

Mothers Day Lament Service

Have table with a lit lavender candle on it with tea light candles ready to light and place upon plate/cardboard.

As people arrive they are given a lavender ribbon and a service sheet.

Welcome Jill

I want to welcome you all here to this special service for Mothers Day. My name is Jill McDonald and I am the Minister here at St Andrews.

I am so conscious that Mother's Day can be one of the hardest days of the year. We see all the adverts on TV, the glossy adverts in the paper, the facebook posts telling us how we should be feeling, where everything looks perfect. It can end up making us feel even worse that our experience of Mothers Day doesn't live up to the perfect images that we see and they can leave us feeling even more isolated and upset.

Here we offer a space for you to lament this Mother's Day. Lament is an important, but perhaps less well-known part of the Christian faith tradition. It is the crying out to God to express deep sorrow and grief that we are experiencing.

And so today we offer a space for the pain to be experienced, a place where we can come together to grieve.

There are so many reasons why Mother's Day might be a tough day for us:

Perhaps we lost babies during pregnancy or through still birth;

Maybe we had children who died when they were young or whose lives were cut short when they were adults

Maybe we adopted a child out, or maybe we were adopted.

Perhaps we are women who have been unable to have the children that we longed for.

Maybe our mothers who are no longer with us or for whatever reason our mother hasn't been able to be the mother that we longed for them to be.

Because it is Mother's Day today our focus is on women but today there is also a space for men and children to express their grief and loss to, whatever that might be.

I know that here among us there are women whose grief they have lived with for a long time, while for others it is very new.

Let us come together as we sign this beautiful waiata that calls for love, faith and peace for us all.

Waiata: Te Aroha

Te Aroha	Let there be Love
Te Whakapono	Faith
Me Te Rangimarie	and Peace
Tatou Tatou e	For Us All

I know here among us, there will be a variety of thoughts and ideas about God and about faith, from those for whom it doesn't really feature at all in your life through to those who experience our faith in God as foundational in our lives.

Wherever you are on that spectrum, whatever faith you are committed too, know that there is space here for you today.

Prayer

Let us pray
God of love
We know that you journey with us throughout our lives
You are there in the richness of our relationships
And you are close at hand in all that we experience in our lives.
You meet us in our sorrow and hold us with your love.

As we stand here today
Help us to hear your word of grace
Help us to come together
Help us to grieve and to honour our loss as an important thread in
the tapestry of our lives.

We pray in your holiest of names. Amen

Tell Karen's story

Last year I was approached by a woman, Karen Kara who had lost two of her babies forty years earlier and who always struggled with Mother's Day. It was on her heart to create some kind of ceremony space for people like her for whom Mother's Day was a tough day to navigate. Last year we had a lovely service at Anderson's Park in Taradale where around 30 people gathered. There was a mix of people from those who had lost babies 50 years ago to six weeks ago, those whose adult children had died. It was also for those for whom it hasn't been possible to have children, or for anyone for whom it was a difficult day.

Sadly, Karen died two months ago, but it was her hope that this ceremonial space that she began, would continue and a number of us are making that happen.

Waiata: Maringi noa

Maringi noa ngā roimata
Mō kua wehea nei
Ka tangi tonu mātou ki ā koe
Kia hoki mai anō
Maringi noa ngā roimata
Mōu kua wehea nei

Overflowing

The tears flow unchecked
For you who have departed
We weep for you always
To return again
The tears flow unchecked
For you who have departed

Bible Reading Psalm 22 and Isaiah 41: 13

I would suggest that it is in days such as this we need something deeper, bigger, stronger to hold us as we gather together, and for me as a Christian Minister I look to God. I want to share some words from our sacred scriptures.

Psalm 22: 1-2

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.

Isaiah 41:13

I am the LORD your God.

I am holding your hand,
so don't be afraid.

I am here to help you.

The words from Psalm 22 are words of lament. This Psalm was written some 3000 years ago, and it is comforting somehow, that these ancient words continue to speak into the tough experiences of our lives today. They can help give us the words to cry out in our own grief.

The words from the Prophet Isaiah remind us that God is here with us no matter what we experience. An age old question in relation to the suffering we experience is where is God in all this? Or Why did God let this happen? I much prefer the sense of God's heart breaking with us in the midst of the difficult and traumatic things we experience, that God is there with us in it all.

As well as in the sacred scriptures of our faith, there are so many words of wisdom in contemporary writings that can touch us deeply.

Last week a friend of mine, Theresa lent me a book in preparation for today's service. It is a book about infertility and how to acknowledge your journey of infertility with ceremony and ritual. Within it I found these words written by an English woman Bel Mooney at a speech to bereaved parents at the Liverpool Cathedral about her grief over the stillbirth of her second son Tom.

She said that at one point she threw away the tranquilizers she has given and thought:

"It's no good trying to blunt the pain, you have to let it kick in and kick in really hard. You have to walk through the valley of the shadow, even though the cliff walls each side are high and there is no way through but straight ahead where it seems like the darkness will never end."

She goes on to say

"Bereavement can leave you bleak and bitter, it can make some people cry abuse at the universe, or at God; it can strengthen others on their faith or acceptance... there are no rules.

Ritual Action

There are some things for which words aren't enough, where we need some kind of ritual to convey the emotions and thoughts that we want to express.

There is a wonderful song that comes from a Christian community in France with the words 'Within Our Darkest Night You kindle a flame that never dies away' reminding us of the flicker of hope that never dies no matter the difficulties we experience. As this song plays in the background I invite you to come up and light a candle to claim this hope.

For those for whom your grief feels very raw right now the idea of a flicker of hope might be too hard to imagine, but even if you can hold on to the idea that one day you might be able to feel hope.

One of the difficult things about losing a child or conversely not being able to have one is not being able to say their name aloud very often. As you come forward to light your candle you are welcome to speak aloud your child or children's name.

Song: In the Arms of An Angel by Sarah McLachlan

Words of Reflection

It is such a poignant song of Sarah McLachlan's that echoes the words of longing for peace and comfort and indeed that is what we long for when we find ourselves in the midst of grief, whether it is fresh or the loss we have experienced is more weathered in the tapestry of our lives.

It helps to come together doesn't it, to know that we are not alone in our grief, where we can lament together, knowing that God holds us in it all.

Those of us who are Pakeha have a lot to learn from our Maori and Pasifika brothers about lament, about grieving together, about knowing how interconnected we all are with each other.

On that note we are going to take some time to come together.

Passing the Peace

I invite you to take some time to share with one another the peace which passes all understanding by taking another's hand in yours or by giving them a big hug knowing that we are all in this together.

We sing....

He hōnore, he korōria
Maungārongo ki te whenua

Honour, glory and
peace to the land

Whakaaro pai e
Kingā tangata katoa
Ake ake, ake ake
Āmine
Te Atua, te piringa,
Toku oranga

May good thoughts come
to all men
for ever and ever, for ever and ever.
Amen.
The Lord is the refuge
and my life.

Blessing: Jill

Gaelic Blessing

May you have the commitment
To heal what has hurt you,
To allow it to come close to you
And in the end, become one with you

Edelweiss Blessing (Tune Edelweiss)

By your grace send us God
Send us, God, with your love;
Send us now full of peace
Send us now with your love;
By your grace may we bloom and grow,
 Bloom and grow forever.
Bless your world, Bless us all.
Bless your children forever.

Karakia: Frances

