

# LAMENT

**Stations of Lament Artwork: The Reverend Louise Carr**

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## INTRODUCTION

Lament offers to God the reality of life as we experience it. That experience includes suffering, which comes in many ways: illness, poverty, crime, job loss, rejection, depression.

***Stations of Lament*** is about finding ways to speak the truth of our existence to God in whose promises we trust even if they seem impossible in our present moment.

*In my own explorations of my testimony of my life and the truth of it before God I have been led to use colour, textiles, poetry and shape. These have allowed me to tell the truth, liberating me from the standard core testimony. This work has been a deep part of my spiritual journey and recovery from some of the complex and difficult stories of my ministry.*

Each station interprets an aspect of lament: each can stand alone but is also part of the whole, which can be experienced in any order.

## **WEEPING: THE PAIN AND THE GRIEF ARE RAW**

To present each Station we are using the words of the Reverend Louise Carr, the creator of the *Stations of Lament Exhibition*. This is what Louise wrote about the Station of Weeping:

Society is not comfortable with tears: people often apologise when events of life bring tears. Yet tears are a sacred act of reverencing the absence of someone or something significant in our lives: the absence of someone once present; the absence of something we have never known, such as peace or unconditional love; the absence of human contact. They are an expression of grief. Psalms of lament in the Bible remind us of the importance of recognising and paying attention to grief, and of finding appropriate voice for it, as individuals and communities. They exemplify the voice of the faithful being lifted in sorrow, anger, in honest prayer, which offer the reality of life to God in the moment.

At this station we hold in our hearts and minds, amongst many others:

- all who have wept and who weep at the death of loved ones in the Covid pandemic;
- all who have wept and who weep at the unrelenting impact of 'long Covid' on their bodies, minds and spirits;
- all who have wept and who weep at the despoiling of our planet and its climate;
- all who have wept and who weep at their inability to feed their children;
- all who have wept and who weep at the hate directed at their identities.

Let their tearful lament be ours. Let their tears and ours feed a mighty river of justice, peace and wellbeing.

For each station we have created a short poem in the style of the Japanese Haiku: 17 syllables to convey the essence of the station. Here is the haiku for

### **THE STATION OF WEEPING**

Raw pain and grief  
elicit agonised  
yet liberating  
tears.

*(repeat)*

We now take a minute in silence to reflect on the Station of Weeping and those who find themselves – perhaps ourselves - at this station.

## **CHAOS AND CONFUSION: THE FEELINGS AND DIRECTION ARE CONTRADICTIONARY, OBSCURE**

The words of Louise Carr concerning the Station of Chaos and Confusion:

Hurt, confusion, chaos, disaster, trauma, devastation, all feature in human experience: the extreme suffering of this world threatens to overwhelm us – or actually does overwhelm us. In the Bible, Jeremiah seeks to articulate and intervene in the extreme suffering of the world, and to enable people to enter into a relationship with God who is described as violent and threatening. The book provides words to name the chaos and wretchedness experienced by the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Broken and bereft of meaning, they are given the possibility of interpreting their world, of discovering creative, loving possibilities within the present.

At this station we hold in our hearts and minds, amongst many others:

- all who are disturbed by the loss in the pandemic of their 'normal', the order that secured and safeguarded them;
- all who are disturbed by the 'omnishambles' to which the pandemic has contributed in the institutions that sustain us;
- all who are disturbed by the chaos, confusion and panic brought by war;
- all who are disturbed by the disruption of the seasons, the chaos of the climate, the loss of species on which the whole of creation depends;
- all who are disturbed by the wilful destruction of the rules that make for integrity, honesty and respect for all in social life.

Let their disoriented lament be ours. Let us join with them in finding ways through the chaos and confusion of a time that is out of joint.

Here is the haiku for

### **THE STATION OF CHAOS AND CONFUSION**

Extreme distress  
shatters sense,  
destroys meaning,  
demanding new stories

*(repeat)*

We now take a minute in silence to reflect on the Station of Chaos and Confusion and those who find themselves – perhaps ourselves - at this station.

## **PROTEST: ANGER IS DIRECTED AT GOD BECAUSE THE WORLD IS NOT AS GOD PROMISED**

The words of Louise Carr concerning the Station of Protest:

Lament offers a framework for people to protest the evils they identify in the world, the evils of their experience. Lament as protest offers the possibility of communal and personal lament. The spirituality of protest that lament lifts to God is a cathartic utterance that this is not the way the world should be. Groups can become places where honest rage can be heard compassionately rather than silenced. The spirituality of lament is brave and courageous enough to tell the truth about life and the world as it is because it passionately believes that this is not how God wants it to be, and that with the God of the miraculous there is the hope of transformation.

At this station we hold in our hearts and minds, amongst many others:

- all who have exposed, confronted and condemned the life-denying treatment of elderly and disable people in the pandemic;
- all who have exposed, confronted and condemned the inequality of Covid vaccine provision globally and locally;
- all who have exposed, confronted and condemned the accelerating enrichment of the already rich, the accelerating impoverishment of the already poor;
- all who have exposed, confronted and condemned the stories – the lies – told by those in power to secure their power and sustain an unfair social order;
- all who have exposed, confronted and condemned the destructive ideologies that put profits before people, that show a careless, callous, disregard for human wellbeing.

Let their angry lament be ours. Let us join with them in calling out injustice, unfairness, inhumanity, holding evil to account.

Here is the haiku for

### **THE STATION OF PROTEST**

This is simply not the way  
the world should be.  
Let honest rage  
transform.

*(repeat)*

We now take a minute in silence to reflect on the Station of Protest and those who find themselves – perhaps ourselves - at this station.

## **COMFORT: THE SENSE THAT SOMEONE IS ALONGSIDE, THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGE**

The words of Louise Carr concerning the Station of Comfort:

Comfort can be about easing pain, removing hurt. But it can also be about witnessing to the reality of that pain and hurt. Comfort can be about hearing the pain of another for whom we have created a space safe enough for them to articulate their pain. From hearing we move to being able to begin to tell their story, to act as witnesses to their reality of pain. Hearing offers the possibility of recognising the truth of their pain and in doing so the witness offers some dignity and restoration, though they cannot take the pain away. There are many who need witnesses to their truth: people in war zones, people recovering from abuse . . . people you know.

At this station we hold in our hearts and minds, amongst many others:

- all who sought to ease the pain of those whose bodies, minds and spirits the coronavirus has attacked, who have brought comfort to sufferers;
- all who have experienced and enjoyed that comfort;
- all who have offered the kindness of strangers to people who have been forced out of their homes;
- all who have received that kindness;
- all who have stood alongside each other, told and listened to each other's stories and thereby found comfort.

Let their comforting lament be ours. Let us listen to and tell our stories to each other, finding dignity and the prospect of restoration for all as we do so.

Here is the haiku for

### **THE STATION OF COMFORT**

Someone is there for you,  
you for someone.  
Pain once exposed, shared,  
restores.

*(repeat)*

We now take a minute in silence to reflect on the Station of Comfort and those who find themselves – perhaps ourselves - at this station.

## **TRUTH TELLING: THE BRAVERY TO OPEN UP THE TRUTH OF OUR LIVES TO GOD**

The words of Louise Carr concerning the Station of Truth Telling:

It is very easy to neglect the truth of life with God in the world, perhaps particularly as a Christian. For there is a pressure to speak of a life of faith as one in which life is filled with joy and praise and with no negatives. Those whose lives do not match up to this find themselves silenced, increasing their isolation and quite possibly making them feel even less worthy. Lament gives voice to the reality that this is how life is sometimes. It enables the speaking of grief, fear and doubt as the truth of the fabric of life. For lament deals in truth, however hard it is – and lament does not pretend it is not hard. And truth requires that the stories of many voices are heard, not those of the dominant, chosen few. Voices silenced for generations – voices of people of colour, of women, of the LGBT+ community, of young people – must be heard for this hard truth to be heard.

At this station we hold in our hearts and minds, amongst many others:

- all who have told the truth about the bad governance that has marked the response to the Covid pandemic;
- all who have told the truth about the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of those who work as medical or care professionals;
- all who have told the truth about the impact of the policy of 'austerity' on the health and wellbeing of so many people;
- all who have told the truth about the networks of corruption that keep power and wealth in the hands of the few;
- all who have told the truth about the climate crisis that threatens us all.

Let their truthful laments be our laments. May we seek and tell the truth with them.

Here is the haiku for

### **THE STATION OF TRUTH TELLING**

Lament deals in truth  
however hard.

Voices long silenced  
must state it.

*(repeat)*

We now take a minute in silence to reflect on the Station of Truth Telling and those who find themselves – perhaps ourselves - at this station.

## DESOLATION: THE SENSE OF SILENCE AND ABANDONMENT, EVEN FROM GOD

The words of Louise Carr concerning the Station of Desolation:

In the deepest darkness of lament we experience the sense of the absence or the silence or the hostility of God. It is well expressed in Psalm 88:

*Lord, I call to you for help; every morning I pray to you. Why do you reject me, Lord? Why do you turn away from me? Ever since I was young, I have suffered and been near death; I am worn out from the burden of your punishments. Your furious anger crushes me; your terrible acts destroy me. All day long they surround me like a flood; they close in on me from every side. You have made even my closest friends abandon me, and darkness is my only companion. (13-18)*

This psalm points to a reality possibly most people experience where, when traumatic events occur, it feels like God is absent. It reminds us that God can appear to be silent, and that we need to recognise this – and even raise our voices in protest.

At this station we hold in our hearts and minds, amongst many others:

- all who have suffered and who suffer desolation as loved ones have died of Covid ;
- all who have suffered and who suffer desolation as they see the health system in which they work in danger of collapsing;
- all who have suffered and who suffer desolation as war destroys their homes, their communities, their nations;
- all who have suffered and who suffer desolation as rising sea levels, floods, heat-waves, forest fires, other unnatural disasters, threaten or destroy their livelihoods;
- all who have suffered and who suffer desolation as they see the values of decency, integrity, respect, truth, compromised in public life.

Let their desolate lament be ours. Let us acknowledge our sense of being taken to the edge, of being abandoned.

Here is the haiku for

### **THE STATION OF DESOLATION**

God's silence, absence, anger,  
leave darkness  
our only companion.

*(repeat)*

We now take a minute in silence to reflect on the Station of Comfort and those who find themselves – perhaps ourselves - at this station.

## **EMERGING HOPE: THE ACT OF TRUST IN A FAITHFUL GOD WHO CAN TRANSFORM**

The words of Louise Carr concerning the Station of Emerging Hope:

The freedom to lament sets up the possibility for hope to emerge, for the context for real hope is the truth of the situation from which it arises. Lament allows hope to emerge because it proclaims a world with which God is not finished, a world in which God can be spoken to honestly about the realities of life. It raises the raw, honest truth about life as experienced to the Creator, who has not only the power but also the love to respond to the painfully articulated cry in the midst of life.

At this station we hold in our hearts and minds, amongst many others:

- those who have created hope through their skills at developing vaccines and treatments for Covid;
- those who have created hope through their commitment to campaigns for global vaccine justice;
- those who have created hope through being good neighbours, with the world as their neighbourhood;
- those who have created hope through taking action in response to the climate crisis;
- those who have created hope through enabling the voices of people silenced for generations to be heard.

Let their hope-discerning lament be ours. Let us share in the risky project of offering hope.

Here is the haiku for for

### **THE STATION OF EMERGING HOPE**

In truth,  
lament proclaims a world  
with which God is not finished.  
Thank God! (*repeat*)

We now take a minute in silence to reflect on the Station of Emerging Hope and those who find themselves – perhaps ourselves - at this station.



Here is the haiku for

**ALL STATIONS**

Hold together  
tears, chaos, protest,  
comfort, truth, desolation:  
hope.