A Guided Lament
By: Jennifer Thigpenn

How long, O Lord?

In the messy middle of pain and protests and politics, we come to You, O Lord, our refuge and our strength, our very present help in time of trouble. (Psalm 46:1, paraphrased)

How long, O Lord? How long?

How long will we have to see violence end the life of one who bears Your image?

How long will we have to see injustice shackle another victim?

How long will we have to wait to see “justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream?” (Amos 5:24, ESV)

(Response)
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, hear our prayers.

O resurrected Christ, the One who is the same yesterday, today and forever, we grieve for the lives of the ones that You so love that have been lost to gunfire and chokeholds, contaminated water and food deserts, medical malpractice and unjust systems.

We weep for the children who are growing up without parents, the parents who have had to bury their children, and the families that are incomplete due to violence, particularly violence fueled by the sin of racism.

We mourn for those who have been profiled, “othered,” silenced or excluded because of the color of their skin, their ethnic heritage or native language.

We cry out for justice for Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Rodney King, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Emmitt Till and millions of others whose bodies were beaten or broken in the midst of American flourishing. We say their names in remembrance of those who were dearly loved by God yet suffered at the hands of a broken humanity.

Jesus, You too know what it is like to have humanity’s brokenness strip You of the right to breathe.

(Response)
We weep with those who weep.
Lord, hear our prayers.
But on the other side of death, You rose in victory and breathed on Your disciples the Holy Spirit. Breathe on us afresh as we pursue justice and righteousness as a testimony to Your great love.

We trust in Your redemptive work, the sacrifice of Your broken body and Your shed blood that has reconciled us, both to God and to one another.

We pick up the baton of Your calling:
To proclaim good news to the poor,
To bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim freedom for the captives,
To release from darkness the prisoners
To proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor
Through the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:18-19, paraphrased)

(Response)
*May Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven.*
*Lord, hear our prayers.*

We, Your Church, come in a posture of repentance, confessing our sins to one another that healing may come swiftly to Your bride and to our land.

For the moments when we have been silent and we should have spoken:

(Response)
*Forgive us, Lord.*

For the places in our heart where prejudice and bias have taken root:

(Response)
*Forgive us, Lord.*

For the times we have shut our eyes to injustice:

(Response)
*Forgive us, Lord.*

For the times that we have preferred ourselves and our comfort over the well-being of our neighbor:

(Response)
*Forgive us, Lord.*

*Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name;*
*Deliver us, and atone for our sins, for your name’s sake!* (Psalm 79:9, ESV)
Show us your steadfast love, O Lord,
And grant us your salvation.
Let me hear what God the Lord will speak,
For he will speak peace to his people, to his saints;
But let them not turn back to folly. (Psalm 85:7-8, ESV)

God, we have seen You move in ages past.
Show Yourself again to be faithful.
Show Yourself again to be mighty.
Show Yourself again to be just.
Show Yourself again to be loving.

Help us to reflect Your character to a world that is watching us.
We don’t want just a moment of hashtags and emotions; let us not move back to folly.
As You change our hearts, O God, as You set right our spirits and renew our minds . . .
Let us be catalysts for change.
Let us be beacons of hope.
Let us be tellers of truth.
Let us be carriers of love.

(Response)
Unite our hearts, O God.
Send us out with renewed vision and holy action.

Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us,
And for as many years as we have seen evil.
Let your work be shown to your servants,
And your glorious power to their children.
Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,
And establish the work of our hands upon us,
Yes, establish the work of our hands! (Psalm 90: 14-17, ESV)

May the work of our hands be the work of dismantling injustice.
May the work of our hands be the work of abolishing racism.
May the work of our hands be the work of practicing reconciliation.
May the work of our hands be the work of welcoming the stranger.
May the work of our hands be the work of loving our neighbor.
May the work of our hands always be aligned to the heart of our God.

(Response)
Establish the work of our hands.
Yes, establish the work of our hands.
We pray these things in the name of Jesus
Our Savior,
Our baptizer with the Holy Spirit,
Our Healer and
Our Soon Coming King.

Amen.