

Corporate Lament, Confession, & Affirmation

This prayer of lament was written by Paul Burger, with excerpts from the Covenant Book of Worship.

Leader 1: Hear the word of the Lord. Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

Leader 2: Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. (Philippians 2:1-4 NIV)

Leader 1: We would like to lead us in a time of corporate lament, confession, and affirmation, where we acknowledge our deep wounds. And we trust that we are met by a deep and abiding God.

Leader 2: The words we will pray are not easy to say. They are not fixes or solutions. They are a balm, a small drop in wounds that need to be healed, to loosen our grip on ourselves and to cling to a living God.

Leader 1: Jesus promised that those who come to him he would in no way cast out. Think of the ways that we have separated ourselves from others and did not consider our own sinfulness. We will begin in silence and as we do so, we invite you to hold your hands open in front of you, to both release and receive.

Silence

Leader 2: Let these words be your words, as we pray together:

People: Gracious God, our sins are too heavy to carry, too real to hide, and too deep to undo. Forgive what our lips tremble to name, what our hearts can no longer bear, and what has become for us a consuming fire of judgment. Set us free from a past that we cannot change; open to us a future in which we can be changed; and grant us grace to grow more and more in your likeness and image.

LAMENT

Leader 1: As Job's three friends sat together with him in the ash heap, so we sit together in lament, bearing one another's burdens, looking into one another's eyes.

Leader 2: We sit together with our sisters and brothers.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Leader 1: We sit together as God's church with a wide range of emotions and convictions among us.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Leader 2: We sit together with our heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender family

People: Lord, have mercy.

Leader 1: We sit together as your diverse family, privileged and persecuted.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Leader 2: We sit together as beloved children, beaten and bruised, weary and tired.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Leader 1: We sit together.

People: Lord, have mercy.

CONFESSION

Leader 2: The proof of God's amazing love is this: while we were sinners Christ died for us. Because we have faith in him, we dare to approach God with confidence. In humility and faith let us confess our sin to God.

Leader 1: For the name calling, belittling, and minimizing of our sisters and brothers who bear the image of God,

People: We humbly repent.

Leader 2: For the harsh words and lack of compassion we have shown,

People: We humbly repent.

Leader 1: For the unspoken judgments and self-righteous anger,

People: We humbly repent.

Leader 2: For where our theology has gotten in the way of people's suffering,

People: We humbly repent.

Leader 1: For the pain we have caused for our LGBTQ family who have felt alone, shamed, rejected, and abandoned,

People: We humbly repent.

Leader 2: For the pain we have caused for our sisters and brothers of color who have felt undervalued and unheard,

People: We humbly repent.

Leader 1: For the pain we have caused for our leaders,

People: We humbly repent.

Leader 2: For holding a position instead of holding one another,

People: We humbly repent.

AFFIRMATION

Leader 1: We affirm that we all fall short of the Kingdom of God, we affirm that in our weakness, You are our strength, we affirm one another as beloved children of God, we affirm that mercy triumphs over judgment, we affirm that none of us have any claim on the grace of God. And so together we say:

(For this section, each phrase should be shown by itself and given a moment for reflection.)

People: Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me bring love.

Where there is offense, let me bring pardon.

Where there is discord, let me bring union.

Where there is error, let me bring truth.

Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.

Where there is despair, let me bring hope.

Where there is darkness, let me bring your light.

Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.

O Master, let me not seek as much
to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love,

for it is in giving that one receives,

it is in self-forgetting that one finds,

it is in pardoning that one is pardoned,

it is in dying that one is raised to eternal life.

Leader 2: May the grace of Christ which daily renews us, and the love of God which enables us to love all, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit which unites us in one body, make us eager to obey the will of God together, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PASSING OF THE PEACE (This is potentially risky and may feel forced – notwithstanding the beautiful litany that has just been said. It may be that the leaders whomever makes the call in the moment. It may be to soon for this sentiment to be expressed. It may be that Leader 1 or 2 simply encourages the congregation to make right with one another if needful before they leave the conference/hall et al)

The people may say to one another, “The peace of the Lord be with you,” with the response, “And also with you.” Adequate time should be allowed for people to approach one another, seeking pardon in an act of reconciliation.