

My Lament

Lament Service: ESDA April 2023 A Guide for Prayer

“Christian lament is not simply complaint. Yes, it stares clear-eyed at awfulness and even wonders if God has gone...Yet at its fullest, biblical lament expresses sorrow over losing a world that was once good alongside a belief that it can be made good again. Lament isn't giving up, it's giving over. When we lift up our sorrow and our pain, we turn it over to the only one who can meet it: our God.”

— **Josh Larsen**

Today we invite you to voice your laments—your sorrows, pains, and questions—to God. Often, we avoid saying what we actually feel to God for a variety of reasons. Sometimes we are afraid God is not big enough, sometimes we are afraid God is not good enough, sometimes we are afraid that naming our sorrows will cause us to fall into a despair from which we will never ascend.

In this booklet is a guide for writing a poem or prayer of lament. Poetry is the language of the Psalms—the prayer book of the Bible. What follows is a form of poetry that anyone can do: it doesn't need to rhyme, it doesn't have to have meter. It is simply a form that repeats on itself in a way that provides language for both our pain and God's presence in the midst.

Even if you have never written poetry before, or don't find words an easy way to express grief or sorrow, we encourage you to use this guide as a form of lament—to give your sorrow words, and then give those words to God.

If you would like, you may speak your prayer of lament on in community during the service: an act of leaving your pain in the hands of the One who loves you and holds all things.

A Structure for Lament: French Pantoum

My Lament

STANZA 1:

Line 1: Who I know God to be right now/How I feel when I experience God's presence

Line 2: What I'm struggling with/angry about/feeling pain over right now (the cause of my lament)

Line 3: What the situation makes me feel about God

Line 4: What I long to see happen in the situation/What I want from God

STANZA 2:

Line 5 (**repeat of line 2 in stanza 1**):

Line 6 (new line):

Line 7 (**repeat of line 4 in stanza 1**):

Line 8 (new line):

STANZA 3

Line 9 (**repeat line 6 of stanza 2**):

Line 10 (**repeat line 3 of the first stanza**):

Line 11 (**repeat line 8 of stanza 2**):

Line 12 (**repeat line 1 of the first stanza**):