

Lament, Confession, and a Song to the Future

“Ok [Okjökull] is the first Icelandic glacier to lose its status as a glacier. In the next 200 years all our glaciers are expected to follow the same path. This monument is to acknowledge that we know what is happening and what needs to be done.

Only you know if we did it.”

Ágúst 2019

415ppm CO₂

(“A Letter to the Future,” written by Andri Snaer Magnason, on a plaque placed as a memorial on the mountain)

How does confession embrace all of creation?

Words are so small

Ice so thin it will not move

Tears melting unshed

We want to avoid this pain if at all possible, but it needs to soak into the parched earth,
into the thin layers of cold and despair because it cannot be turned away.

Like a glacier slowly advancing, the future crawls out in front of us

but wait,

the glacier is retreating, the future is shrinking

we’re skating on thin ice.

We want to avoid this pain if at all possible, but it needs to soak into the parched earth, into the
thin layers of cold and despair because it will not be turned away.

O God of snow and ice, of rain and ocean, of tears and barren ground,
we face the rising oceans and the melting ice with fear, grief, anger,
helplessness.

We seek the comfort of denial and business-as-usual,
and we know none of that is really the answer.

So we confess, together.

We confess that the workings of our institutions and systems,

the use of our own power,

the choices we make,

the actions we do—or do not—take

all too often lead to the devastation of all you love.

It is on our hands.

O God of hope and healing,

Words are not enough.

Thoughts and prayers are not enough.

We need to change as a country, as a species

and that terrifies us because we do not know what that looks like or

how to do it.

So we watch the glaciers disappear, and feel sad or scared or powerless.

And the future waits for us and seems to shrink

with each flawed system
each misuse of power
each choice
each action or inaction
that gives us a way out, a sense of comfort, a denial of desperate urgency.
And the future waits for us.

And we try not to hear its cries.

O God of all history,
we no longer live in “interesting times,” in crisis times.

We live now in times of dire emergency.

O God of all time, it’s running out.

Get us moving.

Where leaders fail, help us lead in whatever way we can, with the strengths and gifts you have
given us and others have called out from us.

Move your Church to the frontlines of this emergency,

To proclaim and embody hope

To proclaim and embody new definitions of what it means to be a people of progress and
promise

To proclaim and embody a new creation.

In the sure and certain knowledge of your all-encompassing love, we confess here and now to the
damage we have caused Creation.

With great fear and trembling, we take the steps to proclaim and embody what needs to be done
—now—for the healing of your world and our home.

And we promise.

We promise we will dare to celebrate and love in the midst of all of this.

And we will sing to the future of ice and oceans, earth and sky, healing and peace, which our
children’s children will see,

because we promise to do the work that it will take. Somehow. Some way.

With you, O God, and your community of life.