

*a service of*

# LAMENT

Courage to remember the past. Seeking hope for the future.

**21st June 2023**

St. Anne's Cathedral, Belfast





# A SERVICE OF LAMENT

Marking the annual Day of Reflection

21 June 2023, 11.30am; Belfast Cathedral

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*We welcome you to this **Service of Lament**.*

*Using the biblical practice of lament, this service will offer a space to reflect on the conflict in and about Northern Ireland as well as the future that is before us. In this space we will acknowledge our deep hurt and pain, reflect on what we might have done or might still do, and commit ourselves to a future where such suffering and loss does not happen.*

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*This service is being livestreamed. No other filming or photography is permitted. If you do not wish to appear on camera, please avoid sitting in the first two rows.*

## **About The Day of Reflection**

There is no day in the year's calendar untouched by violence from the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. Today, as the sun reaches its highest point in the northern hemisphere and seems to stop in the sky, we pause to reflect on our own attitudes, consider what more we might have done or might still do in the face of violence, and make a personal commitment that such loss should never be allowed to happen again.

## **About the act of Lament**

Lament provides an honest, active and nonviolent response to violence. Practices of lament invite us to bring our pain before God, creating space to address unspeakable hurt within the security of God's undying love and with faith in God's desire for justice. The hope of lament is that in acknowledging what is wrong, we might find the courage to right ourselves towards a more just future.

A central purpose of today's service is to remind followers of Christ that the Church is to stand not with those on one side or another in conflict, but with victims and survivors on all sides. We lament that in our troubled history, churches have too often remained silent – giving tacit support to harm done in 'God's name' – or worse: providing moral cover to those engaged in violence.

Lament leads us to commit to a peaceful new society: one in which Christians are among those actively involved in the healing of one's own self, one's community and the greater whole.



## GATHERING

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

#### A CALL TO GOD IN LAMENT

Lament requires courage.  
Courage to look at what is still broken.  
Courage to name what is still broken.  
Courage to confess what is still broken.

**All:** God who promises to be with us in our brokenness, give us courage.  
**Give us courage.**

*Silence*

Hear us O God, for we do not want to lament.  
Hear us O God, for we do not want to face our painful memories.  
Hear us O God, for you promised to be with those we lost.  
Hear us O God, for you promised to be with us.

**All:** Hear us as we bring to you our pain.  
**Hear us, O God.**

*Silence*

God who is our rock, steady us.  
God who enfolds us within her wings, shelter us.  
God who shepherds us through the valley, comfort us.  
God who cried out from the cross, hear us.

**All:** Hear us as we make our lament.  
**Hear us, O God.**

**Silence**

#### REFLECTION on Psalm 85

*'Mercy and Truth have met each other. Justice and Peace have kissed.'*

**Silence**

#### OUR LAMENT

As we approach noon on this longest day of the year, the sun seems to stop in the sky. The shadows around us diminish but will return. We stop to acknowledge that life is not as it should be.

We come together before you, God, to lament the truth of our



brokenness and the extent of our hurt.

**All: Be with us, God.**

*Silence*

Some of us have lost loved ones because of our sectarian conflict.  
So many we know have been traumatised by violence or its threat.  
No one is untouched by the harmful divisions in our society.

**All: Why, O God? Why?**

*Silence*

Each day on our calendar is a day  
that contains sorrow for a family you love.  
The streets we pass through every day  
hold for someone a story of violence, of death, of fear.  
No place on this land is untouched by the history of our violence.

**All: Why, O God? Why?**

*Silence*

Where were you when this hatred started?  
Where were you when neighbour turned against neighbour?  
Where were you when the trigger was pulled?  
Where were you when they died?

Where were you when we lost our trust in one another?  
Where were you when the future we should enjoy was robbed from us?  
Where were you when our present became defined by our division?

**All: Where were you?**

*Silence*

And why did so many Christian voices  
condone what was done in your name?  
And why was there silence, even from churches,  
when the message you told us to proclaim was one of peace?

**All: Why, O God? Why?**

*Silence*

Hear us, O God, as we cry out to you.  
Take our brokenness and heal it.  
Free us, O God, from our mistrust.  
Save us, O God, with your undying love.



Answer us, O God, in our lament.  
**All: Answer us, O God, in our lament.**

*Silence*

For you are the God who pulled the abandoned up from the pit.  
You are the God who welcomed a criminal into paradise.  
You are the God who broke bread with sinners.  
You are the God who told us not to be afraid.

You are the God who will wipe the tears from our eyes.

**All: You are our God.  
You are our God.  
Hear us in our lament.  
You are our God.**

*Silence*

**Music** A Psalm of Lament *Benedictine Monks*

**SILENCE at midday**

### **THE HOPE OF LAMENT**

**Music** 'O Christ the Same' *Towards Inclusion Choir*

### **AN OFFERING OF PATCHES**

*We invite attendees to come forward to take a small patch of cloth to symbolise our participation in the healing of self, of others, and of society as a whole. Take a small patch of cloth, return to your seat and consider where you are on this journey of healing and how you might be resourced by the Holy Spirit for the journey ahead.*

**Music during distribution** by *Grace-Evangeline Mason*

'Where the Birds Sing'  
(Original piece composed for the Commission for Victims and Survivors)

### **OUR COMMITMENT**

*Please stand.*

We stand together committed to the collective civic courage required to be people of peace.

We cannot forget the past or pretend that violence does not threaten to return.



We cannot legislate our way out of our troubled story.

We cannot impose a peace upon others.

**All: But we can find new courage as we stand with one another.**

*Silence*

We are people who continue to lament the loss of life.

We are people whose stories have been shaped by violence.

We are people who must learn to trust again and be worthy of that trust.

And we are people whom God has gathered to bear the hope of Christ.

**All: Together, we commit to a society of peace and justice,  
showing the courage to reject violence  
by standing with and listening to victims and survivors,  
and calling the Church again  
to the power of love, grace and forgiveness  
which alone can break our cycle of violence.**

### **BENEDICTION**

Now go out into the world in peace. **Amen.**

Have mercy. **Amen.**

Hold on to what is good. **Amen.**

Return no one evil for evil. **Amen.**

Strengthen the fainthearted. **Amen.**

Support the weak. **Amen.**

Help the suffering. **Amen.**

Honour all people. **Amen.**

Love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

And may the love of God, and the grace of God and the community of God be with each one of us, all those we love, and all those we should love, both now and forevermore. **Amen.**

### **THE PEACE**

*We invite you to turn and offer a word or gesture of peace to one another.*

**Peace be with you.**



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*As the service reaches its close, please sit in silence for as long as you wish.*

*Refreshments and conversation will be available in the south transept.*

*Volunteers wearing nametags are present should anyone need help.*

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Thank you for being with us.  
This service is part of the Day of Reflection.

Belfast City Council is hosting an open event at City Hall today,  
offering time for quiet reflection and remembrance,  
and a programme of activity between 10am and 4pm.  
All are welcome.

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An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha  
Department of Foreign Affairs



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CATHEDRAL  
THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. ANNE



