

The appointive cabinet has written a daily Lenten devotional for the Arkansas Conference called 40 Days of Lament for Lent. You may share in this journey toward Easter by reading the daily post via an email blast from the Center for Technology, checking the Network for Discipleship and Mission for daily posting, or downloading a weekly set of the 40 Days of Lament for Lent document to use or reproduce and distribute in your church. The daily postings began Wednesday, March 5, and the weekly downloadable documents will be available on arumc.org.

40 Days of Lament for Lent



Welcome to the Season of Lent. For most of us this is an unsettling season of personal sacrifice and self-examination. Few of us approach Lent with joy; however, for many of us Lent offers precious days for honesty and truth telling within the Body of Christ. Walter Brueggeman writes that the life of faith is a life of orientation, disorientation, and reorientation. If this is true, then Lent is our season to admit our disorientation and claim a new reorientation by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The process for this movement of the Spirit in our lives requires lament. Lament for our own sin. Lament for the suffering we endure. Lament for the world. Lament for all that is not right, oriented, and true, in spite of the grace of God. Without lament, our losses, shortcomings, and disappointments feel like punishment. However, through honest lament, we can discover a new way as we admit our disorientation and experience God's reorienting grace.

Such honesty is not for the faint of heart. It takes courage to admit when we are lost, afraid, ashamed, angry, and vengeful. Yet the scriptures, especially the Psalms, attest to the power of such honesty before God. When the faithful lament, we are always led to affirmation that God is with us and God alone can lead us to new life. Ultimately it is this new life, this reorientation that we seek when we enter Lent, knowing that it is through the cross that resurrection is possible.

Thank you for joining us in this Lenten journey of Lament. May God show us the way forward.

Monday, March 17
A Global Lament for Civil Unrest and Violence
Read Psalm 57

Reflection Questions:

1. Where are the places in the world where people "lie down with lions" because they cannot trust their neighbors?
2. What has caused the unrest in places like the Ukraine, the Central African Republic, and Egypt, where neighbors turn against their neighbors and families are divided by doctrine and dogma?
3. Imagine yourself in that place of fear and danger. What would you say to God?
4. What are the signs you see of God's presence in these places? Is there some way you can participate in bringing peace?

Prayer:

Dear God, send forth your love and faithfulness, for you alone are our peace. You are the source of justice we seek. You are the fountain of mercy we have forgotten. You are the wisdom we need when all our plans and systems crumble. As nations fall and your people suffer, we cry out for you to protect the innocent, comfort all who mourn, shelter any who are displaced, and reform this chaos for your Kingdom's sake. Amen.

Tuesday, March 18
A Personal Lament for Stunted Spiritual Growth
Read Psalm 25:10-14

Reflection Questions:

- 1) What new spiritual practices have you added to your walk with Christ?
- 2) How do you keep the spiritual disciplines alive and vital in your life?
- 3) How do you keep ministry fresh and vital in a constantly changing world?
- 4) Are you open to new ways to feed your soul? What are they?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, remind us each day how important it is to grow in your love and grace. Help us to constantly use the tools that you have given us to stay connected with you. Allow us to constantly discover the new riches of your Word. Guide us toward a life filled with prayer. May we always make time for daily prayer. Allow us to always worship you. When we come to your glorious table of grace, remind us and empower us to be your Church. Guide us to constant transformation in our walk with you. Amen.

Wednesday, March 19
A Personal Lament Concerning Spiritual Satisfaction and Comfort
Read John 14

Reflection Questions:

- 1) Would you describe your life as one of "quiet desperation"?
- 2) What is the foundation of your beliefs and values?
- 3) Who and what is most important to you?
- 4) Is Jesus Messiah, Savior, friend, confidant, and advisor to you?

Prayer:

We call you Lord, but what place do you really hold in our lives? Are you first when it is convenient? Do we call out when we are panicked? Do we invite you to join in our lives to live and breathe with us? Lord, search us and change us so that instead of a casual knowledge of you, we know you as the constant and faithful Savior who died and rose again. Amen.

Thursday, March 20
A Mission Field Lament for Corruption in Government
Read Psalm 43

Reflection Questions:

1. How does corruption in government impact your life?
2. Imagine your church's neighborhood; do you see effects of corruption in your mission field?
3. How can your church be a source of light and truth to those who have been victims of corruption?

Prayer:

Deliver us, O God, from leaders who are self-serving and corrupt. Protect us from cynicism and hopelessness, which numb our disappointment and tempt us to accept that things can never change. Open our eyes to see how corruption causes hardship for our neighbors, and give us the compassion to reach out and the courage to work for change, so that the mission fields where we worship and serve may reflect your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Friday, March 21
A Lament Concerning Resistance to Change in the Local Church
Read Acts 7:51

Reflection Questions:

- 1) Why are you surprised when the Holy Spirit gives a different direction to your life?
- 2) How far are you willing to go to resist that which God has instructed?
- 3) What are you willing to risk to become what God desires you to be tomorrow?
- 4) How will you communicate to others the change that God is bringing into your life?

Prayer:

We acknowledge that we are not the persons that you hoped we would be. The Holy Spirit moves within us, bringing us closer to you and your desire, but we resist and disagree. Our desire is inward and pleasing self instead of loving God and neighbor first. Work within us the miracle of living a life for Jesus, and in Jesus. Amen.

Saturday, March 22
A Relationship Lament Concerning Conflict
Read Psalm 41

Reflection Questions:

- 1) How has conflict made an impact upon our relationships? What are the repercussions of the misuse of words and actions we have made in the midst of conflict with others?
- 2) How do you know God is present in relationships when so many are suffering?
- 3) What kind of personal pain does it create?
- 4) How do you respond to conflict as a follower of Christ?

Prayer:

O God of Love and Justice, forgive the conflict and suffering we have caused others: the malicious comment or hasty word that, once spoken, cannot be recalled; the self-indulgence that ignores real need; and the violence we wish upon our enemies. We admit our part in all the conflict, and pray for all the relationships of our lives, and for those interconnected in the world. Forgive us, too, for blaming you for the evil we could have avoided or prevented. Hear our words as we cry out that we, too, have been in conflict with our own selves and with others. Almighty God, set us free that we may reconcile our relationships with others. Guide us to an understanding of love and reconciliation with all our relationships, that we may experience unity and harmony with others and ourselves. Amen.