



Planning
liturgy/ritual
at times of
community
trauma

A RESOURCE FOR LEADERS



Promoting a Harmonious Multi-faith Victoria

Acknowledgements

This is an eLM (equipping Leadership for Mission) publication. In conjunction with Christina Rowntree, Nigel Hanscamp, Jenny Byrnes and eLM presbytery liaison ministers, it was compiled and edited by Andy Calder. Selected photography Ian Ferguson. Image of Rev Jude Benton conducting service at Captain Stevenson's Point, by Rev Chris Mulherin.

Published December 2020



Contents

	Page
1. Introduction and Purpose	4
1.1 Where this resource could be used	4
1.2 How to use the resource	4
1.3 Caring for yourself	4
1.4 The importance of ritual as part of healing	4
2. Theological Perspectives	5
3. Considerations and Guidelines for planning Ceremonies/Rituals	7
4. Creating Sacred Spaces	8
4.1 Planning	8
4.2 Site Selection	9
4.3 Shaping the Gathering Space/s	9
4.4 Procession	10
4.5 Ritual Action	10
4.6 Elemental Symbols	11
4.7 Colour and scale	12
5. Checklist for planning a community event	14
6. Resources/Information	18
6.1 Uniting Church in Australia	18
6.2 Bushfires	18
6.3 COVID-19	18
6.4 Additional Resources: Books re liturgies and prayers	19
6.5 Funeral and Memorial Resources	19
7. Support Organisations	19
8. Case Study – Time for Remembering	20
Prayers/Petitions used	22

Introduction and Purpose

In their local communities, ministers and church lay leaders are sometimes called to offer leadership in times of crisis – bushfires, floods, drought, or other traumatic events that impact our neighbourhoods, cities or communities.

1.1 Where this resource could be used

This resource has been compiled to support people who are in positions of leadership and responsibility when disaster and crisis strikes. Its purpose is to encourage and equip leaders with resources which can be used or adapted to suit the particular circumstances, in caring for people who are experiencing shock. The resource is intended to be a communal one, shared widely so that the response of planning a ritual or liturgy (be it simple or complex), becomes an activity of a community providing care for each other, be it within the faith community, and/or beyond into the wider community.

1.2 How to use the resource

It is recommended that familiarity with the resource happens now, so that when needed, knowledge of these materials and information is readily recalled.

In times of trauma, communities find distinctive ways of caring for each other. This resource offers guidelines that leaders can adapt to their particular context and community. The contents page and checklist can be useful for an overview, with details provided in each section. It is also recommended that ministry leaders reach out to colleagues for assistance and advice.

It is also hoped that feedback and future contributions will strengthen the content.

In responding to critical events or circumstances, either cyclical or unexpected, it is helpful to acknowledge that many people have previous experience in preparing and planning liturgies, prayers and communal events. This resource draws on that experience, gives thanks for it and trusts the contents are of value and assistance when needed.

1.3 Caring for yourself

Ministry leaders who provide care or guidance in times of trauma especially need to attend to their own care. Traumatic events can evoke pain or deep emotions in leaders: while this is a natural response, it is important that leaders connect with their colleagues, presbytery leaders, supervisor or other skilled professionals to assist with processing these emotions and events.

1.4 The importance of ritual as part of healing

A part of healing at such times is to offer ritual. Here are two definitions of ritual:

The purpose of ritual is to *“establish order, to reaffirm meaning, to bond community, to handle ambivalence and to encounter mystery”*¹

‘The purpose of ritual is to wake up the old mind in us, to put it to work. The old ones inside us, the collective unconscious, the many lives, the different eternal parts, the senses, and the parts of the brain that have been ignored. Those parts do not speak English. They do not care about television. But they do understand candlelight and colours. They understand nature’.
(Z. Budapest. Source unknown).



2

Theological Perspectives

Stress for individuals and communities is caused by events such as floods, fires, droughts, earthquakes, road crashes, anxiety and fear about COVID-19, or the impacts of climate change.

Powerful emotions related to loss and trauma may arise - across the spectrum of horror, fear, shock, despair, sadness, depression and anger.

People might well ask, "Why should I/our community suffer in this way? Who will help? How can we support each other at such a time? Will it happen again? What did I/we do to deserve this? Where is God? Is God to blame?"

There is no easy way of addressing such questions about trauma, and there are no easy answers. Sometimes the insurance industry and media accounts refer to these events as 'acts of God'.

So where is God in this?

Echoes of the questions above are found in Jesus' cry of anguish from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

How might Scripture inform and support this vital conversation?

■ In the book of Job in the Christian and Hebrew scriptures, Job struggled with the meaning of his immense suffering. He lost everything, great herds of livestock, his sons and his daughters, and finally, covered with ulcers, his health. Three friends arrive to comfort him but insist on the 'truth' that suffering is punishment for evil. For 34 chapters the friends repeat, rehash and backtrack over tired arguments, their theology 'an exhausted mine' (McKibben, 1994).²

Job himself is struggling with a 'new fact', one that simply does not fit his (and their) assumptions. He knows he is not an evil man; he is thus locked in a battle with the orthodoxy of his time.

Then, at long last, God speaks. God does not address Job's immediate problems, does not refer to his acute distress nor to his anguished questions.

In answer God speaks of a wild and glorious world – a world that is ‘rapacious, tough, deadly, amoral’ – intoxicatingly alive, every being in place (McKibben, 1994).³

God is giving Job new eyes, showing him that he is part of a vast world. Humans are not the centre. We are part of a wider non-human creation that exists without us and before us. In the presence of this glory, and this immensity, Job is silent.

- We turn to the Psalms, where Jesus’ cry is pre-figured in Psalm 22:1-2:

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest”.

Words of comfort and deliverance follow in verse 24:

“For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him”.

Psalm 23 is a beautiful reminder of God’s journey with us through the valley of the shadow of death, and the restoration of our souls when we are in God’s company.

- For Christians the journey of Lent commences on Ash Wednesday culminating in the Good Friday story of death and desolation, reaching its zenith in the resurrection and hope of Jesus revealed on Easter Sunday. From ashes we are all raised in Christ.

- And it doesn’t end there. 50 days later we mark Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came in the form of wind and fire to those assembled in Jerusalem. Jesus appeared to the disciples (John 20:19 - 23) and breathed the Holy Spirit upon them and said: “Peace be with you”. This meeting of hope and peace in the risen broken body, also offers us strength and encouragement to our sagging hearts and communities.

- As we share the elements of bread and wine in the Eucharist we are reminded of God’s gift to us in Christ and give thanks for God’s presence in times of suffering.

- The Apostle Paul writes:
“What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?”..... “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”.....
“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord”. (Romans 8: 31, 35, 38 – 39).

There are no easy answers. Too often trite words are used to offer answers or solutions, words that only further alienate when what is needed above all is a sense that God journeys with us in the hearts and minds and actions of those around us. As we consider our response as Christian leaders, we recognise the tension between these two realities: the constant love of God, and our lack of solutions in traumatic events.

¹Ramshaw, E., *Ritual and Pastoral Care*. Philadelphia. Fortress Press. (1987), p 22.

²quoted in McKibben, B., (1994). p 2.

³McKibben, B., (1994). p 56.

Considerations and Guidelines for planning Ceremonies/ Rituals

Key questions to be considered when considering a response include:

- Why is this event being organised? Is gathering together the best response to our felt need at this time?
- How are we acknowledging the diversity of cultures, memories of past experience and people of other faiths?
- Are appropriate delegated leaders from other faith communities being approached and invited?
- Is there an opportunity for all those who gather to tell their story in some way? Not only speeches – perhaps open time to express phrases about their experience?
- Where is the event to be held? Why?
- Is it a time of worship or one of remembering / commemoration / support? How are we organising this

event based on its purpose?
Which group is responsible for which section? Are we doing anything that might give offence?

- Should we offer further hospitality before/after the event? Is this appropriate?
- Are there opportunities for individuals to express their own feelings in actions: write a word; pick up a symbol; light a candle?

The links below include checklists for use when planning and organising events, in Christian spaces and in wider community settings.

For Christian communities and for all people of goodwill who want to organise a multi-faith gathering – produced by the Victorian Council of Churches and Victorian Multicultural Commission.

<https://www.assembly.uca.org.au/images/Ministries/ROF/images/stories/worship/guidelinesvcc.pdf>

For Civic, Memorial and multi-faith events <https://assembly.uca.org.au/rof/resources/interfaith-gathering/item/2186-so-you-want-to-worship-together?highlight=WyJ3b3JzaGlwliwiJ3dvcnNoaXAnliwidG9nZXRoZXIiLCJ0b2dldGhlciculiwidG9nZXRoZXInliwidG9nZXRoZXInL>



4

Creating Sacred Spaces

As leaders and ministry agents connected with the Uniting Church in Australia, our starting point and focus in times of trauma is to serve the needs of communities – especially their suffering and brokenness. As Christians, our offering will be made in response to the God who suffers with us, our neighbours, and with the whole Creation. We may be responding to an invitation from a community, or initiating a community gathering. Ideally, an invitation will be extended to local indigenous leaders and the leaders of various faith traditions, to plan the event together. We will be most effective when community leaders work together to offer a space where symbol, ritual action and speaking can be received by people of any or no faith.

As ministry agents, we may be familiar with an indoor worship environment that carries many meanings for us and creates a place from which we speak. A new task awaits in creating public ritual, where speaking will need to be honed and framed by attention to the space and manner in which people

are invited to gather. This posture is not a given and needs to be examined closely. Can we serve our diverse communities, trusting that an event possibly conceived and delivered without reference to specifically Christian symbol and liturgy will be effective in carrying the purpose we have identified?

4.1 Planning

In the early stages it can be helpful to identify, and clearly articulate, what the purposes are assumed to be for the event. These could include:

- Lament - to acknowledge grief for loss and suffering
- Despair – the struggle to hope
- Gratitude – to acknowledge those spared, and for emergency services
- Recognition of community effort and resilience
- Coherence – to provide an opportunity for ritual action where everyone participates
- Memorialisation – to provide markers in recovery
- Restoration – to promote healing, recovery, restitution, and hope.

The purpose of this document is to guide planning and preparation to create sacred spaces through use of elemental symbols, colour and ritual action. It is assumed that accessible spoken or written words will be delivered, and texts selected to support the community. Developing spoken elements will not be addressed here.

One of the primary questions is whether to conduct a community event indoors or outdoors. In response to natural disasters, it is important to acknowledge the trauma experienced, not only by individuals and the community, but also to Country. Honouring the connection of First Nations people to Country, especially when damage to Country has occurred, can be done by planning ritual and ceremony in partnership with First Nation elders. In consultation with them, an outdoors site may be proposed.

4.2 Site Selection

Beyond listening for community preference, selecting a site or venue will be determined by many factors, including seating and/or standing capacity, disability access requirements, acoustics and technical capacity. If you decide on an outdoors site, you will need to select an indoor location as a wet weather alternative, and plan it just as carefully.

Whether you choose an indoor or outdoor site, you might consider moving participants from one space to another for different parts of the event. This may incorporate a procession (see 4.4).

In an ideal world you would engage an experienced event manager to support on-site logistics, technical and audio-visual requirements, and a stage manager

“

Who will separate us
from the love of Christ?
Will hardship, or distress,
or persecution, or famine,
or nakedness, or peril,
or sword?

”

to organise and conduct a rehearsal and guide the event. If this is not possible, please be aware that spatial, visual and audio considerations cannot be taken for granted but must be planned in detail.

4.3 Shaping the Gathering Space/s

The way a community is shaped as it gathers carries meaning. Consider alternatives to the usual ‘bus’ shape with leadership at the front and straight rows. This form signals to those attending they are passive recipients of leadership from the front, especially if there is a raised platform from which they speak.

At the other end of the spectrum the community may gather ‘in the round’ with leadership emerging from within the community. The egalitarian nature of this design creates more active engagement, but has logistical challenges. An effective design somewhere between these extremes and working with the constraints of your chosen site or building must be found.

4.4 Procession

Procession can be a metaphor for journey, moving from one state to another. The physicality of moving together from one place to another is an embodied representation of communal change. You may start at one significant site and process the community to another gathering site, where a ceremony may take place with ritual action. Or you may process from a site outdoors to a building and a seated ceremony indoors. The movement between outside and inside, stepping across a threshold, signifies a transitional space.

Alternatively, and especially if you have no idea how many people may attend, you might plan people to continue moving right through an indoor space, to sign a memorial book, to place an object as ritual action, or pick up an item to carry and place it in a ritual action outdoors. The time between picking up and placing a symbol allows the participant to invest it with their own meaning.

After trauma, the tone could be solemn and silent, or could be accompanied and supported by music, drumming or indigenous instruments. It is also important to recognise that some people, whilst present, may not wish to actively participate.

4.5 Ritual Action

Find a simple gestural action using a material object to create the focus for a community gathering (e.g. placing a stone in a bowl of water: see below for other examples). If done well, the common action brings people together, creating shared meaning. This is particularly the case as the action is replicated by each individual in attendance. By engaging in a ritual action, individuals invest the material object with meaning. It becomes symbolic of the individual's experience. Repeating many

individual gestures, the ritual action may memorialise that experience, for individuals and community. The memorialisation may be strengthened by preserving and/or documenting the ritual action. For example, ribbons tied to fences are left as visible reminders.

The ritual action need not be explained, nor a fixed meaning expected. Symbols are best left to speak for themselves. Trust the action and symbol to express and carry the community's experience. Ensure the action is simple enough to be easily replicated.

“

The purpose of ritual is to wake up the old mind in us, to put it to work.

”

People of Christian heritage often think primarily of lighting a candle and placing in a sand tray as ritual action. Certainly this is a powerful symbol of individual prayer or wish. Here are some other options:

- Floating a charred leaf on a bowl of water
- Dropping a pinch of salt into water
- Planting a seedling
- Placing a stone on a cairn
- Tying a ribbon onto a tree, or fence.

A note about singing: Christians may be used to singing in events like these, affirming our faith and personally articulating our theology. However leaders should recognise that communal singing, particularly using hymns, is not a familiar practice to many in our community. While it may be appropriate to have a soloist or choir sing, expecting the community to join in voicing Christian faith is not appropriate.

4.6 Elemental Symbols

The use of symbol is a powerful and significant requirement in ritual action. When planning with First Nation elders, the choice of a natural symbol needs to be made by them. Be careful not to presume upon indigenous sharing. If material is to be gathered from Country, ensure this is managed by indigenous leadership.

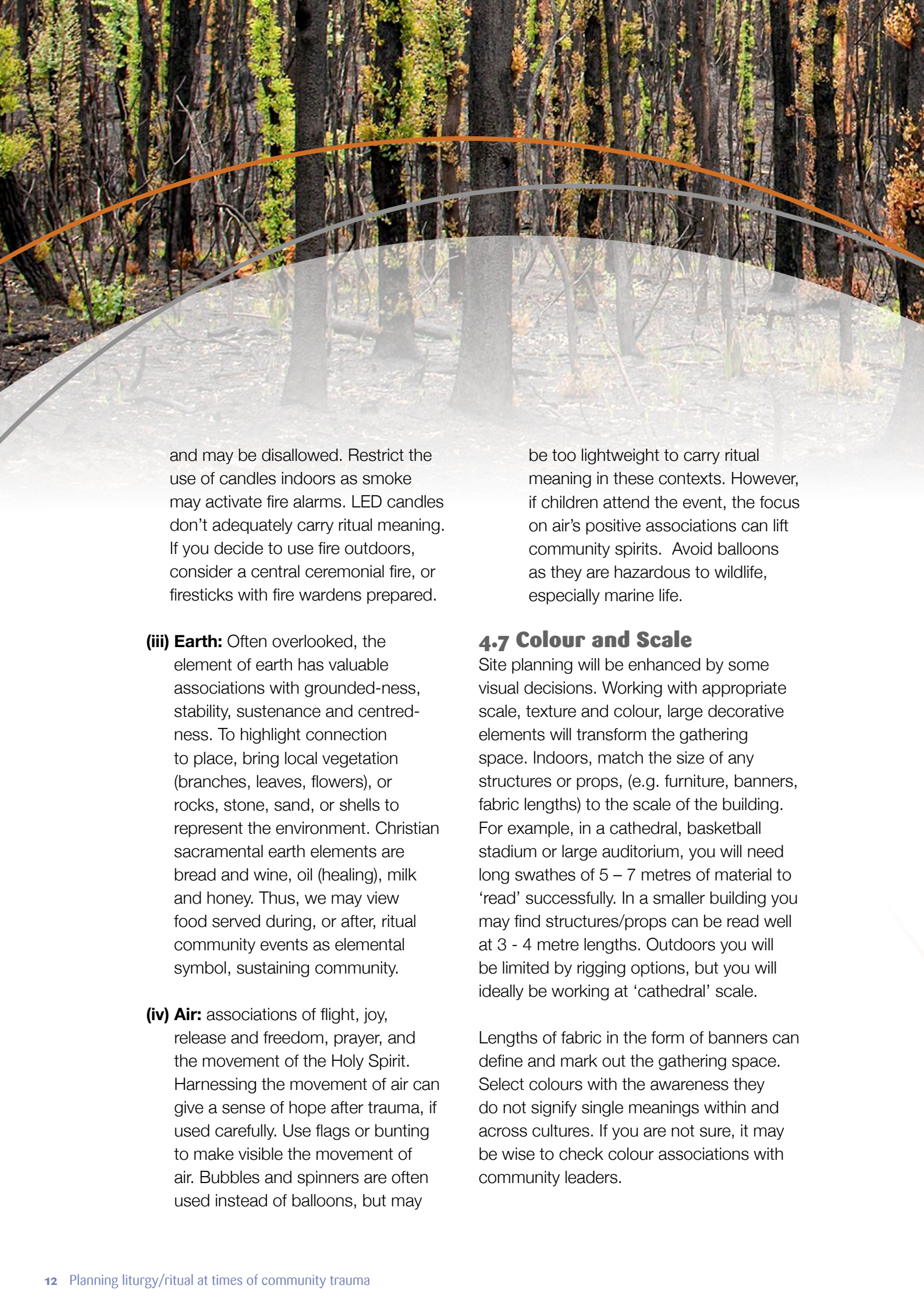
Keep it simple. Choose one, or at most two, symbols that serve the moment. Select from the four elements, water, fire, earth, air. These elements are universal, conveying meaning across culture and religion. Trust the symbol to carry multiple meanings and try to resist the urge to 'fix' meaning. Each element carries positive associations, balanced by associations to danger, injury and death, because the elements are integral to natural disasters. For example, the use of candles when commemorating fire is likely to be inappropriate, and so water or earth may be the best symbols.

It is most important to confer with local people to check they are appropriately used; e.g. use of water as a symbol and sign of God's faithfulness when suffering consequences of extreme drought; or fire being used as a symbol of God's presence.

(i) Water: Essential to life, the element of water carries associations of cleansing, refreshment, quenching of thirst, movement and flow, dynamism, finding balance, as well as the sacramental association of forgiveness and new life in Christian baptism. When introducing water for use in a community event avoid fabric imitations. It is best to have real water, difficult though that can be. Water may be placed in large bowls, poured out from jug/s, or visible from the event site. Orient the gathering so that participants are facing the river, lake, or beach.

(ii) Fire: is associated with warmth, change, transformation, cleansing and clearing. Christians associate fire with the presence of the Holy Spirit. In Australia, fire stimulates regeneration, and new life. Be mindful that flame and the smoke from a candle can sometimes trigger distressing memories of fire. Fire indoors with crowds carries risks,





and may be disallowed. Restrict the use of candles indoors as smoke may activate fire alarms. LED candles don't adequately carry ritual meaning. If you decide to use fire outdoors, consider a central ceremonial fire, or firesticks with fire wardens prepared.

(iii) Earth: Often overlooked, the element of earth has valuable associations with grounded-ness, stability, sustenance and centred-ness. To highlight connection to place, bring local vegetation (branches, leaves, flowers), or rocks, stone, sand, or shells to represent the environment. Christian sacramental earth elements are bread and wine, oil (healing), milk and honey. Thus, we may view food served during, or after, ritual community events as elemental symbol, sustaining community.

(iv) Air: associations of flight, joy, release and freedom, prayer, and the movement of the Holy Spirit. Harnessing the movement of air can give a sense of hope after trauma, if used carefully. Use flags or bunting to make visible the movement of air. Bubbles and spinners are often used instead of balloons, but may

be too lightweight to carry ritual meaning in these contexts. However, if children attend the event, the focus on air's positive associations can lift community spirits. Avoid balloons as they are hazardous to wildlife, especially marine life.


4.7 Colour and Scale


Site planning will be enhanced by some visual decisions. Working with appropriate scale, texture and colour, large decorative elements will transform the gathering space. Indoors, match the size of any structures or props, (e.g. furniture, banners, fabric lengths) to the scale of the building. For example, in a cathedral, basketball stadium or large auditorium, you will need long swathes of 5 – 7 metres of material to 'read' successfully. In a smaller building you may find structures/props can be read well at 3 - 4 metre lengths. Outdoors you will be limited by rigging options, but you will ideally be working at 'cathedral' scale.

Lengths of fabric in the form of banners can define and mark out the gathering space. Select colours with the awareness they do not signify single meanings within and across cultures. If you are not sure, it may be wise to check colour associations with community leaders.





Warm colours:

 Yellow and oranges – evoke joy, fun, youth, harmony, but are also associated with danger, radiation, and poison.


 Red – evokes blood, life, passion, Country, good luck in some cultures, but also danger, fire.


Cool colours:


 Blue, green – evoke calm, peace, growth, pristine environment.


 Green – in some cultures is associated with prosperity.

Neutrals:

 Browns – evoke soil, nature, Earth, Country, and also drought, dryness.

 Black – evokes drama, solemnity, night sky, death. Aftermath of fire.

 White – evokes purity, light, peace, and also death. in some cultures. Aftermath of fire.

 Purple – evokes mystery, wisdom, the esoteric, high status, royalty.





5

Checklist for planning a community event

For planning purposes, you might like to use the accompanying Checklist which is available as a downloadable, editable word document.

EVENT MANAGEMENT FOR A COMMUNITY EVENT IN RESPONSE TO TRAUMA		NOTES
PLANNING		
Build a planning team	<p>Planning a large community event for an unspecified number in a short time frame requires an effective team working together.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consult Council officers, Police, VicRoads, St. John's Ambulance etc. ■ Agree on areas of responsibility, risk management protocols ■ Engage First Nations elders through appropriate channels ■ Engage leaders from community groups, ecumenical and interfaith, sports and business groups. Not all need be on planning group. 	
Site Selection	<p>Identify site or sites for event, suitable for anticipated crowd:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Select site with good access to toilets ■ Ensure access for people living with disability ■ Decide whether to move the crowd from one site to another ■ Identify site for wet weather plan. 	<p>See UCA Assembly Disability Access Guidelines</p> <p>https://resources.uca.org.au/images/Guidelines-For-Disability-Access -Final.pdf</p>
Risk Management and Public Liability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure risk management plan in place ■ Ensure Public Liability insurance is in place for event ■ Identify responsibility for first aid ■ Identify responsibility for cleaning, site restoration ■ If required, plan traffic management, parking ■ Prepare briefing notes for volunteers, ushers, traffic marshals ■ St. John's Ambulance booked, or enrol current First Aiders, prepared with up to date kits. 	<p>When organising an event with any organisations other than the Uniting Church, if evidence of public liability cover is required, a 'Certificate of Currency' can be obtained from the Synods' Insurance Team by emailing the Insurance Officer at: insurance@victas.uca.org.au or calling 03 9116 1995.</p>

Enrol specialist personnel	<p>In an ideal world you would draw on people with the following expertise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Stage Manager, to conduct rehearsal and guide event ■ Site Manager, see logistics section ■ Counsellors, pastoral carers. 	
Shape of Gathering	<p>Orient focus to create sense of community, assuming seating is movable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Wide and close, rather than long and distant ■ Try for curved lines of seating over straight lines. Prioritise good sight lines over acoustics, and ■ Bring in more PA, if needed. 	
Ritual Action	<p>Plan appropriate Ritual Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consider several options before selecting one action ■ Select one element as the symbol for ritual action ■ Plan what people will be invited to do, and ensure people with disabilities can participate ■ Factor in time, between collecting element and enacting the ritual action. You may invite people to reflect with their element ■ Try out the ritual action in your planning group and review. If you are not happy with it, don't be afraid to try a new idea ■ Decide whether there will be one focal point or several 'stations' in the space where the crowd can move to enact ritual action ■ Plan how/where the elements will be contained (baskets, bowls, tubs, etc.), and presented respectfully ■ Organise collection of sufficient elements well ahead of time ■ Plan what will happen with the elements after the event ■ Consider/consult on whether filming or photography will be allowed. 	
Spatial Coherence	<p>To enhance focus on Ritual Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identify what distractions need to be removed from the space ■ Select colour elements – banners, cloths, to support the ritual action. Restrict colour to one or two relevant colours ■ Plan and order in equipment required to rig anything at height ■ Design focal points where ritual action takes place. Ensure plinths or tables are accessible to all. 	
Speaker Preparation	<p>Suggestions to guide speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Request First Nations elder to provide the Welcome to Country, or identify person to make an Acknowledgement of Country ■ Reduce the number of different speakers ■ Give speakers time limit and/or word count guidance and encourage speakers to time themselves prior ■ Suggest a format for speakers to adopt, e.g. informal/formal ■ Keep introductions to a minimum ■ Prepare spoken invitation and demonstration of ritual action ■ Advise the time you need speakers to arrive for a sound check. 	
Crowd management	<p>Prepare your ushers well with written and spoken briefing notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Enrol ushers with defined tasks to assist crowd management ■ Ensure pathways remain unimpeded throughout event ■ Place signage to reserve seating ■ Identify and communicate directions for people to move through to enact Ritual Action ■ Communicate location of amenities, First Aid, fire exits and extinguishers ■ Maintain quiet space after the event ■ Do not remove symbols; don't extinguish candles, if used ■ Request counsellors/pastoral carers be present during and after the event. 	
Logistics Personnel	<p>Ensure risk management plan is ready for action, check all required insurances are in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Get expert assistance and book/organise equipment to rig any elements safely at height ■ Consider engaging separate set up and bump out teams ■ Prepare a run sheet for everyone ■ Create a contact list with everyone's phone details ■ If you do not have a dedicated stage manager, identify one person for this role. 	

SITE PREPARATION

Declutter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clear the space as planned see Spatial Coherence section (P15) 	
Visual props, banners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Best rigged by expert in a cleared space 	
Seating/standing zones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Set up seating and/or mark-out standing zones 	
Access pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mark off with chalk or high-vis tape 	
Sight lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Stagger seating rows and test for sight lines 	
Focus lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure focal point/s for ritual action are well lit 	
Test sound /Public Address	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cue any recorded music or other sound files 	
Projection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cue any projected visuals 	
Fire and Safety protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Check signage, safety plans, first aid, toilet provision, parking and traffic management are in accordance with local Council, Police etc. 	

REHEARSAL

Rehearse music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Schedule a separate, earlier rehearsal for musicians 	
Rehearse ritual action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ If possible, walk through ritual action with ushers, and any speakers/ dignitaries available 	
Rehearse speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Orient, welcome speakers, indicate where they will sit and when to move forward to speak ■ Adjust height of mikes, sound check each speaker. 	

The Event begins, may all your plans go well.

AFTER THE EVENT

Don't rush to clean up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Keep the space open. People will likely return ■ Some ushers and counsellors remain in the space ■ Allow the elements of the Ritual Action to be present for some time after the event. 	
Photography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ If photography was disallowed during event, now may be a more appropriate time ■ You may want to document the event and stage a re-enactment of the Ritual Action with one or two people. 	
'Bump Out'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Always faster than setting up ■ Consider organising a fresh team of volunteers. 	
Memorialising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ You may have planned to retain and preserve some of the ritual elements for the future ■ Depending on what you decide, there may be a task to respectfully dispose of some or all of the elements. 	
Site Restoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clean up litter ■ Recycle where possible. 	
'Thank you'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remember to thank all your volunteers and persons/organisations involved ■ Acknowledge the planning team. 	



Resources/ Information

6.1 Uniting Church in Australia (disasters)

<https://assembly.uca.org.au/resources/disaster>

<https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/natural-disaster-recovery/>

<https://assembly.uca.org.au/images/stories/Disaster/rainbows.pdf>

<https://assembly.uca.org.au/resources/disaster/item/517-list-of-materials-for-specific-times-of-disaster-and-hardship>

<https://www.nswdrn.org.au/resources> (NSW and ACT Synod)

Synod of Victoria and Tasmania Presbyteries

<https://www.northeastvicuca.net.au/worship-resources/>

<https://www.ucappep.org/covid-19-updates/>

<https://victas.uca.org.au/resources/bushfires-pastoral-and-worship-resources/>

<https://ucatas.org.au/faith/worship/prayers/>

6.2 Bushfires

<https://assembly.uca.org.au/resources/disaster/item/3113-worship-resources-for-australian-bush-fires>

<https://theconversation.com/bush-fires-can-make-kids-scared-and-anxious-here-are-5-steps-to-help-them-cope-126926>

<https://www.unicef.org.au/blog/news-and-insights/january-2020/how-to-talk-to-your-children-about-australia-s-bushfires>

<http://www.gungahlinuniting.org/?p=4744&fbclid=IwAR0AQ9x-KE1NSjQv12EyFXjXOcasf8E0ZgmEY-Px0yl91f4mOXxIR3oWUIFE0>

6.3 COVID-19

<http://pilgrimwr.unitingchurch.org.au/?p=7822>

<https://victas.uca.org.au/resources/covid-19-worship-resources/>

6.4 Additional Resources: Books re liturgies and prayers

Gentle rain on parched earth: worship re-sources for rural settings. Eds. Philip Liebelt and Noel Nicholls JBCE 1996

Echoes of our Journey: Liturgies of the people. JBCE 1993

The Glory of Blood, Sweat and Tears: Liturgies for living and dying JBCE 1996

Liturgies for the Journey of Life SPCK 2000

In This Hour: Liturgies for Pausing
DesBooks 2001

Titles by Dorothy McRae-McMahon

The pattern of our days: Liturgies and resources for worship ed. Kathy Galloway
The Iona Community 1996

Pastoral Prayers in Public Places F. Belton
Joyner Jr. Abingdon Press 2006

6.5 Funeral and Memorial Resources

Methodist Church of New Zealand Te Haahi
Weteriana O Aotearoa 1997

<http://www.methodist.org.nz/files/docs/faith%20and%20order/funeral%20resource.pdf>

Support Organisations

(include)

Blue Knot Foundation
<https://www.blueknot.org.au/>

Lifeline
<https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

Beyond Blue
<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

Road Trauma Support Services Victoria
<https://rtssv.org.au/>

VCC Emergency Ministries
<https://vccem.org.au/>



A Case Study

Time for Remembering (2001 – 2020)

An annual Memorial Service to remember: those who have died those who continue to suffer and the impacts of road trauma on the community

This multi-faith event for road crash victims 'Time for Remembering' (2001-2020), including Prayers/Petitions, is an example of a community ritual which incorporates religious content.

The inaugural ceremony, planned jointly by representatives from Road Trauma Support Services Victoria, Victoria Police, Epworth Hospital Pastoral care practitioners and the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, was held on Palm Sunday 2001. The purpose of the occasion was to provide a public opportunity for people affected by road trauma to gather and express their grief and sorrow, and was held in two locations: in Melbourne's City Square and St. Paul's Cathedral. It was also an occasion in which media and public attention was drawn towards the need for care and vigilance over the impending Easter holiday period, a time when high numbers of road deaths and injuries occur. The poignancy of the Christian marking of Easter was also a significant factor in the planning.

This Case Study illustrates some of the elements involved in planning an event which considered people's preferences to express their loss and grief in either, or both, secular and sacred spaces. At the first location, the City Square, a personal story of a mother's loss of her daughter was shared, followed by

road safety messages from the Minister of Transport, the CEO of the Transport Accident Commission, and a Commissioner of the Victoria Police. A candle was then lit as a symbol of universal grief, followed by some multi-faith prayers and poems held in honour of the diversity of religious backgrounds of people in the Victorian community.

As a point of transition between this public context and a distinctively ecumenical Christian Service, the candle-bearer and the Moderator of the Uniting Church lead all those in attendance into the closed-off intersection of Collins and Swanston Streets for a brief prayer and time of silence. This act was to symbolise a 'reclaiming of the roads' from the horror and trauma that people have been victims of. With trams and traffic halted, and surrounded by emergency services personnel and police, it was a poignant moment providing an opportunity for many expressions of tears and sadness. Driver notes that 'the liminality of ritual can be used by God to weaken the grip of oppressive powers, and that in fact God has no other use for it' (The Magic of Ritual). In the tears and symbolism of standing together in that usually busiest of intersections, for those present this ordinary place was transformed into a holy one.

A procession to the Cathedral then took place, filing behind the candle and a cross assembled from twisted car parts. Following introductory prayers, readings from Scripture and a homily, a series of prayers were offered, with a symbol being placed at the foot of the cross prior to each petition. These petitions were as follows:

- **for people bereaved by road crashes**
- **for people injured, and their carers**
- **for those who administer emergency services**
- **for those who provide health services in hospitals and other settings**
- **for those who make and administer our laws**
- **for our community at large.**

These were concluded by sharing the Lord's Prayer together. The symbols placed under the cross included a Bible, a prosthetic, a fireman's helmet, a first-aid kit, and a bouquet of flowers.

During the singing of 'Amazing Grace', the congregation was invited to come forward and light a candle for their own personal remembrance or grief. The Cathedral was half full and almost everyone present went forward to light a candle – the timing of which created some logistical hiccups for the following group booked to use the space. But this time could not be hurried, having a life and depth in need of respect and honour. This was the 'kairos time where God can find us sitting still; that time which is the dwelling place of the eternal God we serve' (*R. Fulghum – From Beginning to End*).

At the conclusion of the Service a blessing was offered by the Moderator prior to people returning to their everyday lives. The range of reactions after the Service was broad: from personal expressions of grief, groups holding and comforting each other and the exchange of stories, whilst some chose to leave hurriedly.

What meaning might people ascribe to such a significant occasion? Some form of reconciliation perhaps? Broadly speaking, reconciliation is 'the establishment of harmony with one's world, one's destiny, or oneself' (Dictionary of Pastoral Care

and Counselling). For Clebsch and Jaekle, reconciliation is that function of pastoral theology which 'seeks to re-establish broken relationships'. They also contend that 'ritual acts are powerful means of healing, guiding, sustaining and reconciling troubled persons' (Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective).

Acts of healing, and of reconciliation, are closely linked. This event provided an opportunity for both private and public prayer in the company of others, in both secular and sacred spaces. People were free to choose to be present at either or both settings. Reconciliation, in speaking of 'broken relationship', may mean for one person the seeking of God's forgiveness for an action that led to the suffering of another. For another, it may mean the offering of prayers for personal solace over the anguish of losing a loved one, or for their own personal injury.

In the very company of others who have suffered similar burdens of grief, such solidarity and togetherness may be profoundly comforting. In the words of Victor Turner (*The Ritual Process*), it is to be hoped that a ritual such as this one did indeed provide a space where 'identities are challenged, reshaped, reframed and social status is temporarily suspended until we re-enter society in new ways, transformed by our encounter with the living God'.

Prayers/Petitions used:

The Bereaved

I come representing those who have been bereaved through road crashes – the family members and friends who now have only the memory of those they love.

(Brief silence)

We remember with sorrow the many who have died as a result of road crashes. We give thanks for their lives and all that they have meant to ourselves and others. We pray for those who grieve their loss, that they may be comforted.

We remember them

Those Injured and their Carers

I come representing those who suffer the continuing effects of road trauma in body, mind and spirit. For them and those who care for them, the pain continues.

(Brief silence)

We remember with concern those who carry injury and disability following road trauma. We pray for them, and their families and friends who suffer with them and give support and love. May they be strengthened in hope and perseverance.

We remember them

The Witnesses

I come representing people who have witnessed road trauma and who are troubled by recurring memories.

(Brief silence)

We remember with compassion those affected by road trauma, including drivers, who are weighed down by the sadness of what they have seen, heard and experienced. We pray for the healing of their memories.

We remember them

Emergency Services

We come representing the Emergency Services of Victoria – Ambulance, Fire Services, Police, State Emergency Service. Our members see the horror of road trauma, and do all they can to save the injured.

(Brief silence)

We remember with gratitude Victorian members of the Ambulance Services, Metropolitan and Country Fire Services, State Emergency Service and Police who bring compassion and care to those involved in road crashes. We pray for them as they give unstintingly of their skills and themselves to help others.

We remember them

Health and Healing Services

I come representing those who care for the injured in hospitals and rehabilitation centres. We see their suffering and use our knowledge and skills to help them return to a full and satisfying life.

(Brief silence)

We remember with thankfulness the skill and dedication of doctors, nurses, hospital staff, community counselors and grief and loss services who treat and rehabilitate those injured in body, mind and spirit. We pray for them as they use their knowledge and skills to restore broken lives and instil hope for the future.

We remember them

The Law

I come representing those involved in the making and administration of our laws. Through the law we seek to promote responsible behaviour in all who use our roads, and we strive for assistance for those affected by road trauma.

(Brief silence)

We remember and respect those whose responsibility it is to make and administer laws for the sake of us all. We pray for them, that they may have wisdom in making decisions that help shape a just, caring and responsible community.

We remember them

“

Identities are challenged, reshaped, reframed and social status is temporarily suspended until we re-enter society in new ways, transformed by our encounter with the living God.

”

Our Community

I come representing the community of which we are all part. Our community is only as strong as the commitment we each give to its wellbeing. We acknowledge the responsibility we share for keeping our roads safe.

(Brief silence)

We remember ourselves, the women and men, young people and children, who make up the diverse community of our state and nation. We pray that as we use the roads we may exercise patience, tolerance, self-control and generosity of spirit for the safety of our community.

We remember them

The event continues to be held annually, with less overt Christian symbolism and language. The event is now held on the third Sunday in November which coincides with the United Nations declaration of the date being World Remembrance Day for Road Crash Victims. The event incorporates representatives from the Faith Communities Council of Victoria and Humanists Victoria, reflecting the community's diversity.





Further contact

Nigel Hanscamp

Director – Priorities, Focus and Advocacy

Equipping Leadership for Mission eLM

29 College Cres, Parkville 3052

t (03) 9340 8816 | m 0438 732 226

nigel.hanscamp@victas.uca.org.au