

A Liturgy of Lament

For "A Remembrance at Fort Chambers," Sunday, Sept. 19, 2021

"A liturgy represents a communal response to and participation in the sacred. Should you feel led to respond where appropriate with "Amen," know that what you are saying is, "May it be so."

OPENING POETIC-STYLE PRAYER

Why?

Why so many?

Why did so many innocent people die on the prairie?

How?

How did so many miss the point?

How did so many miss the point of Jesus who was called Christ, who healed the sick, served the stranger, and loved his neighbors and enemies --- even to the point of execution by the imperial powers of his day?

How did the minister Chivington conflate the way of the Musket with the way of the Cross?

Who?

Whose side was Jesus on?

Whose side was Jesus on when the so-called "Christian" soldier used his bayonet?

Why did men form in ranks and go marching through a cold winter's night, and discard their haversacks and heed commands to fire, and why did they later celebrate and joke about their exploits?

Why those unholy meetings of metal and bodies, curses and prayers, claps of muskets and booms of howitzers, songs of the wounded and dying?

Why did it happen?

Why?

Good Creator, One Who Is With Those Who Suffer, One Who Mourns With Those Who Mourn, teach us to lament today. May these whys and whos and hows leave their mark on us.

Amen.

HONORING OF VICTIMS

There were 111 Cheyenne "heads of families" present among the lodges and camps along the Big Sandy Creek. Today, we remember them and their family members, who suffered at Sand Creek.

As for the 60 or so Arapaho people camped along the Big Sandy on Nov. 29, 1864, as we have heard, most were killed or mortally wounded, but a few survived. Our presenters will read each name of the Arapahos known to be at Sand Creek. After each name is read, please do not unmute, but feel free to respond from your location with the phrase, "We remember":

[Call] Chief Nawath also known as "Lefthand"

[Response] We remember

[Call] MaHom also known as "Snake Woman"

[Response] We remember

[Call] Mary Poisal

[Response] We remember

[Call] Notanee

[Response] We remember

[Call] Neva

[Response] We remember

[Call] Bosse

[Response] We remember

[Call] Bull Bear

[Response] We remember

[Call] Cheyenne Woman

[Response] We remember

[Call] Jabene

[Response] We remember

[Call] Mixed Hair

[Response] We remember

[Call] Red Bull

[Response] We remember

[Call] Hairy Face

[Response] We remember

[Call] Tom White Shirt

[Response] We remember

[Call] Ice

[Response] We remember

[Call] Kooish

[Response] We remember

[Call] Lameman

[Response] We remember

[Call] Rabbit Run

[Response] We remember

[Call] Phillip Pratt

[Response] We remember

[Call] Lumpforehead

[Response] We remember

[Call] Singing in the Water

[Response] We remember

[Call] Red Dress Woman

[Response] We remember

[Call] Goes in Lodge

[Response] We remember

We will now hold 231 seconds of silence, one second for each of the more than 230 Cheyenne and Arapaho elders, women, children and men massacred at Sand Creek...

[Tess and Tim start countdown of 231 seconds of silence...Alan unmutes and shares his screen/video shot of Fort Chambers marker, etc.]

[Response] Together, we remember them.

LITANY

[Call] Those who have ears to hear, let them hear.

PRAYER

Spirit of Life, inscribe these names on our hearts so that we may deeply lament these lives and lifeways lost. Grant deep and peaceful rest to these victims of the Massacre at Sand Creek. Bring healing from trauma and sustenance in struggle to their descendants who today live in Oklahoma, Wyoming, Montana and

elsewhere. Help us all to see Fort Chambers and Sand Creek as another "Ground Zero" --- sacred places of remembrance not only for Arapaho and Cheyenne nations but also for all residents of the Boulder Valley and of the State of Colorado.

[Call] From generations of ignorance and relative silence regarding the legacy of Fort Chambers and Sand Creek,

[Response] Save us and our neighbors, O Creator.

[Call] From the snares of arrogance, defensiveness and self-justification,

[Response] Save us and our neighbors, O Creator.

[Call] From the scapegoating, fear and racism cultivated at Fort Chambers, and from their terrible harvest as murder, mutilation, and destruction at Sand Creek.

[Response] Save us and our neighbors, O Creator.

[Call] From the dehumanizing and anti-Christ "Doctrine of Christian Discovery," which is rooted in a 15th-century papal sanction of the conquest, colonization, and exploitation of non-Christian territories and peoples and still informs American jurisprudence today.

[Response] Free us and our neighbors, O Creator.

[Call] From the myth of "manifest destiny," which enabled conquering white Americans to veil their greed, violence and theft with deterministic religious language,

[Response] Free us and our neighbors, O Creator

[Call] From the effects of generational trauma on descendants of both victims and perpetrators of the Sand Creek Massacre,

[Response] Free us and our neighbors, O Creator

[Both] Amen.

CONFESSION

Today, we repudiate the racist attitudes and heinous actions of Company D, 3rd Colorado Cavalry and of their leaders.

Today, we confess our own ignorance, our attachment to security and comfort, and our timidity in the presence of injustice.

Today, we repent of the scourge of "Othering" that continues to this day, and ask forgiveness for the conscious and unconscious ways in which we have contributed to the suffering of others.

BLESSING

O Creator, may we face the hard truths of Fort Chambers and Sand Creek. May we find the humility to search our past, ourselves and our institutions for the roots of injustice, and the courage to consider the many ways Native peoples today experience prejudice, discrimination and oppression. May we have eyes to see and ears to hear how we deny, ignore, perpetuate, and even benefit from those injustices. May we seek right relationship with our Arapaho and Cheyenne neighbors. May we overcome generations of broken promises and show ourselves worthy of trust and friendship.

May the hope of Christ's resurrection and his victory of life over death guide us.

May paths open toward understanding, partnership and true conciliation between all Native and non-Native peoples, and may you place in us a holy unrest until those paths meet.

In the Name of the Christ of tears, of the wounds, of the piercing.

Amen.