

# Service of Lament for Sexualized Violence

Designed by Amy Epp and Megan Ramer

## Set-up:

- sand with taper candles
- slips of paper with pens/pencils - purple copy paper
- “Wailing wall”... a place on the wall of the place of worship where folded-up slips of paper can be tucked or placed

## Notes:

- This worked well with a strong music minister singing and leading music, so that the gathered community of survivors could be free to just listen or let tears come, and had no pressure on them to sing.
- Consider asking allies not to attend, but to instead support survivors from afar through prayer.
- Unison text in bold; otherwise, spoken by leadership (we didn't even print it)
- Let “Stay with Me” be long enough to give folks enough space and time for any emotions that may arise
- After the service some participants snuffed out their candles by thrusting them wick-down into the sand. In the context of the light being one of hope, that act in particular may not fit. But the chance to tear or break or in some way could be a helpful physical embodiment and expression of anger. Tearing the papers and/or burning them could work too.

Introduction and Welcome by pastor

Opening Song - “Welcome Here”

Call to Worship (responsive)

Sweet and holy friend,

**Welcome here,**

All of who we are,

**Welcome here,**

Faithful loving guide,

**Welcome here.**

***Welcome here.***

## Opening Prayer

Sweet Holy Friend, because you are acquainted with grief and anger,  
Hear our sobs for children abused and neglected by those they trust;  
for girls, women, and femmes violated by men,  
for wives taught to submit and sacrifice  
until their spirits have been deadened;  
for boys and men treated as objects,  
for husbands taught to believe they are not spiritual beings  
unless they dominate women and children.  
Hear our outrage at parents, relatives, pastors,  
youth sponsors, church leaders, teachers,  
mentors, counselors, partners;  
those who should have been trustworthy;  
those who have exploited we who were in their care.  
Oh, God of grief and anger,  
Comfort, comfort your people.  
Do not forsake us.

## Song - "Tears"

### Psalm of Lament - Psalm 13

How long, O God? Will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?  
How long will I wrestle with my anguish,  
and wallow in my despair all day long?  
How long will my enemy win over me?

Look at me! Answer me, my God!  
Give light to my eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death,  
lest my enemies say, "I have prevailed,"  
lest my foes rejoice when I fall.

## Confession

*In this time of confession, we confess not our sin but our fear. We confess our anxiety and our doubt. Our doubts of self, our doubts that we will be believed, our doubts in a system that has put us and so many women and femmes at a disadvantage. We take courage to put on paper what is difficult to put into words.*

*Maybe you will write a name, maybe a place, maybe feelings or fears that you would like to release, that you would like to hold with these gathered beloved.*

*While we will not be speaking our confessions aloud in this gathering, if you would welcome a space to speak what you are holding with others, please speak with one of us or be in touch with us. We are seeking to provide spaces of being able to share more deeply with each other and be known to our family of faith in this way.*

*While the music is playing, you are invited to meditate, pray, write your confessions (will be burned) and be held by the presence of God and these friends.*

Music instrumental versions of Welcome Here and/or Tears

Releasing and Candle Lighting

*We are holding pain in our hands and in our bodies - taking symbolic shape in these pieces of paper. When we put them down (or tuck them into our "wailing wall") we will not be completely free of that pain - but may we release these words and our aching hearts into the tender embrace of our Holy Beloved. As we sing together, I invite you to leave your words at the wall. And, if you wish, to light a candle.*

*These candles are the light of hope. Augustine is credited with the saying, "Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are." May these candles, and may we, be daughters of hope.*

Song - "Stay with me"

Words of Assurance\*

Sweet Friend and Holy Guide, create us anew;  
Leave nothing undone;  
Purge shame, overturn guilt,  
Redeem what has been broken in us;  
And show us how to love.  
Oh, everlasting God, Creator of the wide world,  
Let each of us know we are yours.

Song - "Daughters of Hope"

Psalm of Hope - Psalm 46

Hear this Psalm of hope,  
and even if these words are difficult to believe,  
allow them to wash over you  
and perhaps soak into some long forgotten corner of despair within.

God is our refuge and strength  
who from of old has helped us in our distress.  
Therefore we fear nothing --  
even if the earth should open up in front of us  
and the mountains plunge into the depths of the sea,  
even if the earth's waters rage and foam  
and the mountains tumble with its heaving.

There is a river whose streams gladden the city of God,  
the holy dwelling of the most Holy.  
God is in its midst and will never fall -  
God will help it at daybreak.  
Through turmoil and crumbling empires,  
God's voice resounds in justice.

Hymn - Sing the Story 121 - "Nothing is lost on the breath of God"

Closing Prayer

**Because you are the God of healing,  
Heal us! Heal us,  
And bestow your Spirit upon us;  
In the wilderness of our grief,  
Rain your justice over us,  
That we may blossom;**

**Plant your wholeness on earth  
as you promised.  
In the arms of your grace, hold us.  
Through deep water or scorching flame,  
Mercifully carry us;  
Let no one be squandered or lost.**

## **Amen, Amen, Amen**

### Benediction

Thank you for sharing this sacred space together.

For bringing all of who you are.

We know some of you are interested in continuing to hold our stories together in intentional ways.

If you are one of those people who would welcome a continued shared journey - perhaps in the form of circles of story sharing and/or mutual care - please let one of us know.

Now, as you prepare to depart from this space, receive this benediction.

Go with this blessing.

It is a blessing in a time of violence.

“Blessing in a Time of Violence”

Which is to say  
this blessing  
is always.

Which is to say  
there is no place  
this blessing  
does not long  
to cry out  
in lament,  
to weep his words  
in sorrow,  
to scream its lines  
in sacred rage.

Which is to say  
there is no day  
this blessing ceases  
to whisper  
into the ear  
of the dying,  
the despairing,  
the terrified.

Which is to say  
there is no moment  
this blessing refuses  
to sing itself  
into the heart  
of the hated  
and the hateful,  
the victim  
and the victimizer,  
with every last  
ounce of hope  
it has.

Which is to say  
there is none  
that can stop it,  
none that can  
halt its course,  
none that will  
still its cadence,  
none that will  
delay its rising,  
none that can keep it  
from springing forth

from the mouths of us  
who hope,  
from the hands of us  
who act,  
from the hearts of us,  
who love,  
from the feet of us,  
who will not cease  
our stubborn, aching  
marching, marching

until this blessing  
has spoken  
its final word,  
until this blessing  
has breathed  
its benediction  
in every place,  
in every tongue:

*Peace.*

*Peace.*

*Peace.*

“Blessing in a Time of Violence” by Jan Richardson