

WELCOMING MUSIC – Sounds of Nature Series *My Secret Place by the Tully River*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY & WELCOME - David Dawes

On behalf of the Spiritual Care Department of Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre I welcome you to Peter Mac for this commemoration service. We hope this will be a time to honour and cherish the lives of the people that we love who have died, to name the places they continue to have in your hearts and to celebrate the gifts of love, life and hope.

For today we gather on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation and I acknowledge them as the Traditional Owners.

I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging and any who may be with us today. I also welcome and acknowledge all members of the Aboriginal community, whose care of the country, love and spiritual connection to the land has provided us all with a great legacy to share and treasure.

I especially thank each you who have journeyed here to be present today, to face your personal loss both individually and collectively. It is no small feat to touch the wound of loss. As you arrived you were asked to write on a leaf the name of the person whom you are remembering tonight and attach the leaf to the tree. Before the service began the tree was bare now it is covered with leaves, with growth. Unfortunately the growth is an indication of loss, it is a reminder of the loss of life, of cancer, of pain, of fear but also of compassion, of love, of memories, of life.

It is with gratitude that we acknowledge the presence of Nicole Tweddle our Interim Chief Executive Officer and, Jac Mathieson Chief Nurse and

Thank you for coming and supporting families as they remember their personal loss collectively and individually.

This service has a theme of nature. For nature speaks what words cannot express. The sound of running water soothes the mind and can give rest, nature is able to heal the heart, time spent in nature can feel as though time stands still and give us moments of connecting with our soul.

OPENING WORDS – Heather

We come together from the diversity of our grieving,
to gather in the warmth of this community
giving witness to our belief that
in times of sadness, there is room for laughter.
In times of dryness, we long for rain.

May we hold fast to the conviction
that what we do with our lives matters
and that rejuvenation is possible after all.
We affirm the ties that are not broken by death.

M. Maureen Killoran

HONOURING – Ben

We welcome you into this place, a place where we come as we are, with all that belongs to each of our stories. For each person here their life has been touched by loss, through the death of a loved one.

Within most of us there is a mourning, an empty space which was once filled or which we expected to fill, a sense of ourselves which is no longer there, a way of being and living which has gone. Within us there is a loss, a grieving for someone held precious. We gather now as one to offer companionship on the journey, as we each hold the memory of our loved one close in our hearts.

We remember

In this moment we claim the dignity of our human journey, our travelling with a grief. To love someone is to risk the pain of parting. Not to love is never to have lived. The grief we experience is the honouring of our love. Today we give space in the rush of human existence to feel what we feel, find the hope within us and be open to the receiving of love.

MUSIC – Bapa: *Geoffrey Gurrumul*

FOUR BOWLS – Adrienne and Gail

The first bowl represents grief.
Remembering the pain of loss.
Being reminded of the gap that now exists in life.

The second bowl represents courage.
To confront sorrow, to provide comfort.
To recognize how life has changed.

The third bowl is in memory.
For tears.
The frustrations.
The pain.
The misunderstandings.
For joy shared.

The fourth bowl is for love.

The gift of life.
The beauty of love.
The lightness of being.
These are the memories that are treasured.

MEDITATION ON THE STONES – Megan

Finally she understood about the river stone: that tears and sorrow are as natural as the river.

That the formation of beautiful smooth, shiny pebbles with deep colours doesn't come without cost

That what changes it from an uninspiring piece of jagged stone, dislodged from the depths of the earth, involves getting knocked around in the river

And letting the water and other rocks smooth over the jagged edges

 Patiently

 Slowly

 Over a long period of time

 (with gratitude to and adapted from *A Season of Mercy*, Martha Manning)

I invite you to bring your attention to the stone that you chose as you entered this evening. If you have missed out on this opportunity, put up your hand and someone will bring a selection of stones for you to choose from.

We are going to spend some moments now reflecting together in silence.

Have you ever noted the marvel of how stones and rocks in a stream have been smoothed by the continual flow of water over their surface.

At times this water is gentle in current and at others flowing full of force and transforming what were jagged and rough edges into edges that are rounded and smooth.

I invite you to spend some time reflecting on what have been the moments of transformation in the journey of being with a loved one and the moments of grief and loss - (Silence is held)

What edges have been smoothed over this journey? (Silence is held)

Are there particular experiences of the journey that have left you feeling chipped and knocked around.... I invite you to reflect on these in silence. (Silence is held)

Is there an invitation to accept the gentle current of life and allow change to continue to grow and unfold? (Silence is held)

Grief can be a weight to bear; it can be heavy and solid - as you hold the stone I invite you to remember and hold the sorrows of the journey you have been on.
(Silence is held)

Whilst grief can be a weight to bear, there is more to our remembering. Notice the beauty of the stone – notice the polish. What have been the encounters, the events, the moments of beauty and celebration as you journeyed with those you are remembering tonight? (Silence is held)

As an act of remembering and honouring you might like to add your stone to one of the bowls here at the front. As you do this, feel free to choose additional stones to place, if this feels appropriate for you. (Silence is held)

MUSIC – May it be: Enya

May it be an evening star
Shines down upon you
May it be when darkness falls
Your heart will be true
You walk a lonely road
Oh! How far you are from home

Mornie utulie (Darkness has come)
Believe and you will find your way
Mornie alantie (Darkness has fallen)
A promise lives within you now

May it be the shadow's call
Will fly away
May it be you journey on
To light the day
When the night is overcome
You may rise to find the sun

Mornie utulie (Darkness has come)
Believe and you will find your way
Mornie alantie (Darkness has fallen)
A promise lives within you now

REFLECTION – Debbie Moore

A journey to the gift

Let us reflect today, in a place where we join together, to remember, honour and cherish the people we have both loved and lost.

As I considered reflecting on the journey on a life that is lost, I wondered if there is space in our hearts to focus on the life that is still to come? Yet I wonder how do we focus forward, how can we when we want to be elsewhere? Everything is different now and without choice or control everything has changed.

As we compare our life now to what was, we can only notice that we are so very different, neither better or worse, but just different. Changed forever through no choice of our own.

It is impossible to focus forward without such a sense of loss and what is missing from our life. As though the picture of a puzzle can never be complete when a piece of the picture is missing. When we grieve, our hearts break and our whole world becomes incomplete. As the world around us returns back to its regular rhythm, it can be difficult to even recall what our rhythm even was, our focus has changed, our purpose has changed. Perhaps even our identity in some part, as we can be unsure even who we are without them in our lives.

As we grieve, it is almost as though we can shrink back from who we were before...and wonder if we will ever be the same again? As though a cloud has covered us. It seems like such a distant memory when we felt the shadows disappear, and the sun shine on our face with such a sense of embrace. Perhaps it is hard to even imagine, if that will happen again, let alone when??

I wonder when then?

As I take my mind back to the image of the puzzle, at what point in time we can redirect our eyes not on the sole piece that is missing in the picture? But instead, to all of the beautiful colours of so many other pieces. As though each piece, is a part in time, in our memory, that brings us joy, pictures in time, that we can recall where we felt love, hope, and purpose.

For each of us here today, that time frame is so delicate, and certainly unique. Who can possibly tell us when and how to move forward again in life?

I only know from my own personal experience that each life lost, took on its own unique process, each with its own set of feelings and timeframes. So different from loss to loss, and each so unique and delicate.

As I reflect back on those memories, it is as though each piece of a puzzle is one that makes up a memory picture in my mind. I feel warmth again. A slow warmth, like the slow and steady rise of the sun in the morning, not knowing how long it will take, but assured and hopeful that the sun will most certainly rise. When we recall each memory...in time, we smile and allow ourselves to feel the warmth in the love that those memories bring.

A fleeting guilt arises, for is it too soon, is it wrong to find joy again? Are they becoming a distant memory we are not yet ready to lose....Yet, we rest and breathe again, taking a breath in the present moment...knowing in the depths of our soul, that a love like that can never be erased, a love that is permanently engraved into the daily beat and rhythm of our heart.

We smile again...for we remember, and we cherish, all that they brought to us in our lives. All of the times shared in laughter, the memories created, and the lives changed...because we were so very blessed to know them, love them, and be loved in return.

As I think of this Christmas season fast approaching, it is only more evident of how things have changed and what is so very different for each of us, especially this year. Yet as I look under the tree and already see gifts appearing, perhaps we notice how the only gift we could possibly want this year, is the gift of their return...everything else seems now so superficial and meaningless.

I wonder what it would look like for each of us to visualise a gift underneath our tree, in a box of your choice, wrapped up perfectly with a bow. As we approach the gift and read the tag, we see that it is a gift to ourselves, to ourselves from ourselves.

It is the gift of memory, of so many times cherished together. It is the treasures of time that hold our loved ones ...

- so tightly held in our past,
- so close to our present,
- yet also so delicately weaved into our future.

For we are changed forever from our relationships, and also from the experiences that came along with that relationship. In the delicate fabric of life, it served as such an intense understanding of just how delicate that life is, and how quickly it can be taken from us.

So, this gift now under the tree, is also the gift of the present. A present that invites us, into this very present moment,

- to recall,
- to remember.
- and to cherish.

And to remain in the presence of life. With life being the very gift itself. Just as our lives are so very different know, so is our perspective, so is the meaning of relationship. What once was fleeting experience, is now also to be cherished. The smile of another, the uncontainable laughter of a child, the warmth of touch, the tender care from another, the gentle breeze on our face.

As we return to the image of the puzzle and all of the beautiful memories we hold and cherish, I wonder what our perspective is now.....how the picture is different for us now? What is it we see with warmth and love.

It is in the feeling of both love and loss, and in cherishing the relationships and memories that we hold dear, that we also hold the gift of this moment dear to us now...

And in the contrasts of our knowing and understanding of both death and life let us be gentle with ourselves also, and give ourselves permission to be nourished, held and loved ... in life and love together, here in this place.

POEM - Roslyn

We trust that within absence there is a presence.
That within the pain there can be healing.
That within the brokenness there can be wholeness.
That within the anger there may be peace.
That within the hurting there may be forgiveness.
That within the silence there may be understanding.
That through understanding there is love.

Author Unk

BLESSING – David

May you travel from here with a healing heart.
May you be sustained by love.
May you know that absence is full of tender presence and
no-one is ever lost or forgotten.
May you find laughter among your tears and
encouragement in the faces of those who care about you.
May you find deep peace.
May you be blessed with new life.

MUSIC – Christina Perri, A Thousand Years

Acknowledgments

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