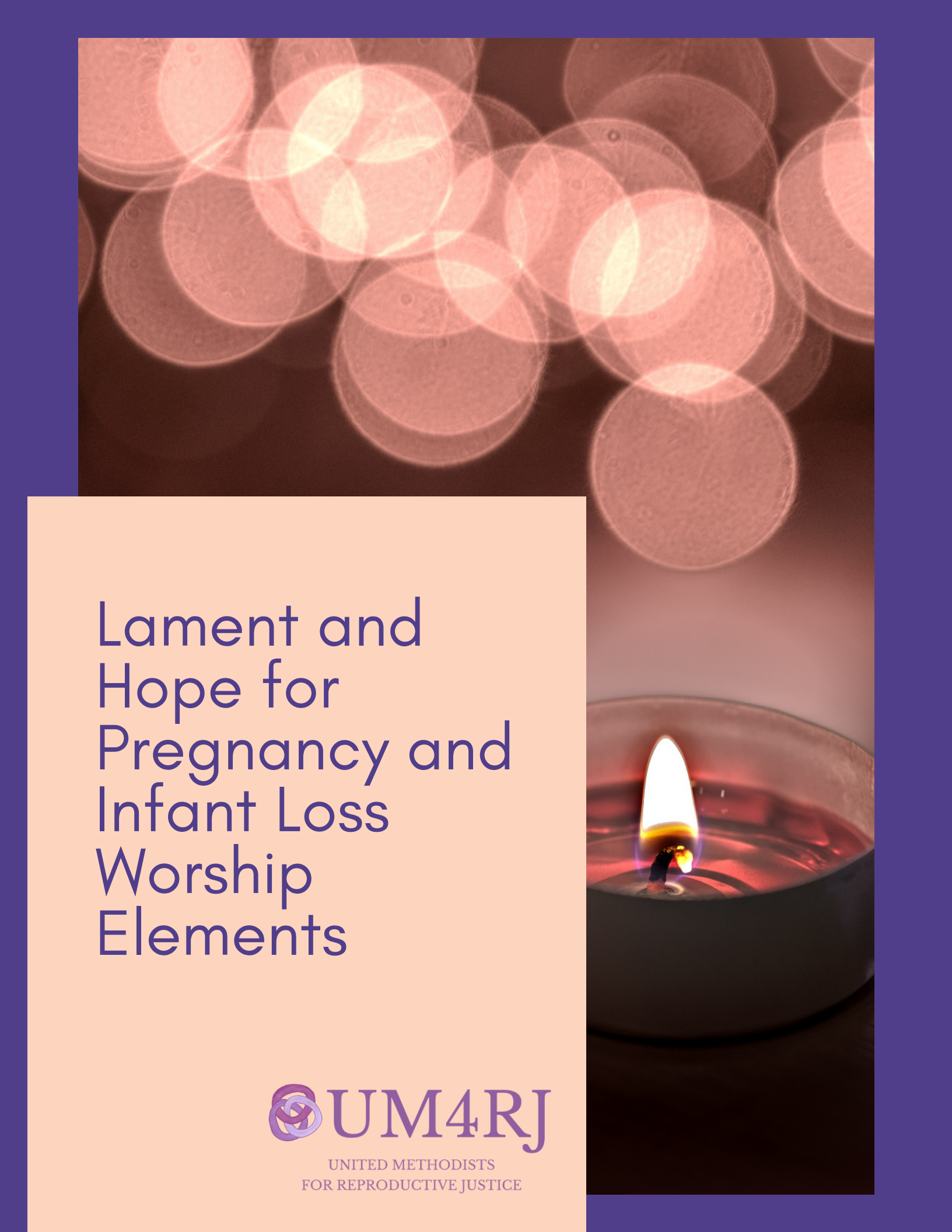




Lament and Hope for Pregnancy and Infant Loss Worship Elements



UNITED METHODISTS
FOR REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Overview

In the US, October is Pregnancy and Infant Loss awareness month. This national recognition uplifts the reality and importance of Pregnancy and Infant Loss and how this loss impacts every family and community.

Worldwide maternal and infant health has faced devastating challenges, but in recent years through education, advocacy and care, infant and maternal deaths globally have decreased.

However, in the US, growing social inequities are impacting the well-being of birthing persons and their children resulting in an increase in infant and maternal deaths.

As people of faith we are called through our gifts and witness to transform conditions of injustice while cultivating sacred space for loss and transition. In the Christian faith we have a spiritual practice of lament that allows us as a community to grieve together and to envision what else is possible through the presence of God in each of us.

This specific service of Lament and Hope is an invitation for the church to collectively name and grieve the ways that we have been silent to the pain of infant and pregnancy loss experienced by a birthing person, their family, and our communities. We also hope that this service provides space for people to share their own stories and cultivate a hopeful vision where birthing persons, children, families and communities are thriving and flourishing.

We know that this service can not speak to all the loss, but we pray that sacred moment is an invitation to create what is possible in your context and for your community.

We have suggested prayers, hymns, scriptures that may be helpful for your planning but we encourage you to co-create the service that reflects your community. If you do not hold a full service of Lament and Hope, we hope that you will incorporate elements of the service or from the additional resources in your setting during the month of October.

Order of Worship

Welcome and Invitation

Centering Music

Suggestion: UMH 393 "Spirit of the Living God"

Gathering with Lighting of the Candle

We light this candle recognizing the life of children, mothers who have transitioned too soon and we hold this light in hope of a world where their losses will no longer be our reality.

Centering Prayer

We meet in the presence of God
who knows our needs,
hears our cries,
feels our pain,
and heals our wounds.

(Adapted from The Methodist Church (UK) Service of Lament)

Lament and Lighting of Candles

Lament allows us as a community of faith to grieve together and to envision what else is possible through the presence of God in each of us.

May we hold and lift up these testimonies of faith:

"Thus says the Lord: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." (*Jer. 31:15 NRSV*)

Order of Worship (continued)

As Rachel lamented her children, we also lament and confess:

O God, our Eternal Parent, we confess that we have ignored the cries of your children.

When Hannah cries out in the temple, we mock her and shame her.

When Rachel cries out in childbirth, we allow her to die alone.

When Hagar cries out at injustice, we send her away to avoid the truth.

When Shiphrah and Puah cry out at the tyranny of the empire, we silence and ignore them.

When Bathsheba cries out at the death of her child, we place the blame on her.

When Elizabeth cries out in thanksgiving, we laugh at her.

When an unnamed woman cries out for healing, we want her to wait.

We have continued to turn away from the cries of those whose pain makes us uncomfortable.

Help us turn back and attend to their cries.

(Written by Rev. Barbara Dunlap)

May we hold and honor these experiences by lighting a candle and offer silence to those we have lost:

For pregnancies that ended in miscarriage.

For this child we prayed.

Leader: For ectopic pregnancies.

For this child we prayed.

For pregnancies that ended in abortion.

For this child we prayed.

For infants who were stillborn.

For this child we prayed.

For babies who did not reach their first birthday.

For this child we prayed.

For our babies

For these children we pray.

For mothers and birthing persons whose care was comprised

For them we pray.



UNITED METHODISTS
FOR REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Order of Worship (continued)

Hymn

Suggestion: UMH 510 "Come, Ye Disconsolate"

Scripture

One or more of the following may be used: Gen. 35:16-20, Ex. 1:15-21, Ex. 2:1-10, 1Sam. 1:-18, 1Sam. 1:27, Psalm 139:7-18, Isaiah 66:13a, Jer. 31:15, Matt. 2:18

Message of Hope

Prayer

All-loving and caring God, Parent of us all,
you know our grief in our loss,
for you too suffered the death of your child.
Give us strength to go forward from this day,
trusting, where we do not understand, that your love never ends.
When all else fails, you still are God.
We thank you for the life and hope
that you give
through the resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ.
We pray to you for one another in our need,
and for all, anywhere, who mourn with us this day.
To those who doubt, give light; to those who are weak, strength;
to all who have sinned, mercy; to all who sorrow, your peace.
Keep true in us the love with which we hold one another.
And to you, with your Church on earth and in heaven,
we offer honor and praise, now and forever. Amen.
(United Methodist Book of Worship, p. 171)

Dismissal w/ Blessing