

# LAMENT:

Grace Presbyterian Women  
2020-21 Bible Study

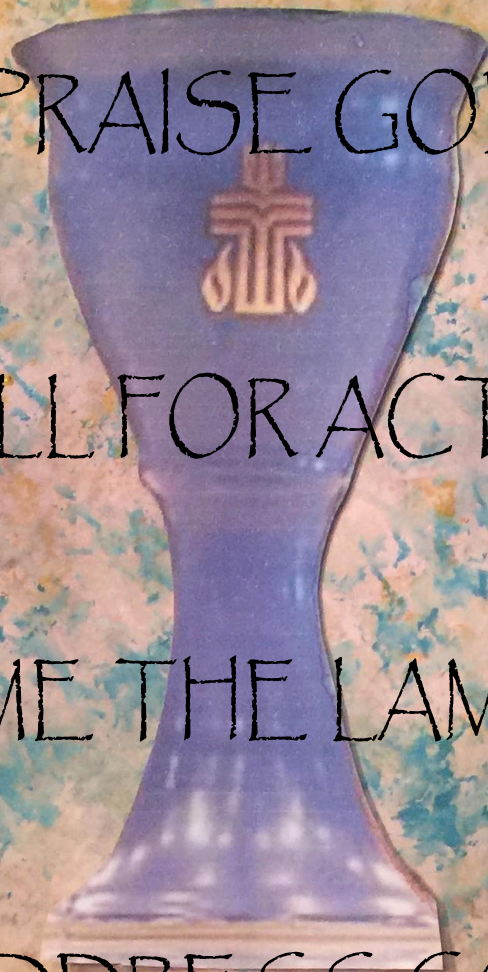
## HOPE

PRAISE GOD

CALL FOR ACTION

NAME THE LAMENT

ADDRESS GOD





Grace Presbyterian Women is comprised of women of the church who meet once a month in a day circle and a night circle for Bible study, fellowship, and connections with the Presbyterian Women of the Presbytery of the Mid-South, the Presbyterian Women of the Synod of Living Waters, and the Presbyterian Women of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Our purpose and mission:

Forgiven and freed by God in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves

- to nurture our faith through prayer and Bible study,
- to support the mission of the church worldwide,
- to work for justice and peace, and
- to build an inclusive, caring community of women that strengthens the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and witnesses to the promise of God's kingdom.

Our Bible study book for each year is selected by a process through the *Horizons* magazine for Presbyterian Women of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that begins several years before the study is to take place. Therefore, no one knew the world would be in the midst of a pandemic when we would be studying how to lament.

The topic for 2020-2021 was "Into the Light: Finding Hope through Prayers of Lament" written by P. Lynn Miller, who also designed the art for this study.

Most of the laments in this booklet were written during each circle meeting with contributions from those attending, along with two laments for the December study, written by Suzanne Getman in memory of our two members, and several written by individuals as they studied the lessons.

The cover for the booklet was created by Becky Stirling in the style of the artwork in the study book. We express our gratitude to Becky for contributing this thoughtful and beautiful design. The vessel central on the cover is the communion chalice, which was used in worship at the 215<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the PCUSA in May 2003 in Denver, Colorado.

Thanks be to God for giving us such a helpful and challenging study for a pandemic year!

Grace Presbyterian Women  
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## **Lesson 1 – The Heart of Lament**

### **Night Circle –**

God of all creation,

We are destroying your creation in ways that have led to hurricanes, fires, and other methods of destruction.

We know that people can solve problems using the intelligence you gave us.

Help motivate people to listen to activists and experts, and help us to see the problems, and stop the misuse. Help to change the hearts of those who are motivated by greed, power, and selfishness so that we can protect and care for your world. Remind us that we only need what is necessary to live.

We thank you, God, for your blessings, interventions, and answers to these problems. Amen

### **Day Circle –**

Oh God of the ages,

We don't feel as youthful or energetic as we used to. So much of our vitality is gone. Our aches and pains keep us from doing what we want to do. Sleeping is often difficult.

You bring us wisdom, now. You have enabled us to see the world differently. You have provided us with more time to pray and study. You have given us the experiences to help us find the blessings in our lives now.

You are with us every day in the nature, love, and hope we can hear today. Amen

## **Lesson 2 – Lamenting Together**

### **Day Circle –**

Dear God and Jesus,

We feel separated from you because many of us cannot be in church physically. We do rejoice in the technical togetherness, but we miss the energy and love of the personal touch. We want to praise you together in community with each other. Our individual gifts make us stronger together. Give us the hope and strength to persevere and accept your will. Amen

### **Night Circle –**

O Merciful and Loving God,

Protect us from the Covid-19 virus.

Open our minds to what is true and our best course of action.

We ask for your support and guidance.

Show us ways we can help people in need within our community- with isolation, hunger, depression and other issues.

Continue to give our medical professionals the wisdom and health to cope, and lead us to a vaccination and the end of the pandemic.

Forgive our sins and have mercy on us.

Protect us from the evil around us and guide us to you.

We are grateful that you are always with us and will supply our needs. Amen

### **Lesson 3 – Women Lament**

#### **Night Circle**

Dear God, Healer of all our ills,

We can't be together as we are used to; we can't hug or be close to our family and friends. We lament that we can't be as comforting and or as helpful as we are used to being, and we are disconcerted by this loss. We are missing opportunities to give care to the sick, to mourn with the grieving, and to visit the lonely. We have learned from this time how much we need people, and we trust that you will guide us till this pandemic ends. We want to appreciate what we took for granted before.

Please intervene on our behalf and take our place in comforting and caring for those suffering. We thank you for always bringing us through in tough times, and if it be your will, do so again. Amen

#### **Day Circle –**

My God in Heaven,

Will this time of virus ever be over! We are so concerned about our friends and family who have come face to face with this disease. Help us be an example of the comfort lamenting can bring as we share this practice with others. It brings us the hope that you promise to us. We ask for your healing to those who have the virus and to the whole world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

### **Lesson 4 – Lamenting Death**

#### **Day Circle –**

God of the resurrection,

We miss Martha and Frances. We miss Martha's wise counsel and Frances' sense of humor and cheerfulness. Some of us regret that we did not have the opportunity to know these women well. We can learn about them through the loving remembrances of others. We've learned of Martha's grace and serenity and of Frances' welcoming spirit as she was often the first to greet all of us, the young and the older. Help us, Lord, to remember their love and faith. Keep them alive in our hearts. We are grateful to know that they are with you. Our hope is knowing that we all will be together in the resurrection. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.

#### **Night Circle –**

Dearest God,

The number of deaths that have occurred over the earth is so devastating, especially since the virus is touching people known to us personally, and especially for the members of our church family who have died this year- Martha Krech, Sandy Bane, Frances Kitterman, and Bill Byrd. We try but do not understand the need for them to die; we must go on with your help. Please continue to give us the strength to endure. We know and trust that death is not the end. We trust in the life to come with no more pain and tears. Please help us have hope for the future. We are thankful for the birth of Christ and the promise that Emmanuel is and will be with us now and always. Amen.

## **Laments for Members Who Died in 2020**

Suzanne Getman wrote these songs of lament and remembrance for our PW members who died in 2020, which can be sung to the tune of “O Little Town of Bethlehem.”

O Martha Krech, we miss you,  
We miss you very much.  
You were so faithful and so true;  
We miss your loving touch.  
We know you suffered greatly for many days long.  
And now we know you are with God and all your pain is gone.

O our dear Frances Kitterman,  
You meant so much to us.  
Your smiling face and cheerful words  
Brought joy and happiness.  
You were our Circle leader for so many years.  
Though you passed from us too soon, we'll always hold you dear.

## **Lesson 5 – Lamenting Life**

### **Night Circle –**

Dear God,  
Life sucks. People are suffering all over the world from Covid, lack of food, and lack of housing.  
Our country is suffering in so many ways.  
What would we do without you?  
We are grateful to have the peace you give us because we can't understand, but we know you have the world in your hands.  
Please help us to accept your will and to know what to do.  
We are experiencing isolation and the lack of community, and we miss being with loved ones and friends. We miss the touch and hugs of others.  
Thank you for Zoom to give us connections, for texts and calls, and for breathing exercises, centering prayers, and meditations to give us relief. Amen

### **Day Circle –**

Aaargh Lord!  
We are so sorry that we have to go through trials and tribulations that we don't understand. We lament illness, loneliness from all the COVID restrictions, the loneliness of those who must be alone in the hospital, the pain of families who cannot visit, and the extra responsibilities and love needed from the medical staff. Our pain is real and raw right now. Help us to feel the peace that passes understanding. We want to see that proverbial Light at the End of the Tunnel.  
We think we know what is best for us, but our hope is in knowing that only you know what is best.  
Thank you for always listening to us. Amen

## Lesson 6 – Lament about the destruction of the city

Our Laments for this lesson followed the pattern of Lamentations 5.

### Night Circle –

“Remember, O Lord, what has befallen us.”

We lament the separation that racism causes.

**Unison Refrain:** “The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning, our hearts are sick.”

We regret homelessness, crime, and shootings.

**Unison Refrain:** “The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning, our hearts are sick.”

We hate to see the litter and lack of pride in our surroundings.

**Unison Refrain:** “The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning, our hearts are sick.”

Our city used to be called the City of Good Abode, and we don’t feel that this title can still be applied to it.

**Unison Refrain:** “The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning, our hearts are sick.”

We worry about the children during Covid-19, the isolation, the lack of interaction, the increase in child hunger and possibly child abuse, as well as the need to depend on online instruction which may not be best for students who need special education or are speakers of English as a second language, and we worry about college students who have a totally different experience than they expected.

**Unison Refrain:** “The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning, our hearts are sick.”

Help us to be careful with our language around children and young adults so that we give positive reinforcement rather than negative.

We hope that we will become more socially involved in our city when the pandemic ends and that we will develop a volunteer spirit and act on it.

Thank you for caring for us and for inspiring us as we wait out this pandemic.

“Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored.”

Amen

### Day Circle –

“Remember, O Lord, what has befallen us.”

Young people joining gangs bringing destruction to themselves and others. Taking packages from porches and breaking into cars, so many are needing more security. Finding destructive ways to meet their needs.

**Unison Refrain:** “The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning, our hearts are sick.”

We are sad that using a gun has become the way to address an issue.

**Unison Refrain:** “The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning, our hearts are sick.”

Our city is no longer the Cleanest City in the Nation. We need a renewed sense of pride in our city.

**Unison Refrain:** “The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning, our hearts are sick.”

We lament poverty, homelessness, sex trafficking, racial tension in our city.

**Unison Refrain:** “The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning, our hearts are sick.”

Health care issues in our city. There are many who cannot secure or afford the insurance needed to keep them healthy. There are many issues, including lack of internet, transportation, and helpful people to receive their vaccinations.

**Unison Refrain:** “The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning, our hearts are sick.”

We are often fearful of helping others because of concerns for our safety.

**Unison Refrain:** “The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning, our hearts are sick.”

With your guidance, we can come together to work for decreasing areas of lament, and we trust your word.

There is hope that if we come together and work together, we can help our city.

“Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored.”

Amen

### **Lesson 7 – Creation Laments**

The lesson suggested the choice of writing our lament for the destruction, pollution, and damage humans are inflicting on the world or of writing from the view of one of God’s creatures.

#### **Night Circle –**

Most Holy and Loving God,

We lament the selfishness and the destruction we have caused on this earth.

Help us to be more conscious of our natural resources of water, land, and air and to be the responsible stewards of the world.

Help us to be more aware of how our choices ultimately damage the earth.

Remind us to do our little bit so that we make a difference in the preservation of the beauty of creation.

Even though each of us can take small steps to protect the world, help us to be aware of how companies make the things we buy so that we choose what is best for our environment.

We pray that all people can and will experience a personal connection with your creation, and we thank you for creating this world in love.

Dear God, we see all that you have made, and it was and is very good. Help us to see the good in your creation as we seek ways to preserve it. Amen

#### **Day Circle –**

God of Creation, hear my prayer.

I am a small creature of your love, the honeybee, but I am important to the life of all creation. My life is being threatened by pollution in the world. My source of food is disappearing as people remove clover and other plants I love. They are using sprays that kill my food and are harming me. The world needs me and my workers as we pollinate all the plants that provide food - food for the entire world. Without us, the world would die. We are thankful for beekeepers who know how to keep us safe and let us do our work. Our honey is useful as

food, as medications and as a lovely sweetener. We are thankful for people who are learning more about us and how to help us survive. Please, Lord, encourage people to plant more varieties of flowers that we can use.

We ask these things in the name of your son, Jesus, who loves and protects even the small creatures. Amen

## **Lesson 8 – God Laments**

### **Night Circle –**

Merciful God, we confess that we have caused you to lament,

Because of our thoughts – our doubts, our fears, our anxiety, our selfishness;

Because of our words – of unkindness, anger, thoughtlessness, speaking when we should be quiet;

By what we have done – not seeing you in others and helping them, when we are unkind, when we ignore those who are needy and put them down further;

By what we have left undone – when we don't say "I love you," when we don't ask for forgiveness, when we don't thank and praise you.

We have not loved you with our whole heart, mind, and strength – replacing devotions, prayers, and confessions with one more chapter in a book, one more tv show, or one more game.

We have not loved our neighbor as ourselves – when we don't feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the prisoner, care for the stranger, and when we have forgotten to love ourselves so that we can love others.

In your mercy, forgive what we have been, help us mend what we are, and direct what we should be.

Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen

### **Day Circle –**

Holy and merciful God, in your presence I confess that I have caused you to lament,

By wandering from your ways:

by letting the things of the world distract us from you, our technology devices being one example;

by losing our trust that you will care for us;

by being anxious instead of trusting in you.

In wasting your gifts:

by not taking care of the earth, by polluting the water and cutting down the trees;

by not working up to my potential, being lazy;

by wasting the time you have given me and also by not seeing how I have used time well;

by making excuses when I am asked to do something;

by not using the spiritual gifts you have given me;

by not paying attention to the beauty of our world.

Forgetting your love:

by feeling that we haven't lived up to your expectations;

by saying unkind words or not valuing others;



by not loving our neighbors regardless of how they treat us;  
by losing hope in you.

In your mercy, forgive what I have been, help me amend what I am, and direct what I shall be. Through Jesus Christ I pray. Amen

## **Lesson 9 – The End of Lament**

This month each group wrote a prayer of lament, praise, and hope.

### **Night Circle –**

Alpha and Omega,

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,  
thou who has brought us thus far on the way;  
thou who hast by thy might led us into the light,  
keep us forever in the path, we pray.

Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met thee;  
lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget thee;  
shadowed beneath Thy hand may we forever stand,  
true to our God, true to our native land.\*

Soon I will be done with the troubles of the world.\*\*

Help us get through this pandemic to the light at the end of the tunnel, which is you, O God.

Thank you for being with us to help us through these trying times and leading us past them.

Thank you for this study that allowed us to lament, fellowship, and pray together, helping each other along the way.

Thank you that we have each other and that we have Zoom and the internet to bring our voices in concert in praise to you. Amen.

\*from "Lift Every Voice and Sing," James Weldon Johnson and Rosamond Johnson, included in Lesson 9

\*\*"Soon I Will Be Done with the Troubles of the World," African American spiritual

### **Day Circle –**

God of Hope,

There is so much need and suffering in the world, especially affecting the sweet children. There is so much hunger and pain in our country and across the world. Why do we have to go through so much suffering? For some people, especially young people, there have been many feelings of isolation and stress. Teachers have the added worries and concerns of trying to help their students virtually.

We need to wait patiently, but we need to continue our work on this earth, helping and serving others. Help us to find our own way to be of help. Our leaders need prayer and guidance to follow your will.

In the midst of our lamenting, our hope and trust is in you. You have brought us thus far on our way and, though the road continues out before us, you give us hope. Praise God.

Thank you for this study and teaching us that: It's ok to lament; We are all in this together;

Trust in You; We are always close to You; In our trust of You we have learned to laugh and love together even in lament; We have the assurance of hope; We can name our sorrow and learn to act on it; The end of lament is also the end of lament for You; We look forward to a joyful feast with You and with all of us together!

“We’ll Soon be Done with Troubles and Trials,  
Safe from Heartaches, pain and care,  
We shall all that glory share.” Cleavant Derricks, 1934 Chattanooga, TN  
Amen

### **Individual Laments –**

Oh my God, the Lord most high,  
I dare not call Your name.  
For You are far above me.  
You and Your angels dwell in crystal beauty,  
sparkling with the glow of perfect love.  
I am so far below You. A mere speck.  
Were I You I would not want to cast an eye upon me.  
The night is drawing near, the darkness looms,  
my failure gathers round me once again.  
Where is the victory of the day?  
Who cheers, “Well run this race!”?  
My urn is empty, Lord, and  
my heart feels inside out within me.  
Yet from the depths of my unworthiness,  
I bend this broken knee,  
lay down this tattered life,  
at Your dear feet,  
and ask to know You.  
In Your goodness, Lord most high,  
in Your never-ending goodness,  
You shall bring another day.  
How deep Your love!  
How greatly do I thirst, and hunger too, for You.  
If You would have me, make me Yours.  
‘Tis only then my broken bones could move as one.  
‘Tis only then the dusty candle in my heart could e’er be lit.  
I shall wait for You.  
I shall wait for You, my Lord, and not grow faint.  
Praise to You, Oh Lord of Love!  
----- Elizabeth Velazquez

Dear Lord,  
I lament environmental pollution, social and political injustice, sickness and pain and the  
uncertainty of life.  
Thank you for our Father's world and grace.  
Give us hope and the peace that passeth understanding. Amen.  
----- Sharon Ragghianti

Dearest God,

My life is complicated right now—it is the time of my dear husband, Cephas' birthday and his death. My grief is palpable and I'm not handling my life very well right now. I keep lamenting daily and asking you to keep holding on to me; to not let me go. The state of our Country's democracy is at stake and the virus that prevents me from being able to be in the company of others and to attend church has caused me to be depressed. I have lost my zest for life and I keep thinking I have "lost my way," and asking you to guide me and keep me safe. Sometime the loneliness is almost more than I can bear, and yet my blessings are too bountiful to count. My lament is to ask you to help me to always remain in your care... Amen

---- Jean Starnes

My God in Heaven,

I come to you to express my gratitude for the Hope you have promised. Our lamenting has broached the subjects of the overall condition of the world, as well as our individual lives.

We learned that we can have Hope to help with small inconveniences, suffering, pain, desperate needs, and we regret the total disobedience to your Will.

Trusting your Will Oh God we come to you in faith and Hope for a better world. Amen

---- Jean Starnes

Dear God,

Hope this pandemic will soon be over and people will learn to love each other.

Hope we can see the good in each other and want to look after each other. Amen

---- Sandy Kehrli

### Lesson 3 Women's Lament

Dear God,

As women, we often are more willing to show our emotions, which we feel deeply.

I am grieved at the destruction of your earth, the divisiveness of our nation and other countries also, the continuation of racism, the virus that forces separation, fear, loneliness, grief, and struggles.

Please teach us to be stewards of your creation, to love those around us and farther away, to listen, and to do our part to care for each other during this pandemic- and end it soon.

As you are the most powerful God of love and hope, share your love and hope with us today.

Amen

---- Patsy Krech

## December 2020 Lament

Oh God our redeemer and Lord,  
This season should be a celebration.  
We feel so isolated and lonely when we should have joy.  
During our time of mourning and sorrow with the COVID,  
Be with us and let us feel your presence with us.  
Our hope and trust remain in you.  
We thank you for the birth of our Savior and our redemption that we will be with you in the  
end. Amen  
--- Marilyn Wilson

## Lesson 7 – Creation Laments

Most loving God,  
We pollute, pillage, deplete, and destroy this earth you have created.  
We think any action from us is small, but together we can make a difference.  
Help us to take care for this precious gift you have given us.  
Help us to work together to change our actions and become the caregivers you envision us to  
be.  
You are the great creator, sustainer, and our hope for the future.  
For all of this we thank and praise you. Amen  
--- Marilyn Wilson

## Lesson 2 – Lamenting Together

Dear God,  
By our computers on Zoom, there we sit down and weep when we remember how it used to  
be. On our faces we now wear masks. We stay six feet apart. The virus hangs foreboding in the  
air and we do not know who it will attack next. We cannot even sing well together on  
zoom. We cannot greet each other with a handshake or a hug. Help us, oh God, to keep our  
sanity. Help us remember the close fellowship we once had and the joy we once experienced  
being together. The virus speaks, "Die, die!" Oh destroyer of life, happy shall we be when you  
are rendered powerless. Happy shall we be when you are killed forever. Amen  
--- Suzanne Getman

This song was written by Jari Dykstra, who sang it at the final night circle meeting for this study.

## ***THE KINGDOM ON THE WAY. GOOD NEWS!***

***AND, THESE KINGDOM, GLORY, ABBA BLUES!***

- *We get so down!*
- *Get this Paradigm down!*
- *So, angst-ly in despair-ity!  
Embrace Diversity!*
- *Beloved Community, being  
reborn, Pandemic! Put it down!*
- *Oh, oh, oh. Things are openin',  
freein',*
- *Oh, Yes, the Lockdown's seeing,*
- *Less new loneliness ahead, and  
we're not yet dead.*
- *In these Kingdom, Glory! Abba  
Blues!*
- *Connected Pandemonium, Online  
or in your head,*
- *Electronically, virtually, I hold out  
my hand,*
- *Wanting Fleshly warmth, Vitality,  
a road ahead, I can't go dead!*
- *At my deadly paranoia, my God  
smiles down.*
- *He cancels this frown. We're  
hearing' Heavenly sound!*
- *I lift off my crown, and lay it  
quickly down, on His bloodied  
feet.*
- *My promises to keep,*
- *my raging forward leaks. Burns in  
Flash like gasoline. I enter endless  
dream.*
- *Sticking out my fleshly hand, my  
Daddy walks this Land. I am noble  
and grand,*
- *because He takes me by the hand,  
and Hey! His Kingdom comes! I  
laugh and skip and run,*
- *Because my God flies down to  
keep me ever going, the loving  
river flowin' and I chase these  
blues,*
- *These Kingdom Glory, Abba  
Blues!*