

## Lent 2022

Dear friends in Christ,

I am writing to you with a heavy and anxious heart as we have for a week now witnessed horrifying images on our television screens of the unlawful, unjust and merciless invasion of Ukraine by Russia. The last two years have been challenging enough with the fear and anxiety caused by the pandemic, so the looming threat of global conflict or a renewal of a modern Cold War has only fueled the fires of concern.

In times of national and international distress, it is easy to lose hope, to feel that the tears we shed, or the prayers we offer have no impact and are pointless in the face of the powers and principalities of the world who pay no heed to the sacredness of human life. However, both the Jewish and Christian faiths have long-established traditions for precisely a time like this: the tradition of lament.

To lament is to offer our honest, uncensored distress, our pains and our heartaches to God. Lament is to take our deepest concerns and grief to God, knowing that God will never reject us for our prayers: no prayer is too honest, no prayer is out of place, no prayer is unwelcome in God's sight. Laments are acts of praise, an appeal to God based on the confidence we have in God's character. Laments are proof that we trust enough in God to bear the depths of our souls to Him and that we expect to grow closer to God, who in Jesus knows intimately the depths of human suffering and despair that he experienced on the Cross. Laments are also participating in the suffering of others, a way that we can have solidarity with our neighbours whom God has called us to love. Finally, laments are ultimately prayers and prayers are not passive they call for God's response and invite us to be agents of God's Kingdom in these situations.

During this season of Lent, a season traditionally full of self-reflection, confession, almsgiving and prayer I encourage you to be free in your laments before God. Laments for Ukraine. Laments for a world ravaged by the pandemic. Laments for your pain and suffering. Laments for the church. Laments for those you love. Nothing is beyond the scope of God's care and concern. If you need resources or support in this time of lament do not hesitate to call me or the office or one of your fellow church members to share in it.

Lament, however, is not our final prayer. It is a prayer for the meantime. Most lament psalms and even the book of Lamentations end with a promise of future praise, a promise to return Thanksgiving to God for his deliverance. In the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have the confidence to know that sorrow is not the end. Life has and will claim the ultimate victory over death. One day, every tear will be wiped away; one day death will be swallowed up in victory; one day there will be no bloodshed, no pain, no suffering. One day we will sing our Alleluias eternally in God's presence. But for now, we lift our lament to God as we wait with hope, praying come, Lord Jesus, come.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Graham McCaffrey