**A Confessional Lament**

*Service Notes*

*The following confession contains a scripture reading juxtaposed with a song by Bruce Cockburn, as well as a litany of lament that contains the placing of symbolic items on a table before the altar. It can be adapted in the following ways:*

*1. If the musician(s) in the parish are able to perform the Cockburn song, the response in the prayers can also be sung (much like the response in a Psalm). The litany is currently formatted for a sung response. If spoken, it makes sense to format the response in this way:*

*Leader: The beautiful creatures*

***All: are going away.***

*2. If musicians are unable to play the Cockburn song, it can be found here online:*

*<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvstvPzkg-Y>*

*3. The confession can also be used without the Cockburn song.*

*4. If the circumstances do not enable the actual placing of items (ie. the service is happing over zoom), a short video can be created where these items are placed. This can be shown as the confession is being prayed. Or, if the liturgy is printed and screenshared, photos of these items can be included with the liturgy at the appropriate moments. Culturally and geographically appropriate substitutions can easily be made (if sage is unavailable, cedar is an appropriate substitution; if an elder branch is unavailable, any branch with leaves will do; if a thistle is unavailable, any thorny stem or branch will do.)*

**A reading from Hosea 4.1-3:**

Hear the word of the Lord, O people of Israel;

for the Lord has an indictment against the inhabitants of the land.

There is no faithfulness or loyalty,

and no knowledge of God in the land.

Swearing, lying, and murder,

and stealing and adultery break out;

bloodshed follows bloodshed.

Therefore the land mourns,

and all who live in it languish;

together with the wild animals

and the birds of the air,

even the fish of the sea are perishing.

**Song: The Beautiful Creatures** (by Bruce Cockburn)

There’s a knot in my gut

As I gaze out today

On the planes of the city

All polychrome grey

When the skin is peeled off

What is there to say?

The beautiful creatures are going away.

Like a dam on a river

My conscience is pressed

By the weight of hard feelings

Piled up in my breast

The callous and vicious things

Humans display

The beautiful creatures are going away.

Why? Why?

From the stones of the fortress

To the shapes in the air

To the ache in the spirit

We label despair

We create what destroys

Bind ourselves to betray

The beautiful creatures are going away.

*Bruce Cockburn, “The Beautiful Creatures” from Life Short, Call Now. © 2011 High Romance Music Inc.*

**Litany of Confessional Lament**

Reader:

We confess the poverty and wealth

of our cities

and of our world.

We have become creatures

of greed and indulgence.

*A bowl of rice and a jug of water are placed*

*as a symbol of the brokenness*

*between those who lack access to food*

*and water and those who have too much.*

*A pause for participants to add prayers either silently or aloud.*

**All: The beautiful creatures are going away.**

Reader:

We confess our ongoing abuse

of indigenous peoples

and the land

they have nurtured for thousands of years.

We have become creatures

of neglect and exploitation.

*Sage is placed as a symbol of the brokenness*

*between indigenous peoples and settlers.*

*A pause for participants to add prayers either silently or aloud.*

**All: The beautiful creatures are going away.**

Reader:

We confess our suspicions of other people

and our abuse of places not our own.

We have become creatures who assume that the land of others

is ours for the taking.

*Chains are placed as a symbol of the way we enslave*

*other peoples and places.*

*A pause for participants to add prayers either silently or aloud.*

**All: The beautiful creatures are going away.**

Reader:

We confess the weight of hard feelings

piled up in our breast.

We have become creatures who are callous and vengeful.

*An elder branch is placed as a symbol*

*of our retributive society*

*and ongoing conflicts around the world*

*that destroy creatures and creation.*

*A pause for participants to add prayers either silently or aloud.*

**All: The beautiful creatures are going away.**

Reader:

We confess our betrayal not only of each other

but also of the earth and its many inhabitants.

We have become creatures of destruction

who have driven the beautiful creatures away.

*Thistles are placed as a symbol of the brokenness*

*between humanity and the earth.*

*A pause for participants to add prayers either silently or aloud.*

**All: The beautiful creatures are going away.**

Reader:

We confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart.

We have become creatures who ache with despair.

*A cross is placed as a symbol of the brokenness between humanity and God.*

*A pause for participants to add prayers either silently or aloud.*

**All : The beautiful creatures are going away.**

Leader:

Creator, out of your abundant love

all things live and move and have their being.

Forgive us for turning away from you

and for neglecting the creatures that surround us:

the animals that nurture us with wonder and delight,

the water that renews us,

the earth that nourishes us,

and the air that sustains us.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,

raise us up that we might again be servants of your creation

and see your love in all that surrounds us.

**Amen.**

**©**2021 Bishop’s Committee on Creation Care, Diocese of Toronto. Text by Sylvia Keesmaat.