

Good Friday
“Stations of the Cross”

Join the service in silence. Have a candle prepared to light. Listen and meditate as we begin.

*Today the carpenter’s hands are nailed to a cross,
the king of kings is crowned with thorns
and wears the purple robe of mockery.
Today he sets us free, himself imprisoned on a tree.
Today is God’s Friday.
We come in worship.*

In the season of Lent, we “turn” or “re-orient” ourselves toward the Holy. What we pay attention to is what we are formed by. Today we turn our attention to the suffering of the world, the sacrifice of the one who risked his life for the least and the oppressed. We turn our attention so that we might become persons who follow in the way of Jesus, working to bring love and justice to humanity and this earth.

(I invite you to light a candle)

Come and rest

Come and listen

Lay the fullness of your lives before the Maker [repeat]

When a community is under threat, when tragedy strikes, when fear seems close, we humans need to be together. It is what the disciples and followers of Jesus did that last week of his life. Tensions were high. While we may not be on the verge of crucifixion as Jesus was at that moment, we may feel that in today’s world, we face threats that we never would have imagined. Threats to goodness, to love, to health, to humanity’s ability to move into hope. We also recognize that many in this world do face very real fear, health concerns, violence and oppression and death even in the midst of this global pandemic.

Unrest can also take root in one’s very being... it may come from a traumatic event in one’s life and history or even our current anxieties as our world suffers. We gather as community to hold space for pain, and to hold the hope of healing. Let us spend this evening connecting with God, with the depths of our true selves and with each other.

We start by, remembering the last time Jesus ate with his disciples, take yourself back to that place, to that table of grace and betrayal. Then together we will embark on the journey with Jesus along the Way of the Cross.

Come and rest

Come and listen

There’s a wisdom deep within that calls us closer

Silent Rest

You are invited to sit quietly in the silence without any expectation of what you “ought” to be thinking. Don’t worry about extraneous sounds—simply let them float into and out of your attention. And if you find it difficult to settle your thoughts, contemplate the following

Along the journey there must be moments...

To stop....
To question....
To wonder...
Why?

Examen

For that which, then, I thought was right...
have mercy, God.

[pause]

For that which, now, I regret...
forgive me, God.

[pause]

For that which, hence, I know not what to do...
guide me, God.

[pause]

Gospel Reading

On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and said, “Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover meal?” He replied, “Go into the city, to a certain man, and say, ‘The teacher says, “My time is near. I’m going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.” The disciples did just as Jesus instructed them. They prepared the Passover. That evening he took his place at the table with the twelve disciples. As they were eating he said, “I assure you that one of you will betray me.” Deeply saddened, each one said to him, “I’m not the one, am I, Lord?” He replied, “The one who will betray me is the one who dips his hand with me into this bowl...”

The Psalmist's Prayer

Psalm 22: 1-11

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?
O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.
Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
In you our ancestors trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.
To you they cried, and were saved;
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.
But I am a worm, and not human;
scorned by others, and despised by the people.
All who see me mock at me;
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;
“Commit your cause to the Lord; let him deliver—
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!”

Yet it was you who took me from the womb;
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.
On you I was cast from my birth,
and since my mother bore me you have been my God.
Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.

Who is in pain in this moment? What people and places would you name as those over whom we weep, over whom God weeps? I invite you to take a moment to name them quietly in your heart, imagining them at this table with us.

Meet Me Here

Meet me here. Find me in my wanderings
Meet me here. Deep within my soul.

Appointment with God: Pilgrimage with Jesus

When we gather around the table of Jesus Christ,
we remember all the times he gathered with the least and the unlikely
around tables in his ministry.
He showed us how to be in right relationship with those not like us.

Especially in Holy Week, we remember that he also modeled a way of being at the table even—and perhaps especially—when there is disagreement, betrayal and denial—when all is not right with the world.

He invites us to meet him here... where healing begins with grace.

Friends, this morning we will journey with Jesus from the table to the tomb. The tradition of the Stations of the Cross developed in the early church became a way to make pilgrimage and walk the Way of Sorrow with Jesus in those last hours of his life. Pilgrims to Jerusalem around the 4th century would journey and stop where they believed the events happened. Eventually it became difficult for most people to make an actual pilgrimage to Jerusalem. These stations, then, in a sanctuary or on church grounds, became a way to make a pilgrimage to an “interior Jerusalem”—to journey to that place Augustine called “more inward than [our] most inward part.” Just as the disciples, and Jesus himself, searched their hearts in that moment of trauma and tragedy, we search our own hearts. Our stations will invite us not only to examine ourselves, but also to intercede on behalf of others. It is a journey of finding Jesus in all the moments of our lives and of our world.

As we do this journey together there are scriptures and a meditation that connects our lives and world to the story. When we have completed the pilgrimage I will play the song *Were you there* and we invite you to end in silence. We will remain on with our candles lit until everyone has exited the site.

Stations of the Cross

1. Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane.

“Let this pass from me...”

We pray and work for those who live in fear of persecution

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane. He said to the disciples, “Stay here while I go and pray over there.” When he took Peter and Zebedee’s two sons, he began to feel sad and anxious. Then he said to them, “I’m very sad. It’s as if I’m dying. Stay here and keep alert with me.” Then he went a short distance farther and fell on his face and prayed, “Abba, if it’s possible, take this cup of suffering away from me. However—not what I want but what you want.” He came back to the disciples and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, “Couldn’t you stay alert one hour with me? Stay alert and pray so that you won’t give in to temptation. The spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak.” - Matthew 26: 36-41

Have you ever just wished that the situation you are in or the pain you feel could simply be lifted from you like waking from a bad dream? Jesus knows this pain. Let us take a moment of silence to pray for those who live in fear of persecution for who they are or for the stands they take on the side of the oppressed. Here we find the Jesus who felt afraid and alone and yet offered himself for a higher purpose.

2. Jesus is betrayed by Judas.

“Betrayed with a kiss...”

We pray for the strength of forgiveness

Suddenly, while Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, came with a mob carrying swords and clubs. They had been sent by the chief priests, legal experts, and elders. His betrayer had given them a sign: “Arrest the man I kiss, and take him away under guard.” As soon as he got there, Judas said to Jesus, “Rabbi!” Then he kissed him. Then they came and grabbed Jesus and arrested him. One of the bystanders drew a sword and struck the high priest’s slave and cut off his ear. Jesus responded, “Have you come with swords and clubs to arrest me, like an outlaw? Day after day, I was with you, teaching in the temple, but you didn’t arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.” And all his disciples left him and ran away. - Mark 14: 43-50

The sting of difficult relationships is something most of us have experienced. Perhaps as children, trust was betrayed by an adult who did not care for us as we needed or perhaps as adults, family or spousal relationships crumbled under the weight of addiction or illness or resentment. At this station, we pray for the ability to forgive and move on. We find here the Jesus who knew of the betrayal and who broke bread with Judas anyway.

3. Jesus is condemned to death by the Sanhedrin.

“sentenced by the religious authorities...”

We mourn for those who have been harmed by religious authorities and institutions and work to change this

As morning came, the elders of the people, both chief priests and legal experts, came together, and Jesus was brought before their council. They said, “If you are the Christ, tell us!” He answered, “If I tell you, you won’t believe. And if I ask you a question, you won’t answer. But from now on, the Human One will be seated on the right side of the power of God.” They all said, “Are you God’s Son, then?” He replied, “You say that I am.” Then they said, “Why do we need further testimony? We’ve heard it from his own lips.” - Luke 22: 66-71

Perhaps church has always felt like a welcoming and safe space for you. But there are many in this world who have been harmed as they were cast out, denied the right to become religious leaders, ostracized and judged or “sentenced” for who they are. There are also those who have been the victims of religious and clergy abuse. Let us pray for the victims of the world, especially when the violence was done in the name of God and we find the Jesus whose death was caught up in the entangled political and religious climate of his day.

4. Jesus is denied by Peter.

“I do not know him”

We confess our own denial - and pray for forgiveness

Meanwhile, Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant woman came and said to him, "You were also with Jesus the Galilean." But he denied it in front of all of them, saying, "I don't know what you are talking about." When he went over to the gate, another woman saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus, the man from Nazareth." With a solemn pledge, he denied it again, saying, "I don't know the man." A short time later those standing there came and said to Peter, "You must be one of them. The way you talk gives you away." Then he cursed and swore, "I don't know the man!" At that very moment the rooster crowed. Peter remembered Jesus' words, "Before the rooster crows you will deny me three times." And Peter went out and cried uncontrollably. - Matthew 26: 69-75

Denial is a powerful coping mechanism when faced with pain that is too difficult to accept. In our weakness and despair, we sometimes turn to denial in order to cope—in order to survive. At this station we find the Jesus who knows that we are human and will have moments of denial when circumstances feel impossible. And we ask for forgiveness for the times we might have turned our backs on our friends.

5. Jesus is judged by Pilate.

"I wash my hands of him..."

We pray for those in government who make decisions that affect lives and vow to let our voices be heard

Jesus was brought before [Pilate], the governor. The governor said, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "That's what you say." But he didn't answer when the chief priests and elders accused him. Then Pilate said, "Don't you hear the testimony they bring against you?" But he didn't answer, not even a single word. So the governor was greatly amazed... Pilate said [to the crowds], "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Crucify him!" But he said, "Why? What wrong has he done?" They shouted even louder, "Crucify him!" Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere and that a riot was starting. So he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I'm innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It's your problem." - Matthew 27: 11-14; 22-24

So many people around the world suffer under governments who have washed their hands of the plight of the poor. Money for the weapons of war outweigh money for education, for public assistance, for food and shelter, for at-risk youth, for safety of all the world's citizens. At this station, we pray for those in government who make decisions that affect people's lives and we find the Jesus whose witness on behalf of the oppressed got him killed.

6. Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns.

"They slapped him..."

We mourn for those who are victims of abuse

Then Pilate had Jesus taken and whipped. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and dressed him in a purple robe. Over and over they went up to him and said, "Greetings, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face. - John 19: 1-3

Unimaginable numbers of people are victims of abuse. Whether physical, sexual, emotional or verbal, the scars are the same and last a lifetime. At this station we pray for healing for those who have endured violence inflicted on body, mind and spirit and find the Jesus who knew this pain yet also knows the depth of pain inside perpetrators that drive them to commit atrocities.

7. Jesus carries his cross.

"Come to me, all who are weary and carry burdens"

We pray for those who carry heavy burdens

The soldiers took Jesus prisoner. Carrying his cross by himself, he went out to a place called Skull Place (in Aramaic, Golgotha). - John 19: 15-17

The Roman techniques of death by crucifixion were notoriously brutal. Beyond the actual excruciating physical pain, the humiliation of bearing the instrument of death through the streets on the way to the execution was meant to prolong and intensify the suffering. As we find the Jesus who carried the burden of his cross to Golgotha, we remember his earlier words that if we would only come to him, he would carry our burdens. We pray for all those who carry heavy burdens and ask God to give them rest.

8. Jesus is helped by Simon of Cyrene.

"They put the cross on his back..."

We give thanks for those who help in time of need

As they led Jesus away, they grabbed Simon, a man from Cyrene, who was coming in from the countryside. They put the cross on his back and made him carry it behind Jesus. - Luke 23: 26

The bravery and compassion of those who rush to help in times of great need is something to experience. First responders, neighbors, friends and strangers rush to assist in crises in ways that restore our faith in humanity. At this station we find the Jesus whose burden was lightened by one who bore the weight of his cross for a while. And we pray for all those who come to help in time of need and ask God for the strength to put ourselves in that place whenever we have the opportunity.

9. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem.

“we will never leave your side”

We give thanks for those who keep vigil with the suffering

A huge crowd of people followed Jesus, including women, who were mourning and wailing for him. Jesus turned to the women and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, don’t cry for me. Rather, cry for yourselves and your children. The time will come when they will say, ‘Happy are those who are unable to become pregnant, the wombs that never gave birth, and the breasts that never nursed a child.’ Then they will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ If they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?” - Luke 23: 27-31

Expressions of grief and mourning are much more demonstrative in some cultures than others. The women whose weeping and wailing accompanied Jesus’ march to the cross offered him an opportunity for his own lament and despair. At this station, we find the Jesus who proclaims his sorrow about the state of the world and its people and we pray for all those humanitarians and activists who walk alongside, keep vigil with, keep proclaiming and keep before us the suffering of the world.

10. Jesus is crucified.

“Nails in his hands and feet”

We mourn those who are tortured and murdered for their political stands

They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means Skull Place. They tried to give him wine mixed with myrrh, but he didn’t take it. They crucified him. They divided up his clothes, drawing lots for them to determine who would take what. - Mark 15: 22-24

Roman crucifixion was used as a way of terrorizing the people whose lands they occupied and was most often the preferred method for making a statement about political insurgents. And so death was not the main goal, but rather prolonged and lingering suffering. Hanging from nails through the hands and feet would ensure a slow death and make sure those who witnessed were frightened and intimidated into submission to the Roman state. At this station we find the Jesus whose body was tortured to death and pray for all political prisoners who are unjustly detained, tortured and murdered.

11. Jesus promises to share his reign with the good thief.

“You will be with me in paradise”

We give thanks for the promise of redemption at any moment

One of the criminals hanging next to Jesus insulted him: “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” Responding, the other criminal spoke harshly to him, “Don’t you fear

God, seeing that you've also been sentenced to die? We are rightly condemned, for we are receiving the appropriate sentence for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus replied, "I assure you that today you will be with me in paradise." - Luke 23: 39-43

The conversation from the cross between three persons facing their own deaths ranged from denial to acceptance. We all do this when faced with grief... we want to be saved from the pain, we barter with God, we get angry and vengeful and then accept the inevitable. At this station we find the Jesus that is with us, no matter who we are or where we are on the journey, Jesus is with us and promises redemption at any moment.

12. Jesus is on the cross, with his mother and disciple below.

"Behold, your mother"

We give thanks for those who become family
in the absence of family

Jesus' mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene stood near the cross. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that time on, this disciple took her into his home. - John 19: 25-27

Jesus knows his absence will be felt by many, but perhaps no greater than the absence his mother will feel. The band of disciples has become family and this commissioning of his closest disciple to take his place as her son is repeated over and over again throughout humanity when a dying loved one says, "take care of them." At this station we find the Jesus who loves deeply and invites us to care especially for those who have no family. We pray a prayer of thanksgiving for those who have become chosen family to us.

13. Jesus dies on the cross.

"It is finished"

We remember and mourn those we have lost

It was now about noon, and darkness covered the whole earth until about three o'clock, while the sun stopped shining. Then the curtain in the sanctuary tore down the middle. Crying out in a loud voice, Jesus said, "Abba, into your hands I entrust my life." After he said this, he breathed for the last time. - Luke 23: 44-46

At this station, we find the Jesus whose final breath was accompanied by the ultimate letting go into God... "I give you my Spirit." At the time of Jesus, breath was considered to be life and spirit. When someone gives their last breath, we are aware that the life has gone out of the body that was only home to their spirit on this earth. For those that are left behind, it is difficult to accept that all is finished. God's last words in the human

form of Jesus were that the Spirit was returning to the Creator. We lift up the names of those we have lost and give thanks that God holds them even now.

14. Jesus is placed in the tomb.

"Laid him in the tomb"

We rest in the dark night of the soul

That evening a man named Joseph came. He was a rich man from Arimathea who had become a disciple of Jesus. He came to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate gave him permission to take it. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had carved out of the rock. After he rolled a large stone at the door of the tomb, he went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting in front of the tomb. - Matthew 27: 57-61

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?...
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?...
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?...

Reflection - Rev. Cameron Gutjahr

Prayer

God of Suffering, God of Sacrificial Love, God of Redeeming Grace,
there are no more words, for it is finished.
And while we know the rest of the story,
we pause this day to stay in the abyss where there is no light.
We listen for new life to be born in us out of the womb and tomb of darkness.
Be with us, we pray, through the night of letting go.

Were you There - Kayla Mak

Please stay as long as you like to pray and reflect
But leave the service in silence.
Holy weekend
Blessings.