



## Lament & Hope Service

By Wendy Janzen

Created for Forest Church Worship, Nov. 17, 2019, at Wilmot Arboretum, New Hamburg, and Breithaupt Park, Kitchener in Ontario, Canada.

The communion liturgy is adapted from a liturgy written by Steve Blackmer, Episcopal priest of Church of the Woods in New Hampshire, with permission.

**You are invited to adapt this service for your context, naming and honoring the indigenous people who have stewarded the land where you are located and who are still there, incorporating the native species for your environment and location, and speaking to the season you are in.**

### Gathering & Welcome

*Take a moment to look around you and acknowledge the faces in the circle, and this place where we have gathered – the sky and earth, the trees and plants, squirrels and birds, snow and sun...*

Close your eyes. Notice your breathing.

Feel the freshness of the air entering your body,  
feel its coolness (and the sun's warmth) on your face.

Listen to the sounds of this place (breeze, birds, silence).

Feel the earth firm beneath your feet, holy ground,  
supporting your body, supporting all life.

Broaden your awareness to God's Presence  
below us, above us, before us, behind us,  
in all things, yet held by no thing.

Creator, we give you thanks for this place,  
this land where we have gathered,

and we are mindful that we are settlers or sojourners  
on land that was and is home to the Haudenosaunee, Neutral, and Anishinabe  
people since long before we arrived.

Christ, our Wounded Healer, who also suffers the pains of creation,  
gather us close to your heart as we

express our grief and lament this afternoon.  
Spirit of life, blow among us as we worship in this place  
together with all of creation. Amen.

This month of November can be a melancholy month – darker days, moodier skies, fallen leaves, and days like All Saints Day, Remembrance Day, and Eternity Sunday that all point us toward facing our losses and making space for lament. A lot of us feel grief over the amount of climate-related damage that is being inflicted on the earth. This afternoon we will create space to acknowledge our grief and to turn to God for hope in the ritual of communion.

Let's begin listening to words of lament from Scripture.

**Scripture Reading: Psalm 44:23 - 26**

*Wake up, God! Why do You slumber?*

*Get up! Do not reject us any longer!*

*Why are You still hiding from us?*

*Why are You still ignoring our suffering and trouble?*

*Look and You will see our souls now dwell in the dust;  
our bodies hug the earth.*

*Rise up and help us;*

*restore us for the sake of Your boundless love.*

It is helpful to move from generalities to specifics when it comes to lament, and so I have little cards that have printed on them the names of species from Ontario that are either threatened, endangered, or extirpated from our province. This represents only a sample from the full list on the Ontario Nature website. Naming and recognizing these species is one way of acknowledging the effects of climate disruption and other environmental crises on the species we share our bioregion with – they are our neighbours in the community of creation.

Take a look at them, and then choose one. For the next 20 minutes you are invited to either wander or sit and hold this species in prayer. You also may wish to imagine its role and place in our ecosystem and the hole that is or would be left if it were to become extinct. See if you can extend compassion to your species in your heart. We will name them aloud in a litany when we return. There will also be a place to name other laments.

**Wandering** - 20 minutes

We will take time for silence; for listening to God and listening to the Earth. I invite you to wander the grounds for 20 minutes to quiet yourself before the Divine Presence

among us in this place and every place. I will call us back with the ringing of this bowl, and we will have the opportunity to name our laments for the Earth.

### **Lament & Confession**

It is important, spiritually, to make time to remember and name, in sorrow and anger, what we have loved, endangered, damaged, or lost. Let us enter into a time of lament and confession before God and each other. I will give an opening for a specific area of lament, and invite you to offer a word or phrase. We will end each section with singing together a version of the *Kyrie*, which means Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy. Let's sing it together once – I will sing a line and then you echo it.

### **Litany**

Christ, our Wounded Healer, who suffers the pains of creation, we bring to you our prayers of lament for the Earth. In your mercy, receive our prayers as we name the species of our province that are threatened, endangered or extirpated:

*Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison*

Christ, our Wounded Healer, who suffers the pains of creation, we bring before you our laments as we name other environmental concerns we carry:

*Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison*

Christ, our Wounded Healer, who suffers the pains of creation, we hold before you other griefs and laments that are on our hearts today:

*Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison*

Christ, our Wounded Healer, who suffers the pains of creation, *kyrie eleison*, have mercy on us. In your kindness and love, you have asked humanity to be caretakers for your Creation, to live as your image-bearers in a world you created with delight. We confess that we have turned from your will, often abusing Creation for greedy and short-sighted purposes. Now we are facing global climate disruption and other ecological crises as a result of our rebellion. Forgive us our sins, and the sins of our society, which have failed to care for what you created for good. In your mercy, lead us to repentance, compassion, and life. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

As we transition into communion as a ritual of hope, hear these words from scripture.

### **Deuteronomy 30:19**

*I have set before you life and death . . . therefore choose life.*

I will set out the communion elements, and then I invite you to place your species cards around our communion altar as a symbol of our trust that Christ came to reconcile all of creation along with humanity.

### **Communion**

From before time, God made ready the creation. The Divine Spirit moved over the deep and brought all things into being: sun, moon, and stars; earth, winds and waters; rock, fire, and every living thing.

Today we join with all the earth and heavens in a chorus of praise that rings through eternity. We remember our oneness with all that exists and all that has life, and that it is a joyful thing to be in God's presence with each other, with this land, and with all creation.

This meal we are about to share is a miracle and a mystery—a gift of earth, water, wind, and fire, and of seeds buried in the earth and cracked open. This bread and this juice, with their many meanings, are gifts of life to the living.

For followers of Jesus, these gifts assume particular meaning. Jesus broke bread with outcasts, healed the sick, and proclaimed good news to the poor. He yearned to draw all of the world into the heart of God.

When Jesus' life was nearing its end, Jesus was eating supper with his friends. He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and shared it saying, *"Take, eat: This is my body, offered to heal the whole world. Whenever you eat it, remember me."*

And as supper was ending, Jesus took a cup of wine. Again he gave thanks and offered it to his friends saying, *"Drink this, all of you: This is the cup of the new covenant – a promise of eternal love poured out for you and for all beings. Whenever you drink it, remember this."*

#### Let's pray:

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Life-giver, Pain-bearer,  
Source of all that is and ever shall be:

May your peace, your justice, your mercy come on earth.

For the hurt we cause, forgive us.

As we lose the way, restore us.

When we do wrong, transform us.

For you are the giver of life, hope, and all good gifts.

Amen.

*(Break the bread, and pour the juice)*

These are the gifts of God for all the creatures of God.

Remembering that Jesus came to renew us and the whole world, we will offer the first piece of bread and the last drops of juice to the earth.

Eat and drink one and all, whoever hungers and thirsts for renewal. All are welcome. We will come around with the elements. If you want to participate, simply open your hands to receive. Please let us know if you want a gluten-free option. We will serve all the bread first, and then eat together, and repeat again with the juice.

*(Break piece of bread and place it on the earth; serve everyone; after all have been served pour some juice onto the earth)*

#### Prayer of Thanks following receiving communion

Our God of abundance has fed us with the bread of life and the cup of love. With deep appreciation and thanks for the communion we share with each other and with the earth, I send you with this blessing:

#### **Closing Blessing**

God of mercy and compassion, you have fed us with the bread of life and the cup of love. You have reunited us with Christ, with the Earth, and with one another. With deep appreciation for the communion we share with all creation through the risen Christ, we offer you our thanks. Amen.

*May God's blessings be yours this day and everyday.*

**Wendy Janzen** is a pastor at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church in Ontario, Canada, a spiritual director and the founding pastor of [Burning Bush Forest Church](#), an outdoor worshipping community that meets year-round in natural spaces in and around Kitchener-Waterloo. Forest Church (also known as Wild Church in parts of North America) is a new expression of church that invites participants to deepen their connection to their watersheds and practice paying attention to God's presence through worshipping in and with creation.