

Lamentation Sunday

St Philip's Anglican Church, O'Connor
14 August 2014

Isaiah 61.1-11; Ps. 130; 1 Cor. 4.14-21; Matthew 5.1-11

Hymns:

Come down, O love Divine (398)

Jesus Christ is Waiting (665)

Hallelujah! Sing to Jesus (517)

God gives us a future (687)

Introduction by the Reverend Rebecca Newland

Dear friends, today is a very different day in St Philip's worship. The Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn, our bishop, Stuart Robinson, has asked each church in his diocese to hold a service of lamentation in acknowledgement of the failings of the church leadership in protecting vulnerable people, particularly children. At the service he has asked each church to read out his public apology. This may be uncomfortable service for many of us. It may seem irrelevant to many of us. However, we participate in this request because the church, that is all gathered Christians, following in the footsteps of Christ, is called to stand with all innocent victims and to have compassion. We are called to be part of the process of healing and restoration. Today is an opportunity to hold before us and in our hearts all who are wounded and damaged by the destructive actions of others.

Some people here today have been deeply wounded by the church. Some people carry the scars of abuse in their life. Yet even if you are not one of those people and have had no part in hurting others or failing to protect, we can as a community lament, stand in solidarity and make the commitment to be part of a Christian community that reflects the love of Christ more deeply and truly.

I ask you to keep Bishop Stuart in your prayers. He is a good man seeking to lead a diocese through complex issues. He deals with the past, attends to the present and must lead us into the future.

The steps in any change, in any transformation, are many. They involve admitting the truth and facing reality, knowing that change is needed, grieving and feeling the emotions, turning to God, who can bring us wholeness and the help of the Spirit and then committing to a new path and acting differently.

We do this in our individual lives and we do this as a community. Stuart is taking the lead and has asked us to be part of this journey of healing. Today we pray with him and all the Anglican churches in our diocese.

Let the liturgy and the words guide us and open our minds and hearts.

The service included the following:

An Apology

We gather together in this holy place to lament.

We recall the sins of the past, things done and left undone.

We acknowledge our pain and our regrets.

We desire healing of our past in that we may look with hope to the future.
On this day, we acknowledge those to whom the church has especially caused hurt and brokenness.

We lament with them, we apologise to them.

We pray that this may be a small step towards hope, forgiveness and peace.

We are truly sorry.

A public apology from The Right Reverend Stuart Robinson, Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn, on behalf of the Diocese.

On behalf of my Episcopal colleagues and the leadership of the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn, I am writing to express our deep and genuine sadness in relation to the pain and brokenness that people have experienced as a result of their engagement with our Church. I take this opportunity to apologise for any abuse or mistreatment that those sharing in this event may have experienced by individuals or groups connected with our Church.

We know that hurt and sorrow can last for decades—indeed generations—and so we'd value the opportunity to work with people towards wholeness, forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration—and trust that this service might begin to address such things. Our aim is to create and grow communities of faith that are safe, life-giving, transformative and Christ-honouring. In addressing personal grievances and unresolved conflict we'll be better placed to achieve our aim. Thank you for sharing in this gathering with us.

Warmly in Christ,

+Stuart Canberra and Goulburn

An Act of Lament

From Lamentations 3:

My soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is;
so I say, 'Gone is my glory,
and all that I hoped for from the Lord.'

My soul continually thinks of it,
and is bowed down within me.

But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Throughout the ages the Church has used signs and symbols to convey deeper meaning of the love, and grace of God. As in Baptism, the water represents the tomb of Christ into which we enter, die with Him, and are given new life. It is a sign and symbol of our sharing with Christ, our forgiveness, and our need to be forgiven and reconciled to others.

Filling the Bowl

We give you thanks that at the beginning of creation your Holy Spirit moved upon the waters to bring forth light and life. With water you cleanse and replenish the earth; you nourish and sustain all living things.

Water is added to a bowl

We give you thanks that through the waters of the Red Sea you led your people out of slavery into freedom, and brought them through the river Jordan to new life in the land of promise.

Water is added to the bowl

We give you thanks for your Son Jesus Christ: for his baptism by John, for his anointing with the Holy Spirit. We give thanks that we too can share in your death and resurrection.

Water is added to the bowl

We give you thanks that you are the God who weeps and mourns with us. That you are the God who knows what it is to be truly human. That you are the God who has also wept.

Into this bowl we also add our tears of sorrow, and we pray by your transformative love that they will be turned from mourning to joy once again.

In silence we were each invited to pour water into the bowl.
