

College Chapel - Ezekiel

i led worship at college chapel this week (for the second time in 12 months) and decided to resurrect the Ezekiel focus that I had used at the Pentecost retreat. an apocalyptic mood seemed to suit the state of the world, to put it mildly.

I opened with Psalm 137:1-6 with Gorecki's Symphony No. 3 playing in the background and a scene of people weeping (a [National Geographic](#) pic from Kashmir) (I didn't read the last verse about smashing the babies' heads on rocks, but I knew that most of the faculty and some of the students would know where this psalm was leading)

*We gather today
reminded of a people in exile
captive in Babylon
strangers in a strange land
dispossessed and depressed
a people for whom
the heart-songs of faith ring hollow
a people for whom
home is a distant memory
freedom a faint longing
and faith a last resort*

*We are reminded of a people
twisted by anger
hungry for revenge
even upon the babies
people senseless with rage*

*We gather here today
to hear the prophet's cry
not a word of comfort
but a trumpet call
summoned to a place
of unbearable holiness
a thundering sky
an apocalypse of holy presence*

I have been deeply conscious of the number of people being forced into the life of a refugee by the actions of others. the other theme was that one of our partner colleges is facing something of a crisis in terms of funding and staffing (for reasons that I won't go into), and so i was very conscious of the state of the church. a church (and disciples) that often fails to speak and act against injustice, and yet is obsessed with its own internal structures and resources.

*We are called today to a lament -
to acknowledge the brokenness of ourselves,
of the church, of our world
to name our own sense of homelessness, our exile
to recognise our discontent, even our rage
at the state of the church
and the state of the world -*

*a world filling with exiles
we are asked
to confront our silence in the face of such evil*

so I used and adapted the ezekiel worship and stations [here](#), i added a photo of a refugee who stitched his lips together to the station about ezekiel being silenced. apart from reminding people of the state of the world, i wanted people to wrestle with the contrast between a detainee who voluntarily silences and straves themselves as a protest against injustice, and those of us who are not detained choosing to (painlessly) remain silent in the face of such treatment. some people including me found this image deeply disturbing. and we then did a labyrinth walk where we celebrated the eucharist. as usual I forgot to bring a camera or take photos. on the floor above the 'dry bones' (Ezekiel 37) I placed a flame bowl, and thanks to people on my [youthmultimedia](#) list for this. this is excellent for Pentecost.

take a stainless steel bowl - the kind you'd use in the kitchen, medium-sized. put about 1.5 kg of clay cat litter in it an 1 litre of methylated spirits. Add 500g-1 kg of rock salt and mix well. I placed the bowl on a cork mat and then a large wooden board beneath it. light the bowl with a long match or taper. It makes a fantastic, smokeless flame that will burn for up to an hour. I also had a stainless steel sheet of metal (oven tray) to cover the bowl and extinguish the flame, and oven mitts just in case.... the bowl takes time to cool, so don't touch it or add anything to it after it's alight!!!

I should add that you shouldn't do this in public before you've trialled in in your backyard! before the service I was wondering whether or not to advise the college authorities about my fire plans. the week before we'd had a fire evacuation due to burning toast in the student common room! when I arrived at college that day there were two guys checking every fire hose and extinguisher on the campus - one of them checking the room as I carried in my cat litter and metho! but I didnt say anything, and of course all was fine.

*Christ calls and gathers us here, one and all
We come to this place
as people with a longing -
seeking consolation and community
We come to this place
as those who have heard a call -
and seek clarity and conviction
We come to this place
as people on a journey -
seeking sustenance and surety
We come willing to lose life
in order to find it
While some seek certain signs
we see the Crucified One
While some seek certain knowledge
we see the Christ, Living Word
in our midst, in our lives*

i have to say that the first and second halves of the worship didn't mesh. people needed more time in the chapel space, and some clearer way to bring the experience to the communion table.

*God of mystery and wonder
surprise us and the world again this day
as you did
in Mary's womb
in an upper room
at the empty tomb*

*Surprise us again
as you did
when Ezekiel dreamed
of chariots of fire
and when Joel's visions
burst aflame at Pentecost
Make yourself known to us
in this place of your Creation
in this breaking of the bread
in this circle of community
and in the wind and heat of the Spirit's presence
here and now
Amen*

the labyrinth walk (it was windy and quite cool) was uncomfortable for some in terms of weather, and some had not walked in before, and I did not explain it all sufficiently. and a colleague was quite right in reflecting with me that the worship was high on artistic intelligence but needed to be higher on emotional intelligence in terms of helping people process the prayer stations and offer a communal gathering afterwards.

*God of Life
You who create, save and sustain the Cosmos
We stand in awe of your boundless goodness and grace
Since time before time began
You have brooded over your creation
giving birth and suckling life
You crafted us in your own image
inviting us to live in harmony with your world
and in the communion of your embrace*

*Ever and always you invite us to live in your grace
When our ears are deaf to your word
You send prophets with disturbing truths
When our hearts are cold to your love
You send samaritans with reckless compassion
When our eyes are blind to your purpose
You stir our sleep with visions of promise
When our lips are stuttering or silent
You give us fresh songs and new voice*

*As you sent Jesus to live and walk among us
to share our joys and suffer our sorrows
to live our life and die our death
so the risen Christ is present now*

*in him heaven and earth become one
for all eternity*

we couldn't find any communion wine before the service so we borrowed some from the Catholics - great stuff from the Sevenhill monastery in Clare made you want to pass the cup around again!

*As you go from this place,
Know that God
is with you and within you
Know that God
calls you and claims you
Know that God
renews you and refreshes you
Know that God
sends you and surrounds you*

Amen.

I probably want to say in my defense that the communion was more formal than I might have liked because it was at college, and I'm still working out what I can get away with... You can download the liturgy [here](#) and the stations [here](#).

thanks to [roddy hamilton](#) for some of his wonderful words, and to [cheryl](#) for the whale rider bit.