

## Bible Engagement Year C – Pentecost 21 Oct 9 2016



**What this is:** Intergenerational Bible Reading



**Where it's used:** Intergenerational gathering, but specifically with  
Lectionary based gatherings



**Time:** 5-7 minutes



**Bible focus/theme:** Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7



**What's needed:** Chris Booth art images Grieving Babylon and Bless Babylon. Box of tissues. Images of ruined cities of our times (eg. Aleppo, Syria; Kabul, Afghanistan) Rich Mullins Song: Where you are

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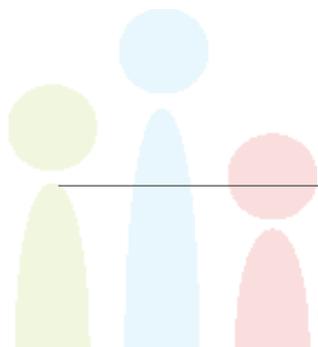
As you begin the introduction, have some helpers distribute a tissue to each person in your gathering. Make sure you have a tissue box too.

Large parts of the Bible tell stories of sadness. I've got my tissue box here, and we're making sure that everyone has a tissue, because if we're going to read the Bible, chances are we'll be needing our tissues. When you get your tissue, make sure you hang on to it.

Lots of parts of the Bible tell stories of sadness.

They tell of the terrible times in which God's dearly loved people find that where they are is not where they wish they were. They find themselves far away from home, far from hope, far from freedom, far from everything that reminds them of God and God's good ways.

These are the story of wars, kings and leaders trying to gain more control and keep their advantage. These are the stories of terrible suffering – families, women, children, babies are caught in the conflict and their lives are turned upside down, and filled with violence and sadness.



Join the Dots...

VCCE Children and Families ministry formation through Communities of Practice



# Jeremiah 29

These stories are called the stories of Exile. In fact, most of what we call the Old Testament was gathered together in the midst of these terrible times, when God's people were scattered and taken far away. This makes the Bible a really good thing to read when where you are is not where you wish that you were. We don't often use this word today – but there are other words, though, that are more common to us, that describe people who have had to leave their homeland unwillingly. Some of the world's cities today look like this (Show images of ruined cities, eg Aleppo, Kabul) and we can understand why people can't live there.

If we were to look through the newspaper, watching out for stories of people who have been forced to leave their homes because of war or conflict, what words would we find to describe them?

(Take suggestions, affirming all responses. Possibilities may include Asylum seekers, immigrants, refugees, foreigners, fugitives, expatriates, displaced person.)

\*option: assemble a poster montage of newspaper stories about exile/ displacement/people movement to

Our reading today is from the book of Jeremiah in the Bible. The prophet Jeremiah writes about the deep sadness of the people. And the deep sadness of God.

(display image #1 'Grieving Babylon) Much sadness.



# Jeremiah 29

And Jeremiah also gives this message from God about what to do when God's people (and that would include all of us) find that where we are is not where we wish that we were, or that we are in a place of great sadness, separation or strangeness.

As we read the Bible together we will hear the words of Jeremiah to the exiles – the people of God who had been captured in their homes in Jerusalem and taken away to the strange city of Babylon.

And as we do, I'm inviting you to join in on the words that remind us of their sadness, their separation and their life in a strange new land.

Join in on the word 'Exile'

Join in on the word 'Jerusalem' – the name of the city the people had left behind with sadness.

Join in on the word 'Babylon' – the name of the strange city the people had been taken away to.

(read once this way)

These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from **Jerusalem** to the remaining elders among the **exiles**, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into **exile** from **Jerusalem** to **Babylon**.

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the **exiles** whom I have sent into **exile** from **Jerusalem** to **Babylon**:

Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce.

Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease.

But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into **exile**, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

# Jeremiah 29

Did you hear the advice that Jeremiah gives the sad and exiled people? He invites them to enjoy good things in life, families and food and neighbourhoods, and to pray for the strange city – the enemy city they are living in, like it's their home, because God is there.

So now, Jeremiah's vision is more like this

Show image #2 'Bless Babylon'



# Jeremiah 29

Let's read again.

This time, as you join in on the words 'Exile', 'Jerusalem' tear a little bit of your tissue off (demonstrate tearing off a piece roughly 5 cm).

These pieces of tissue remind us of the sadness for the people forced to leave their land. And perhaps tearing them in pieces reminds us of families and communities torn apart, separated by war.

(read again this way)

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# Extension & Conclusion

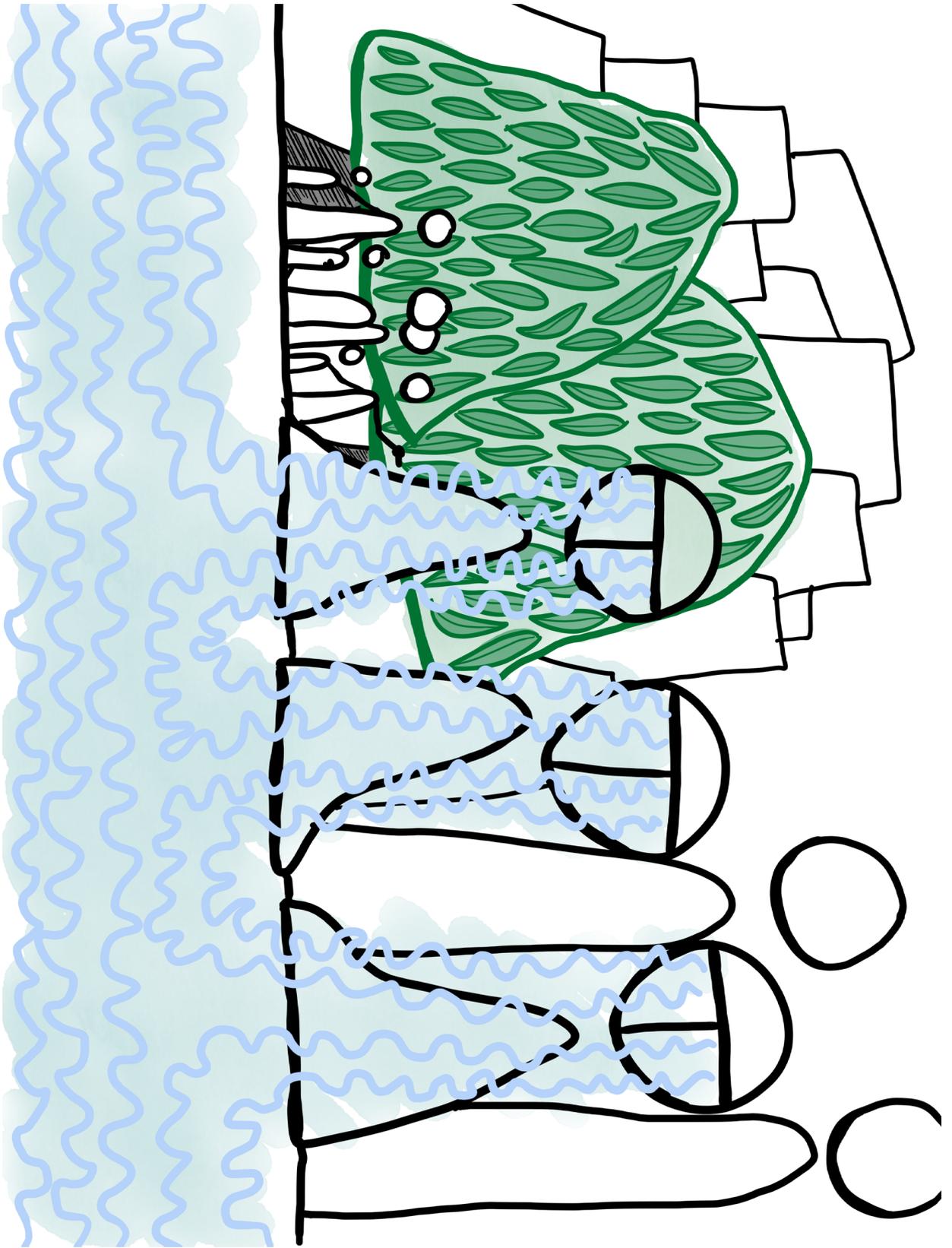
Using the torn pieces of tissue, invite your gathering to write prayers for the broken cities of the world (for example, Aleppo and Kabul). You might display some images of these cities and invite people to glue their tissue pieces on the posters, as prayers for these cities.

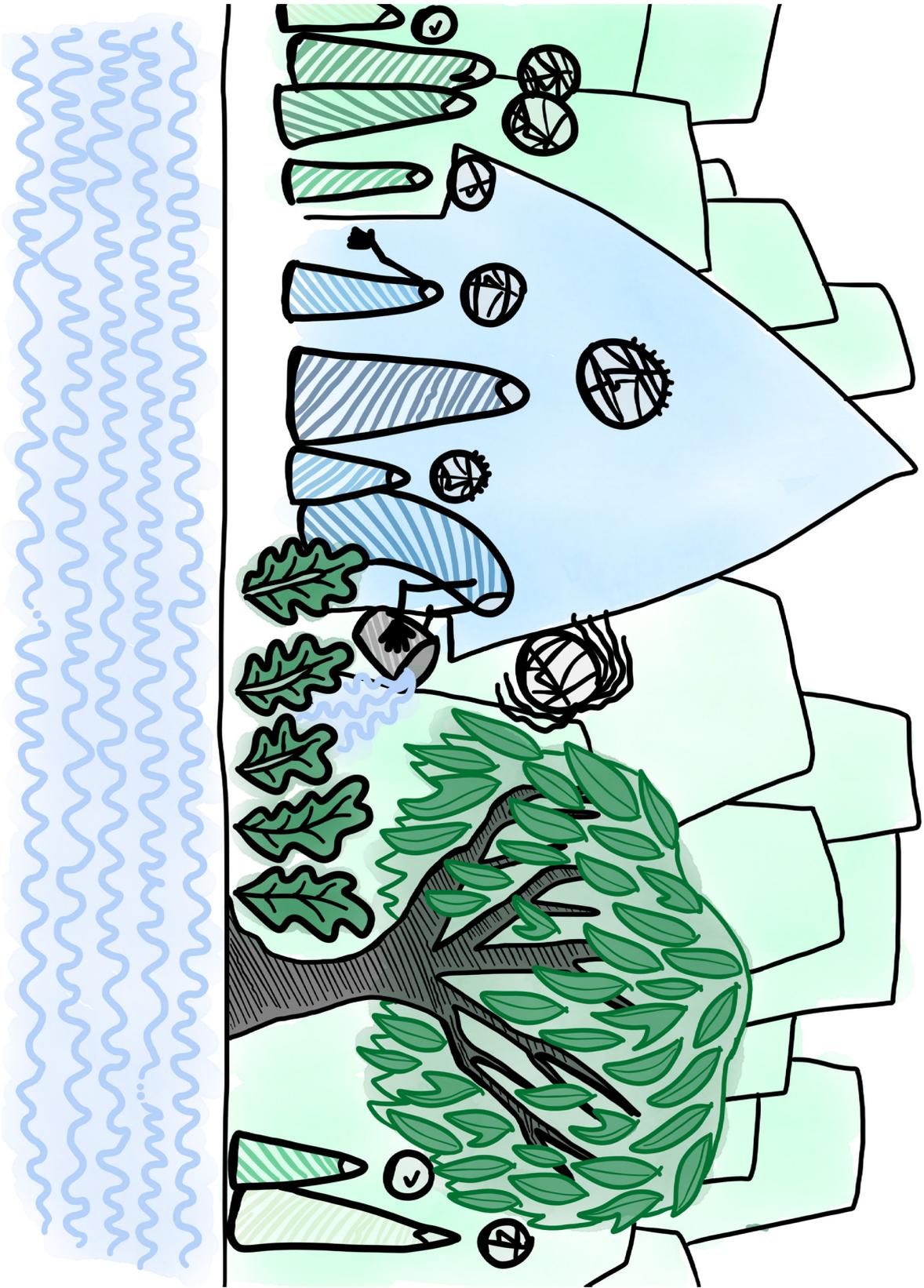


Finish with the simple prayer from the text:

Great God of faithfulness,  
May we have courage to build houses for others and invite them to live safely in them  
May we have hope to plant gardens and share food with those in need  
May we celebrate all of life and love, birth and death in joyful trusting community with others.  
May we look for ways our city, our country our world may become well, and healthy and whole, restored to your good ways of peace and justice.  
May we look for your kingdom in all places.

Amen.





Chris Booth 2016