

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 31:15-17

Prayer of Preparation

As the mythic Phoenix rises from the ashes, O God, may we rise to a new spiritual awareness through the imposition of these ashes. May these ashes serve as a sign of our remembrance of those who died during the 9/11 attacks, a symbol of lamentation for our complicity in the dust of destruction, and as marks of our turning from the ways of death. Amen.

Imposition of Ashes

The person who applies the ashes may use one of the following phrases: a) May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7); or b) Through remembrance and lamentation, may God grant you peace.

Assurance of a New Way

Jesus has shown us a new way to live in the world. He outlined his “political agenda,” his mission strategy, in Luke 4 by quoting from Isaiah 61:1-4, noticeably leaving out Isaiah’s language of vengeance (Isa. 61:2b). Isaiah’s words offer us words of hope and an alternative vision to live by:

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor...to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn...to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness, instead of mourning, the mantle of praise, instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

—Isaiah 61:1-4

Benediction

Go forth in the peace of Christ to speak the truth to power, to resist the bonds of the empire, to follow the nonviolent way of Christ. Serve God radically, love all people fiercely, change your corner of the world. Amen.

These worship resources were written by Leo Hartsborn. For more information on PJSN, resources, or to be added to our mailing list, contact Leo Hartsborn, Minister of Peace and Justice, Mennonite Mission Network, 202 South Ann Street, Lancaster, Pa, 17602, 717-399-8353, LeoH@MennoniteMission.net, PJSN web site: www.mennoniteusa.org/peace. Graphic design: Cynthia Friesen Coyle. August 2006



Sunday, Sept. 10, 2006

Remembrance & Lamentation

Worship Resources for the Fifth Anniversary of September 11

Remember and Lament

September 11, 2001 will be a date forever etched in the memory of Americans. It is a day of remembrance and lamentation. We remember the lives of those who were killed when the World Trade Center towers fell. We remember the rescue workers who gave their lives trying to save others. We remember the airplanes that crashed in Pennsylvania and into the Pentagon. We remember the smoke and fire, terror and tears, chaos and death.

We lament that 9/11 was seen as “another Pearl Harbor” and used as a pretense for war with Afghanistan and Iraq. We lament that violence is still being used as a solution for violence. We lament increasing militarism and nationalism as modern day idolatries. We lament that the death of soldiers and civilians, of the aged, women, and children, and the death of conscience and national shame. We lament that Islam and Christianity have been hijacked for the politics of power. We lament our collective sin, our addiction to war, our use of faith to legitimate violence.

In the Hebrew tradition, we remember the past as arena of God’s revelation and lament our human and societal sin. In the Christian tradition, we look to Jesus as the model of nonviolence and forgiveness toward our enemies. Below are some worship and action resources offered for remembering and lamenting on the fifth anniversary of 9/11.



My eyes are spent with weeping; my stomach churns; my bile is poured out on the ground because of the destruction of my people, because infants and babes faint in the streets of the city.

Lamentations
2: 11

Call to Worship

Come before God not leaving the world behind,

but drawing it into the Sacred Presence

We gather on this day of remembrance and lamentation,

to praise and pray, to mourn and repent

Come before God with your hearts open to the Holy One

and your arms open to your neighbors

We gather on this day to proclaim our allegiance to God,

to follow in the risky way of Jesus Christ

God alone is worthy of our ultimate loyalty.

Christ alone is our savior in this world and the world to come.

Praise be to God, whose mercies are new every morning!

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases!

Song: *When Towers Fall*

Words by Leo Hartshorn

(to the tune of What wondrous love is this, *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, No. 530)

When Babel's tower rose, long ago, long ago

When Babel's tower rose, long ago

When Babel's tower rose, it was power that they chose

to rule, I suppose, long ago, long ago

to rule, I suppose, long ago

When the temple was torn down, long ago, long ago,

When the temple was torn down, long ago

When the temple was torn down, Babel brought it to the ground

Cries were heard from all around, long ago, long ago,

Cries were heard from all around, long ago

When Siloam's tower fell, young men died, young men died

When Siloam's tower fell, young men died

When Siloam's tower fell, Jesus' told the tragic tale,

And the tears of mothers fell as they cried, as they cried

And the tears of mothers fell as they cried

Two towers fell to earth, yesterday, yesterday

Two towers fell to earth, yesterday,

Two towers fell to earth, tell me what is vengeance worth?

Let us chose a better way, on this day, on this day

Let us chose a better way, on this day.

When peace and justice meet, in God's time, in God's time

When peace and justice meet, in God's time,

When peace and justice meet, there'll be dancing in the street

to a different drummer's beat, allelu, allelu

to a different drummer's beat, allelu

Confession (unison)

We confess, God of mercy and grace, our complicity in the injustice and violence in the world through the benefits we embrace as citizens of the United States.

Forgive us, as a people, our hunger for oil, our lust for power and wealth, our control of the global marketplace. Not just our leaders have lied and led us into war.

We have lied to ourselves saying, "Our affluent lifestyles cost no one but us," "They are the terrorists and we are the innocent," and "God is on our side." Free us from falsehood and deception, so we may know and tell the truth.

Give to us the Spirit of turning, turning from our arrogance and ignorance, turning from our exclusiveness and parochialism, turning from our unilateralism and pre-emption. Empower us, O God, to turn toward a genuine national humility, to turn toward a respect for other religions and cultures, to turn toward cooperation and national alliances for the common good of humanity, to turn toward the way of peace. And in our turning may new vistas of hope appear on the horizon of this world's terrain of terror and fear. For the sake of Christ, Instigator of just peace, we pray. Amen.

Ritual of Ashes

Prepare several bowls of ashes for use in this ritual. Ashes can serve as a powerful symbol in this context by making them from the burning of a) newspapers or magazines featuring 9/11; b) documents related to U.S. military power, foreign oil acquisition, or wealth; or c) images of weapons and war.

At least two persons should be enlisted to apply the ashes to the back of participant's hands. Prepare them to recite one of the phrases below when applying the ashes.

Introduction

Ashes are traditional symbols of mourning and repentance (Job 42:6). Ashes symbolize human mortality (Gen. 18:27). Ashes rose in clouds from the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center towers and connect us with death and destruction.

Ashes are the remains of war. We offer the imposition of these ashes on participants' hands as a physical sign of our solidarity with those in New York who felt and tasted the ashes of 9/11 and still bear its tragic memory. These ashes can remind us of the soot of death and destruction that continues to fall on us from the war in Iraq and in Israel and Lebanon. These ashes can also serve as a sign of our collective desire to turn from the ways of violence and the dust of death and to embody the ways of hope and peace in the world.

