



Resource Centre

# From our Churches

*Author: Alicia Buhler*

*Church: Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church*

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## **Remembering Our Babies** **A Service to Acknowledge Reproductive Loss** (Infertility, Miscarriage, Stillbirth, Early Infant Death)

**Note:** *This service was held in October which is Infant and Pregnancy Loss Awareness Month and within the same week as All Saints Day.*

### **Prelude**

### **Words of Welcome & Intention**

Good evening and welcome to this service of remembrance. This evening we gather in the presence of God and in the company of those who have been touched by the loss of a child or the loss of hope for a child, or as those who have known someone – a friend, a colleague, a family member - who has walked this journey. We gather here to remember and to name – to acknowledge that our hopes and dreams for these children are significant to us and significant to God.

So come, you who long for wholeness.  
Come, you who hope for joy.  
Whether you find yourself in the midst of hopelessness and grief,  
or you are in a place of knowing the joy that rekindles hope,  
you are welcome here.  
Whether your loss is fresh or timeworn,  
you are welcome here.  
Whether you have personally experienced reproductive loss  
or you have shared in the grief of others,  
you are welcome here.  
Bring your personal sorrows and joys,  
spoken and unspoken,  
they are all known to God.

May God be near us as we sing, as we pray. May God be near us in our silence, in our speaking and in our remembering.

## **Song**

STS 121 - *Nothing is lost on the breath of God*

## **Scripture Reading**

1 Kings 19.11-13

## **Meditation**

A Presence-Filled Silence

Silence. Many who have walked the journey of grieving the loss of a hoped for child have done so in silence. Infertility, miscarriage, stillbirth, and early infant death...these are losses that are so often intangible; they are losses shrouded in the mystery of what could have been. There are few memories, if any, but there are many, many shattered dreams. Arms remain empty, and hopes for this one child that can never be replaced remain unfulfilled. Grieving the unknown has been, in my experience, one of the most difficult griefs. And so - more often than not – the grief of reproductive loss is marked by silence.

For those grieving the loss of a hoped for child, there is no earth-shattering wind, though it may feel as though a great wind has swept through our hearts. There is no earthquake, though we may feel shaken to the core. There is no blazing fire to call attention to our loss. The shift may be large or small, but there is no doubt that a family who has struggled to conceive a child or who has lost a child has been changed forever. Yet the world goes on spinning – seemingly unchanged. And the silence closes in.

But silence is not empty. Our text from 1 Kings says that the sheer silence has a sound. It is a sound that can be perceived. In fact, this text points to the truth that silence is full of presence. God was present to Elijah in the silence. What happens in the silence of grief does not go unnoticed by God. The tears cried in the privacy of a doctor's office, the anger expressed at the injustice of it all, the precious little one whom we will never get to meet – all of this is held in the embrace of God.

The silence is not empty, but full of presence. Most people who have grieved a death know something of the silent presence that remains long after the person we love has been gone. We may not talk about this much and different people will experience the presence in different ways, but it is no less significant. We have a special day in the Christian year when we acknowledge the silent presences among us. All Saints Day is a time when we remember the Cloud of Witnesses that are present to us – those who have died but through their being have left an indelible mark on our lives. Very often on this day we light a candle in memory of those who are no longer with us. I have often found the quiet light of a candle to be a symbol of presence. Following the singing of the next hymn, we will invite you to light candles in memory of those whose silent presence remains with us still. We also invite you to light a candle to mark the shattered hopes and dreams that you may have carried or carry with you now. Perhaps you will light a candle on someone else's behalf.

Part of the mystery of absence is that it is full of presence. Nothing is lost forever. All is held in the eternal embrace of God.

## **Song**

STS 49 - *I will come to you in the silence – STS 49*

## **Lighting of Candles**

We invite you now to come forward at this time to light a candle or two or many. If you so desire, you may choose to speak the name of your child out loud.

*(Candles are lit from central candle and placed on altar table)*

All is held in the Eternal Embrace of God.

## **Prayer for Comfort**

God of all creation,  
Christ who weeps with us,  
Spirit of comfort,  
We trust that even our silent longings are known to you.  
For those among us who have known the hopelessness of infertility, grant them your peace.  
For those who have needed to say goodbye to their babies before they even had a chance to say hello, grant them your peace.  
For those whose time with their children was all too brief, grant them your peace.  
We trust that our cherished babies, our fragmented hopes, our joys, our sorrows, our fears, our confusion, and our anger are all held in your eternal embrace.  
In our moment of silence, make your loving presence known.

*(moment of silence)*

Amen.

## **Sending Blessing**

Those who wish to receive anointing or a personal prayer for healing are invited to remain in the sanctuary following the postlude.

Now, hear these words of blessing:

May you know that absence is full of tender presence  
and that nothing is ever lost or forgotten.  
May the absences in your life be full of eternal echo.  
May you sense around you the secret Elsewhere  
which holds the presences that have left your life.  
May you be generous in your embrace of loss.  
May the sore well of grief turn into a well of seamless presence.  
May you be embraced by God in whom dawn and twilight are one,  
and may your belonging inhabit its deepest dreams  
within the shelter of the Great Belonging.

- John O'Donohue

May it be so. Amen.

## **Postlude**