

On the Tenth Anniversary of “September 11”, 2001



ALAS...

a spiritual exploration of lament in our lives

September 11, 2011

9.30am – 10.30am

Pilgrim Church in the City

Flinders St, Adelaide.

WELCOME

Welcome to this spiritual exploration of lament in our lives.

ABOUT...

There is nothing we can do or say in the presence of grief but be silent
to be there,
to touch,
to feel,
to open our “inside eyes”,
to remember
to pray.

We will not speak during this hour
no words of direction will be offered.
We will engage in silence
broken only by gentle music.
or when we sing together,
or at the conclusion as we greet each other.

ABOUT LAMENT

v.tr.

1. To express grief for or about; mourn: *lament a death.*
2. To regret deeply; deplore: *He lamented his thoughtless acts.*

v.intr.

1. To grieve audibly; wail.
2. To express sorrow or regret.

n.

1. A feeling or an expression of grief; a lamentation.
2. A song or poem expressing deep grief or mourning.

(<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/lament>)

THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS

The Book of Lamentations in the Hebrew Scriptures (“Old Testament”) is a collection of five poems lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, and its aftermath of ruin and exile. Three of the five poems are acrostics (ie each verse starts, in order, with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet – A, B, C etc). This indicates that the Book of Lamentations was constructed to be memorised for recitation. In fact it is read annually at the Jewish Festival which commemorates the national disaster of 586 BC.

Psychologically, the poetic structure of the book and its ritual recitation each year indicates that for the Jewish people, grief is not something to be repressed, but faced and “gone through”.

It is in that spirit that this exploration, “ALAS”, has been constructed.

PROGRAM

The exploration is in four movements:

- **PRELUDE - Together**
A welcome and acknowledgement
A film to focus our mind and open our hearts
A song about Pain.
- **INSTALLATIONS**
We choose the installations we wish to engage and consult the map
We move individually about the church as if it were an art gallery.
We allow ourselves to be absorbed deeper and deeper into the activity we choose, mindful of our inner thoughts and feelings, unconscious of time.
We choose only one, or two or three different activities.
We move on when we sense we have exhausted what the installation has to offer.
We move back together at the sound of a bell.
- **POSTLUDE - Together**
We reflect on our spiritual exploration and sing “The gift of grace”.
We receive a blessing and we pass the peace to each other.
We move out of the church to morning tea in the Hall.

Pain

In the solitude of pain
times of failure rise again;
in the midst of grief and tears
we confront our deepest fears.

In the wilderness of pain
memories of love remain;
in our anguish, we all pray:
'take, o take, this cup away'.

In the loneliness of pain
tears may fall like gentle rain
even friends may fall asleep
as we endless vigil keep

In the sacrament of pain
human touch brings hope again;
balm of costly nard we share,
gift of grace and sacred care.

In the mystery of pain
many questions still remain,
yet a presence may be found
even here, is holy ground.

The gift of grace (Amazing Grace TiS 129)

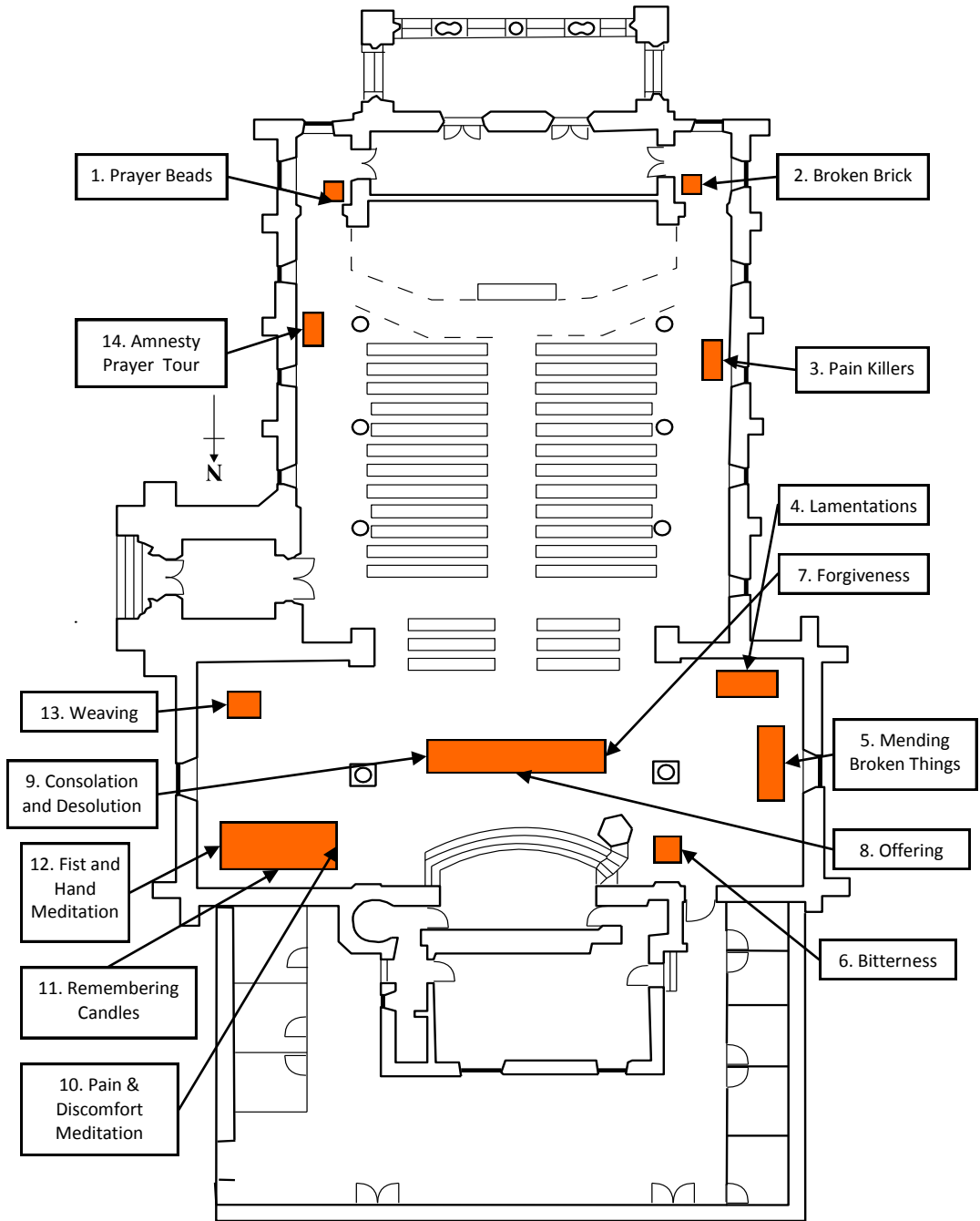
The gift of grace has blessed our days
and touched our lives with peace;
this grace has journeyed shadowed ways
and brings love's sweet release.

The gift of grace will hold our pain
and calm our deepest fears;
this grace comes now as gentle rain
to share our grief and tears.

The gift of grace has come as care
to bless our lives anew;
this grace will every sorrow share
and shine like morning dew.

The gift of grace will always flow
and weave a healing space;
this truth has depths we've yet to know
As life's new path we trace

Words: Helen Wiltshire, August 2011



Installations

1. Prayer Beads—Having something tactile helps give a rhythm and focus to prayer. Construct a wristband with Prayer Beads.
2. Broken Brick Contemplation—We recall things that are precious to us that have been damaged or destroyed.
3. Pain Killers—We make shapes from pipe cleaners to respond to the circumstances that contribute to the need to numb pain.
4. Lamentations 5—Add a contemporary lament.
5. Mending Broken Things—“Putting our lives back together” we take the broken pieces to reflect on “one step at a time”.
6. Bitterness—A bowl of bitter leaves / healing of bitterness.
7. Forgiveness—We take a postcard on forgiveness to a safe place and experience the breathing exercise, and tie a ribbon on the tree as a prayer.
8. An Offering Basket— We leave offerings to support work with disadvantaged people that visit Pilgrim.
9. Consolation and Desolation—We take one of the Examen postcards and find ourselves a safe place to engage in reflection on gratefulness.
10. Pain and Discomfort Mediation— Reflecting on the gift of pain as an inner message to us.
11. Remembering Candles—We light a candle to remember a lost one. We sit in a quiet place and lament the loss.
12. Fist and Open Hand Mediation—Using our bodies as meditation of shock, anger and grace.
13. Weaving the grief—We take some strands and use them to weave our thoughts and feelings
14. An Amnesty Prayer Tour—We pray using newspapers and a Google Earth tour of troubled places around the world.

