

# The Anglican Diocese of North Queensland

## St James Cathedral Townsville



## A Service of Prayer and Lament for Afghanistan

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> August 2021

Minister: The Right Reverend Dr Keith Joseph  
Bishop of North Queensland

Speaker: Lieutenant Colonel Tom Biedermann  
Deputy Commander, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade

Prayers: Chaplain Stephen Brooks CSM

Organist: Mr Michael Fellows

### **Welcome**

We gather on the lands of the Bindal and Wulgurukaba people to whom we pay our respects. We give thanks and acknowledge their service to our nation in war and in peace.

We are here to express our grief and lament for that which has been lost in Afghanistan and is now slipping away. We mourn our mates, our friends, our brothers and sons and fathers lost in Afghanistan, and we mourn those who have died since returning home. We give thanks for the service of all who served in Afghanistan: those who served in uniform, civil servants and diplomats, members of non-government organisations, and the Afghan people themselves who served with us: translators and drivers and soldiers and all those who placed their trust in us.

We gather to show our support and love for those who have returned home wounded in body, mind or soul. We lament the lost opportunities, the things left undone and that which now can never be done for the people of Afghanistan. We grieve for our friends in Afghanistan who now seem lost to us, and pray that in the mercy of God they may be restored to us. We lament for the women facing servitude, for the religious minorities facing persecution, for all the good that is now lost. We pray and reflect in the silence.

## **Organ Prelude**

*Choral Prelude on Psalm 130: "Out of the deep have I called unto you, O Lord"*  
by Johann Pachelbel

## **Welcome and Intent**

The Right Reverend Dr Keith Joseph  
Bishop of North Queensland

## **Opening Prayer**

Chaplain Stuart Asquith, RAAF

God of all mercy, giver of all comfort,  
look graciously, we pray on all who are gathered here  
and on all who suffer from the conflict in Afghanistan.  
Give us a sense of your love and light transcending the darkness  
that we may find our way home  
and comfort those with whom we share the pain.  
This we ask in the name of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ.  
**Amen.**

## **Our Service in Afghanistan – A Veteran’s Reflection**

Lieutenant Colonel Tom Biedermann  
Deputy Commander, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade

## **Reading**

*Ecclesiastes 3.1-8 (AV)*

<sup>3</sup>To every thing there is a season,  
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:  
<sup>2</sup>A time to be born, and a time to die;  
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;  
<sup>3</sup>A time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;  
<sup>4</sup>A time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
<sup>5</sup>A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;  
<sup>6</sup>A time to get, and a time to lose;  
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;  
<sup>7</sup>A time to rend, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
<sup>8</sup>A time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time of war, and a time of peace.

### **Two poems:**

*These two short poems were written by women in Afghanistan*

#### ***“Daughter of Afghanistan” by Shirin Zahra***

I am like spring.  
My hair full of blossoms,  
My heart brightened with sunshine,  
My eyes clear,  
My feet full of energy and my hands filled with goodwill,  
I am an Afghan girl.

#### ***“For Afghanistan’s School Girls” by Marwa Subhan***

They send poison, and sometimes daggers.  
They send fire, and sometimes hell.  
For the girls of my homeland.  
They bring spring, but made of ashes.

### **Organ**

*J.S. Bach – “O sacred head now wounded” after the medieval poet Amult of Leuven (1250)*

## **Reading**

*John 11.1-3, 17-20, 30-35 (NRSV)*

11 Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup>Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup>So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.'

<sup>17</sup> When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. <sup>18</sup> Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, <sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. <sup>20</sup> When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup> The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. <sup>32</sup> When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' <sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. <sup>34</sup> He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' <sup>35</sup> Jesus began to weep.

## **Reflection**

Bishop Keith Joseph

## **Prayers**

The Reverend Stephen Brooks CSM

Chaplain Forces Command, Australian Army

*Chaplain Brooks is a veteran of Afghanistan and will be assisted by other defence members who will place candles on the altar during the prayers.*

*Prayer for Comfort and Peace*

God of mercies and comfort, whose Son ministered to those in need: We pray for our fractured world and all those who suffer through the wars of nations; by loss of home and country, by loss of friends and loved ones, by loss of happiness, security or freedom. We pray for those whose hearts are still bitter, and find it difficult to forgive. Banish from us all the spirit that makes war and instil in our hearts a love for peace and a love for all of humanity.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

*A prayer for consolation and healing*

God of all consolation, in your unending love and limitless mercy for us, you turn the darkness of death and suffering into the dawn of new life. Be close to those who have suffered the loss of loved ones in war. Comfort them, and draw them closer to each other in their common sorrow and grief. Be their refuge and strength, and give us all a glimpse of the way it will be, when love will never be taken away, when life itself will not be diminished, and when all that we hold most precious will live and remain with us forever.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

*A prayer for the people of Afghanistan*

O compassionate God, you are with us, nothing that has happened, or nothing still to come, can rob us of our hope. We pray for the people of Afghanistan in these times of great uncertainty and fear that they will not be abandoned by the International Community. When Jesus appeared to his disciples after his death he said them 'Peace be with you'. Speak these words to the hearts of all in war torn Afghanistan. May the victors turn away from revenge and seek a path that respects the sacredness of each person's life. And may those who find comfort in your love be strengthened with the courage to face tomorrow in the knowledge that you are with them always.

Lord in your mercy  
**Hear our prayer**

*Prayer for the Fallen*

'Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying?  
Whom shall I send?  
And who will go for us?'  
And I said, 'Here I am. Send me.'

God of mercy and compassion,  
length of days is not what makes age honourable,  
nor number of years the true measure of life.  
It is in the ultimate giving of self that our friends have attained true  
fulfilment. Humbled by their selfless sacrifice, grant us the courage to  
continue to build anew the world they died for.  
Lord in your Mercy  
**Hear our prayer**

**SILENCE**

**In remembrance**

*From "For the Fallen" by Laurence Binyon (1869 – 1943)*

Read by Mr Bill Whitburn, President Townsville RSL

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,  
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,  
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known  
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,  
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,  
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,  
To the end, to the end, they remain.

## **Organ**

*J.S. Bach – “Wachet auf, ruft uns die stimme” (“Sleepers Wake”) based on the parable concerning vigilance and the last judgement from the Gospel of Matthew*

## **Commendation and Dismissal**

Bishop Keith Joseph

*The service will end in quietness; the candles will be extinguished and the lights dimmed. You are invited to stay and meditate in the silence, or to share quietly with others. The Bishop and Chaplains will remain to pray, talk or share the silence with any who wish to avail themselves.*

*Further help is available from Open Arms (formerly Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service) on 1800 011 046 or at [www.openarms.gov.au](http://www.openarms.gov.au)*

## **Acknowledgements:**

All who have taken part in the service today; and  
The Reverend Rob Sutherland CSC, Anglican Principal Chaplain, Army  
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The Very Reverend Dr Kenneth Lay, Dean of Townsville, the Reverend  
Alphonse Garimae and the people of St James Cathedral

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Map on first page from the CIA Factbook

Afghani Women’s Poetry: <https://www.freewomenwriters.org/2017/01/18/three-short-poems-afghan-women-inspire/> accessed 18 Aug 21

Prayers provided by Chaplain Stephen Brooks