

ASH WEDNESDAY LITURGY

INCORPORATING A LAMENT FOR REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

PREPARING THE SPACE FOR WORSHIP

Worship space is designed with four seated sections to represent NSEW Table in the centre with décor with cross, Christ candle, a torn apart loaf of bread and a chalice lying on its side; two blue “weeping” cloths spread out from the front end of the Table; ashes soaked in oil ready for symbolic act of repentance and solidarity.

WELCOME

Friends, I welcome you as those whose care for life, goodness and justice. As a minister of the Gospel, I also welcome you in the name of Christ Jesus, whose life and death, reveals the cost of compassion.

On this the first day of Lent, a season of penitential preparation for celebrating Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, we lament that all around the world many nations have closed their borders to those fleeing persecution, terror and war; that our nation, the place of the ‘fair go’, that sings of having ‘boundless plains to share’, also turns away those who most need our welcome, our shelter and our comfort.

We lament the political choice to inflame the emotions of the fearful, we lament moves to seek to attain or maintain political power by exploiting populist prejudices through misinformation and hype, we lament the appalling continuing incarceration of refugees trapped in an abyss justified by having arrived by boats with the mantra “you will never settle in Australia”.

Today we seek forgiveness for the hardness of heart which leads to policies supposedly in our name. We trust that through confession, repentance and intercession we might find new ways forward to honour

the imperative to love God, and our neighbour as ourselves; to do to others as we would have them do to us. We commit ourselves with the sign of the cross of Jesus, whose love knew no bounds.

WE ARE GATHERED

As we gather here, we acknowledge the Kaurna people as the First Nations people of the Adelaide Plains. We pay our respect to their Elders, past and present:

And we own that we took their land, without their permission.

Some Australian forebears were forced here, as convicts.

Some came as soldiers and settlers and others as refugee boat people of an earlier time.

Some simply came because they chose to live here, seeking a better life for themselves and their families.

Many others were born here and have benefitted from the toils of our forebears.

We are gathered here today

linked to our history and to be reminded that by grace we inhabit this land.

HYMN: GOD WEEPS (Shirley Murray) tune by Doug Simper

p42 "Songs for Pilgrims

THE WORD: Matthew 5: 43 – 48

"You have heard it said, 'Love your neighbour- but hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for your persecutors,

This will prove that you are children

of God. For God makes the sun rise on bad and good alike;
God's rain falls on the just and the unjust.

If you love those who love you, what merit is there in that? Don't tax
collectors do as much?

And if you greet only your sisters
and brothers, what is so praiseworthy about that?
Don't Gentiles do as much?

Therefore be perfect, as Abba God
in heaven is perfect.

(no closing words, just leave the text hanging)

THE LAMENT

Presider (pours water into bowl)

Hear the cries of your people, O God.

**As we who sow in tears and reap the pain of
grief**

*Chant Were you there when the people fled
 their lands*

Voices of Lament

N Hear the cries of those seeking asylum as they hear voices
 across the land:

S Go home!

E Turn back!

W Join the queue!

N Hear the cries of those who fled for their
 lives and the lives of their families;
 homelands filled with horror; violence
 and war, persecution and death,
not knowing where to go – only knowing
 they cannot stay,
pleading with the Australian people for
 refuge and shelter.

S The crisis on our borders was deemed out of control that's why
 the Border Force was sent to maintain operational control.

E Any asylum seeker who arrives in Australia by boat will have no
 chance of being settled in Australia as a refugee.

W We will decide who comes to this country and the
 circumstances in which they come!

N Hear the cries of those desperate enough to
 cram onto leaky vessels,

who faced gut-wrenching thirst and
inhumane conditions,
 who faced, indefinite detention often in remote camps out
 of sight
and some having to watch others drown at
sea.

Chant *Were you there when those lives were
 lost at sea?*

Presider (pours more water into bowl)
 Hear the cries of your people, O God.
**As we who sow in tears and reap the bitter
 taste of anger.**

E Hear our cries in anger at the injustice visited
 upon flesh and blood:

W Anger at corrupt governments in foreign
 lands

N Anger at war-mongers and race-based
 trouble-starters

S Anger at those who profit from human
 misery

E Hear our cries in anger for the tone for the
 tone of public debate;
 people demonised, the issue politicised, so
 many polarised.

W Illegals. Queue jumpers.

N They are only economic migrants.

S Muslims. Terrorists. Liars and fakes.

E Hear our cries in anger at the popularity of
 peddling fear
 as a tool for winning elections,

and for the lack of choice we face when our
two major political parties
race each other to the bottom.

Chant *Were you there when our nation
turned its face?*

Presider (pours more water into bowl)
 Hear the cries of your people, O God.

**As we who sow in tears and reap the reality of
our complicity.**

W Hear the cries as Christian and citizen
 confessing our weakness and failure;
N our failure to tell an alternative story of
 welcome and hospitality;
S our failure to mobilise our nation to fulsome
 compassion and hope;
E our failure to risk our own comfort for your
 prophetic call.

W Hear the cries of your church confessing our
 complicity,
 in reproducing the myth of scarcity
 despite the biblical litany of abundance,
 that there is enough for everyone, when
 shared with justice.

N Not enough money. Not enough
 employment.

S Not enough space and no desire to make
 room for another.

E Not enough willingness to adapt and still
 prosper in peace.

W Hear the cries confessing our lack of faith,

preferring instead the gods of market forces
and political expediency,
giving preference to self-reliance
and the belief that we deserve every good
fortune we've inherited.

*Chant Were you there when our hearts were
led by fear?*

Presider (pours more water into the bowl)
Hear the cries of your people, O God.
As we who sow in tears and reap the
emptiness of despair

S Hear our cries in despair – we cannot find
our way from here!

E We don't know how to solve this.

W We don't know how to advocate.

N We don't know how to effect change.

S Hear our cries in confusion at this immensely
complex global issue
with no simple or quick local solutions,
amidst loud and vicious debate as a way to
score points for power,
whilst locking up and compounding damage
upon vulnerable people.

E Why can we not see the public leaders of
compassion?

W Why can we not find the public dreamers of
justice?

N Why can we not hear the public proclaimers of
hope?

S Hear our cries of despair at our
powerlessness,

how to make the story turn out right,
how to overturn the actions done in our
name,
how to inspire our neighbourhoods to new
attitudes,
how to infect the public discourse with grace.

*Chant Were you there when they crucified my
Lord?*

SILENT REFLECTION

We take 2 minutes for silent prayer and reflection.

IMPOSITION OF ASHES

We now invite you to share in an ancient liturgy
which today acknowledges both our personal mortality
and our solidarity with those for whom we lament.

Loving and liberating God,
our forebears told the story that you created us out of the dust of the
earth.

Grant that these ashes may be a sign to us of our mortality, our penitence
and our solidarity with the refugees of the world.

By your grace may we embrace both the particularity and totality of life,
its goodness and its brokenness; our joys and our tears
through the liberating Word of Christ Jesus. Amen

*Ashes are imposed on each person's forehead or hand
with the sign of the cross, saying:*

*Remember that you are mortal and that you
live for others.*

SING: Jesus remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

THE WORD OF HOPE (Revelation 21: 1, 3-5)

(without introduction – just start reading the text)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth;
for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,
and the sea was no more.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
‘See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away.’

And the one who was seated on the throne said,
‘See, I am making all things new.’

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray:

O God responsive to the cries of the oppressed,
we plead for those who have crossed many
borders
separated from those they love, without a
country or home
not knowing where to turn:
Open closed hearts to receive them.

O God revealed in Jesus of Nazareth,
stand among those stuck in refugee camps
around the world,
often hungry and despairing, in unsanitary
conditions,
at the mercy of the elements:
Open closed ears to hear their cries.

O God sender of the spirit of comfort,

support those having fled terror, traumatised
but still wait with clinging to hope while
detained:

Open closed eyes to see innocent suffering.

O God present when seemingly absent,
remember those still languishing in detention
centres

enduring endless uncertainty and great pain

**Open closed minds to recognise inhumane
policies.**

In a moment of silence, add your own prayers.

A silence is kept

Hear us as we cry out to you, O God.

And give us a voice for those who suffer.

**This we pray in the name of Jesus, the man for
others. Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth,
As it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil. For thine is the
kingdom,
The power, and the glory, For ever and ever.
Amen.

HYMN: LOVE WILL BE OUR LENTEN CALLING

(Elizabeth Smith) 684 [TiS] tune: Picardy

- 1) Love will be our Lenten calling,
love to shake and shatter sin,
waking every closed, cold spirit,
stirring new life deep within,
till the quickened heart remembers
what our Easter birth can mean.

- 2) Peace will be our Lenten living,
as we turn for home again,.
longing for the words of pardon,
stripping off old grief and pain,
till we stand, restored and joyful
with the Church on Easter day.

- 3) Truth will be our Lenten learning:
hear the Crucified One call!
Shadowed by the Saviour's passion,
images and idols fall,
and in Easter's holy splendour,
God alone is all in all.

**BLESSING AND DISMISSAL – led by the
Lament Voices and Presider**

N Restore our fortunes O Lord,
Like the watercourses in the Negeb.

E May those who sow in tears
Reap with shouts of joy.

S Those who go out weeping
Bearing the seed for sowing...

W Shall come home, with shouts of joy
Carrying their sheaves.

(Psalm 126:4-6)

Let us lift up our eyes to see those who wait for love:
and open our ears to the cries of the world.

**Let us speak for those who have no voice:
and take our stand on the ground of mercy
and justice.**

And may God of Creation go on creating in us
Christ the Human One walk beside us
and the loving passion of the Holy Spirit burn within us.
Amen.