

A Service of Remembrance, Lament & Hope

adapted by Katie Cook

Note: We offer this service for use for any memorial service. This could be for people who have been killed in armed conflict, people in your community who have died in the last year or people who have died as a result of disaster or pandemic. It has been arranged so that it can be observed through virtual connections. You will need four "stations," each with two leaders. One group will have a container of ashes, one will have a pile of stones and a bowl of water, one will have a vase and a bunch of flowers, and one will have bell and a list with the names of the people your group wants to remember and honor.

FIRST READER: For vibrant lives suddenly taken from us, we lift up the ashes of our loss. *(With each reading, the reader's partner scatters ashes in the air.)*
ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.

FIRST READER: For the lives that continue, gripped in the throes of absence, we lift up the ashes of our pain.
ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.

FIRST READER: For the nightmare visions of violent deaths, widespread illness and catastrophic loss that haunt the world around us, we lift up the ashes of our dismay.
ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.

FIRST READER: For our shattered dreams of peace and the cynicism with which we are tempted, we lift up the ashes of our despair.
ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.

FIRST READER: For the deaths that have been justified by oppression, ignorance, arrogance and greed, we lift up the ashes of our shame.
ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.

FIRST READER: We ask now, O God, that you would receive the ashes of our sorrow, and turn them into comfort. Take our ashes of despair, and turn them into hope. Take our ashes of fear, and turn them into love.

SECOND READER: For the ways humanity pursues violence rather than understanding, we lift up the stones of our anger. *(With each reading, the reader's partner picks up a stone from a pile and puts it into a bowl of water.)*
ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.

SECOND READER: For the ways we allow national, religious and ethnic boundaries to circumscribe our compassion, we lift up the stones of our hardness.
ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.

SECOND READER: For our addiction to weapons and the ways of militarism, we lift up the stones of our fear.
ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.

SECOND READER: For all the ways we cast blame and create enemies, we lift up the stones of our self-righteousness.
ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.

SECOND READER: As we cast these stones into the troubled water of our times, hear our plea: Just as water wears away the hardest of stones, so too may the power of your compassion soften the hardness of our hearts and draw us into a future of justice and peace.

THIRD READER: For sowing seeds of justice to blossom into harmony, we ask for your guidance. *(With each reading, the reader's partner picks up a flower and puts it into a vase.)*
ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.

THIRD READER: For seeing clearly the many rainbow colors of humanity and earth, we ask for your wisdom.
ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.

THIRD READER: For calling us to life beyond our grieving, we ask for your comfort.
ALL: Lord, hear our prayer.

THIRD READER: God of guidance, wisdom and comfort, hear our plea: Just as water births life in a desert and gives hope to the wounded, so too may the power of your nurturing refresh our spirits and equip us for your work.

FOURTH READER: *(The reader, very slowly, reads the names of the people who are being honored, and his or her partner rings a bell for each name.)*

FIRST READER: O God, hear the prayers of our hearts. Amen.

—This service was adapted by Katie Cook from a litany by Rev. Patricia Pierce of Tabernacle United Church, Philadelphia, and Rabbi Arthur Waskow of The Shalom Center.

