

The Garments of Gethsemane

The Revd Peter Privett made four garments in colours which are significant to the life of the church and reflected in the colour of the cloth covering the altar and in what the priest wears. These colours are red, purple, green and gold/white. The garments were created in a mode of spiritual exploration and journey and displayed with texts from the Bible. The texts were also on printed sheets that people exploring the garments could take away.

What follows is Peter's information about the garments and what they signified. You can use this information to imagine the garments, or to use textiles for spiritual reflection in your own way:

People were:

- ⊕ invited to touch and handle the garments to discover the texts...
- ⊕ invited to use the beads, bones, leaves etc as a tactile stimulus for prayer and meditation...
- ⊕ invited to engage in conversation with others or be quiet with the garments...
- ⊕ imagine what it might be like to inhabit them or wear them...

They are a mixture of machine and hand sewing, dyed, painted and printed materials.

The Four Garments explore the suffering and hope of the world.

Each Garment explores one particular aspect.

Each garment is made up of biblical texts.

The colours reflect the cycle of the liturgical year.

Originally, I planned to include quotes from contemporary issues, events, newspapers etc., but the more I searched for biblical texts the more I became aware that they spoke to the present time... The words of the Old and New Testaments still have a power that speaks to our world today.

For example, the verse 'because they sell the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, ' (Amos 2 v6) is still relevant as big corporate companies like Nike constantly search for cheap labour in the poor world.

RED GARMENT

– Cotton, silk, synthetic fabrics – dyed, painted, and printed – gold paint – metal and cotton threads – beads.

The Red garment describes the pain of the world. Different fabrics pull against each other revealing splits, gashes and wounds. The pain of hunger, exile, exploitation has dire consequences for all of us. The fabric of society disintegrates under the weight and tension.

But it is not only human society which is pulled apart – the earth itself feels the weight of our actions. Indeed the whole of the created order is affected.

Whilst looking for texts I began to read the Lamentations of Jeremiah, whether this is a historical description of the ten year siege of Jerusalem, or whether it is a poetic piece of ritual didn't seem to matter. The starkness of 'the hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children' (Lam 4 v 10) seemed to speak of the possibility in each of us. These are not wicked, or inhuman women. The description is 'compassionate'. If we are pressed in on every side, desperate, pushed to the edge – this is what we might all do.

Which of the texts do you respond to?

What are the most important texts for you?

Do you have any experience that is similar to these?

There are blank squares and spaces – what texts, or comments would you write here?

Which texts would you wish to have removed from this garment?

What contemporary situations, events would you bring to this garment?

SACKCLOTH GARMENT

– ripped linen, cotton, muslin – dyed, painted – beads, bones, shells – cotton and wool threads.

The Sackcloth garment reveals the feelings and emotions as suffering is experienced. The garment is made from ripped strips of material – life is shredded. Many of the quotes are from the psalms and the prophets. There are many references in the Bible to people ripping their garments as a sign of their sorrow, repentance, shame and despair. Was this a spontaneous act or a piece of ritual? There are the obvious questions of 'why has this happened?' The experience is not only emotional, or of an inward spiritual suffering, the body is definitively affected: 'my bones are out of joint' (Psalm 22 v14)

There are also the feelings of fury, anger and a desire for retribution.' Take your little ones and dash them against the rocks' (Psalm 137 v9)

Which texts do you respond to?

Have you ever felt the same?

How do you express your anger, despair, pain, frustration?

What situations, feelings, emotions, would you like to add to this garment?

GREEN GARMENT

– recycled clothes, curtains, strong – dyed muslin with hand printed leaf prints – silk, painted by Yarpole Youth Club

The Green Garment explores promises and hope for renewal. It is more fragile, delicate, sheer, than the others. The texts are sometimes hidden and you have to search for them.

Each of the garments is linked by a golden cord...hope does not stand apart from the others. In no way does this garment deny the pain and the anger. Hope comes because of the other two stages, not in spite of them.

**Which text do you think is the most important?
Where do you find signs of hope and encouragement in the world?
What would you add to the blank spaces on the leaves?
What might have to change to enable hope to flourish?**

WHITE GARMENT

– linen strips – metallic thread, nails – white muslin lining

The white garment is made from strips of white linen, a coat that is not all sewn up...

**A coat that has a scarf of nails – a reminder that there is no cheap resurrection. Resurrection is not in spite of crucifixion it is because of it
A coat that waits to contain the others.**

When I had finished making this garment and placed it on the stand with its white muslin lining, I was struck by the space created inside...a tomb... a womb...waiting to receive...or an emptying out?

Whilst searching the concordance, I came across numerous references to linen.

It is the material for priests set out in the Mosaic Law

It is the clothing associated with renewal and promise in the books of Ezekiel and Daniel

It is the righteous deeds of the saints in Revelation (Rev 19 v18)

The references to clothing and garments are also numerous... They often suggest more than just outward apparel

The robe wrapped around the body of the prodigal son signifies restitution, forgiveness, restoration.

Even the hem of a garment swishing through the crowd becomes a source of healing to a woman who has been marginalised by her bleeding.

Marginalised, she touches the margins of his clothes...

Where and where are there times of restoration today?

What other texts would you add to this coat?

What are your dreams for the world?

What contemporary situations can you add to this coat?

When and where so situations become transfigured and transformed?

Who would you wish to remember here and what might be their righteous deeds?

**Each garment is displayed separately, but can be overlaid over the others.
Each is connected to the other. Pain Hope and Resurrection intermingle and are intimately related.**

use the garments for meditation, a stimulus for prayer, creative work, worship, and retreats.