. Love is stronger than hate.

OPENING SENTENCES

Grief, grief, through all the universe the tears fall like rain:
and we add our own grieving.

Grief, grief, the cries of the people sound among their painful struggles:
and we add our own cries.

Grief, grief, the Christ, the one who bleeds, whose life is poured out, joins the
grieving in Godly vulnerability:
and we touch the wounds of this Christ born of our own frailty.

READING – at the foot of the cross to the garden tomb

John 19: 25a-end

25a Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.'²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

28 After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), 'I am thirsty.'²⁹ A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.³⁰ When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

31 Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed.³² Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him.³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.³⁴ Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out.³⁵ (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.)³⁶ These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, 'None of his bones shall be broken.'³⁷ And again another passage of scripture says, 'They will look on the one whom they have pierced.'

38 After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. ³⁹Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. ⁴⁰They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. ⁴²And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

REFLECTION

Amongst the agony of the story we hear Jesus say these words: “Woman, here is your son”, and to the disciple he says, “Here is your mother.”

Does this bring you comfort during this time of the pandemic and lockdown?

Jesus is now dead and apparently unable to help anyone else. “It is finished”. Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Does Jesus’ physical pain, his agony and suffering help you to frame a prayer in this time of great suffering in the world?

All seemed lost now; with Jesus dead, the disciples and the women shut away in their homes, afraid and grieving.

As we have lost so much of our normal life during this time of pandemic and lockdown can we identify with their feelings of fear and grief?



WE CAN HARDLY BEAR TO SEE

O God, we can hardly bear to look at what lies around us,
the pain of humankind is too much for us.
People are suffering with illness, infection,
isolation, fear and uncertainty,
with pain, distress, loneliness and anxiety.
People feel the loss of physical contact with family and friends,
and those who care for them are isolated and exhausted.
What will happen?
Who will save us?

*Lord, I cry to you, hear my prayer,
Lord, I cry to you, heal my despair.
Calm my anxieties, take Lord my pain,
bathe me with holy love again and again.
Hear from your cross of love, stretch out your hand,
dwell in this inner place, help me to stand.*

O God, our own lives carry the wounding of life.
We are bowed down by things which seem too much for some.
We grieve for our losses in illness and death,
in separation and alienation from each other.
We reel under hard choices
and the dreadful burden of our mistakes.
Who will understand this our life?
Who will comfort and forgive us?

*Lord, I cry to you, hear my prayer,
Lord, I cry to you, heal my despair.
Calm my anxieties, take Lord my pain,
bathe me with holy love again and again.
Hear from your cross of love, stretch out your hand,
dwell in this inner place, help me to stand.*

A silence is kept and a bowl of ashes is placed on the table

COLLECT

Living presence of mysterious power
and unfathomable love,
revealing to us in Jesus
that it is through the perplexing places
of evil, pain and death,
that the whole of anguished humankind
and the groaning universe itself
will come to the place of joy and wonder.
Give us courage steadfastly to trust
that in the end we shall come to know
that all has been done well.
We pray this in the Spirit of the One
who indeed bore the cost of love,
enduring to the end.
Amen.

A candle is lit and a bowl of fragrant oil is placed on the table.

WE BELIEVE

**God is present in the tomb of our waiting,
creating the costly miracles of the victory of good,
of love, of grace, of the restoration of all things.**

**In the centre of our waiting
the seeds of our salvation are announced in small signs,
in small kindnesses, in humble courage.
in lives of fragile hope, in faithfulness.**

**God is not defeated.
Life is more powerful than death.
This we believe.
From this we will live.**

OUR GRIEVING IS GATHERED INTO THE LIFE OF GOD

There will be beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning.
There will be oil for our cherishing and oil for our healing,
oil for our anointing and oil for our calling to the task.

BLESSING

And may the pain of God become the glory of the gift of life,
the suffering of Jesus be the threshold to joy,
and the travail of the Spirit be the prelude to the miracle of the birthing.

Amen.

HR – Holy Week 2020

*The words of this liturgy are drawn from the writings and prayers of Dorothy McRae-McMahon,
Jim Cotter, Graham Booth*