

Journey to the Cross



Many of the stations used for this chapel were adapted from other sources. Credit and appreciation given to:

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Rethinking Worship – Journey to the Cross

Stations of Prayer

Invitation to Holy Week

Use the space on these pages to journal your thoughts, feelings and prayers as you consider the events of Holy Week, and what God has done for you and for the world through Jesus Christ.

Each year, the Christian church observes the events of Holy Week. We remember that Jesus entered into Jerusalem, was tried and found guilty of treason, abandoned by those closest to him, and died a painful death on the cross. We take time each year to remember these events because they are central to our faith. We can only understand what it means to be called Christian when we come to know the life that Jesus lived and the death that he died - because this is how we are called to live as disciples.

Today, you have the opportunity to enter into and reflect on these events through stations of prayer. On the pages that follow you will find the story of Jesus' final days as told in the Gospel of Matthew. You are invited to take time to read this story throughout this week, perhaps several times. Around the room, there are several stations that tell different parts of the story - some of these stations are participatory and will instruct you to *do* something. Others will invite you to stop and reflect.

At the back of the booklet, there are several pages left blank as a place for you to journal your thoughts, feelings and any questions that arise for you in this service and throughout the week.

Today you may find that you work your way through all of the stations, you may visit only one or two, or you may stay in your seat to read, reflect, write and pray - these are all appropriate ways to participate in this service. Whatever you choose to do today, receive this invitation to reflect, remember and give thanks.

The Gospel According to Matthew

Station 7 Jesus' Death

Jesus Anointed at Bethany (Matthew 26:6-13)

While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." Aware of this, Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus (Matthew 26:14-16)

Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

The Last Supper (Matthew 26:17-30)

On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.'" So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me." They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely you don't mean me, Lord?" Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays

Read Matthew 27:45-54 – The Death of Jesus

When Jesus died that day - those who had believed that he was the Messiah, those who had given up everything to follow him, those who called themselves disciples must have thought that their hopes for the future had died as well. We are told that darkness came over all the land that day.

Can you feel the presence of death?

Can you feel the heaviness of despair?

Can you feel the sorrow, the emptiness, and confusion?

Can you feel the darkness?

Choose a candle and extinguish it. As you put the candle out, remember the darkness that was felt on that day and the hope that was extinguished.

Station 6
The Crucifixion

Read Matthew 27:32-44 – The Crucifixion of Jesus

Here is Jesus, dying a brutal death on a Roman cross, an instrument of torture. Kneel in front of the cross. Imagine yourself there at the scene. What is going through your mind?

As you reflect on this moment, remember that it was because of God's love for all of humanity that took him to the cross. He died on the cross so that all people could have freedom from sin and death. Near you are several pieces of papers and pens. Think of a place of sin or death in your life that you need to be rescued from, from which you desire freedom.

Write that down on a piece of paper (no one will read these papers). Fold the paper in half, then pick up a hammer and a nail. Walk to the cross and nail your sin to the cross of Jesus, confessing your need of the grace of God in your life. As you nail it, remember Christ's words, "It is finished." Jesus bore the pain of the cross so that you could receive the gifts of freedom and redemption.

Go from this station remembering that as we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive us. Know that you can go from this place forgiven and redeemed because of what God has done in Jesus Christ.

the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely you don't mean me, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "You have said so." While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial (Matthew 26:31-35)

Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. 'But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.

Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46)

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken

away unless I drink it, may your will be done." When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

Jesus Arrested (Matthew 26:47-56)

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. Jesus replied, "Do what you came for, friend." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" In that hour Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Jesus Before the Sanhedrin (Matthew 26:57-68)

Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. But Peter followed him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome. The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though

Station 5 *Carrying the Cross*

Read Matthew 27:27-31 – The Soldiers Mock Jesus

Standing as an innocent bystander, Simon of Cyrene was called upon to carry Jesus' cross when he could no longer carry the burden himself. The act would be an example for the Christian community of what it means to care for one another. This act is a reminder that there are times when we need to carry one another's burdens and when we need to allow others to carry our burdens.

Take one of the simple crosses laid on the altar. Using the labels there, write a burden that you carry with you today. After you have written your burden, lay your cross on the altar, knowing that there are those in the community who will carry your cross, your burden for you when you cannot.

As you leave, pick up one of the burdens that another member of the community has laid down and take it with you. Pray for this burden throughout the week, asking God to be present to this person in their moment of need.

Use this as an opportunity to remember what it means to be a part of a Christian community.

Station 4 *Jesus' Trial*

Read Matthew 26:57-68, 27:27-31

Imagine yourself in Peter's shoes. You are looking out over the courtyard where Jesus is being tried and mocked. You know that he is being unjustly accused. As you stand here, you see men telling lies about him. You stand by and watch him being beaten and mocked.

Here is the man you have followed for three years, the man you had put all your hope in, being sentenced to death. You believed that he is God, the promised Messiah that your people have been waiting for. But now, your whole world is crashing around you, and worst of all, you have denied that you even know him.

Look at the purple robe and the crown of thorns used by angry soldiers to wound and humiliate Jesus. If you had the chance, what would you say to Jesus right now?

As you reflect on the events of this week, what would you like to say to Jesus? Write your prayer to Jesus on the wall.

many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward and declared, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'" Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God." "You have said so," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" "He is worthy of death," they answered. Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him and said, "Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?"

Peter Disowns Jesus (Matthew 26:69-75)

Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. "You also were with Jesus of Galilee," she said. But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said. Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth." He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!" After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away." Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Judas Hangs Himself (Matthew 27:1-10)

Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed. So they bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor. When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was

condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself. The chief priests picked up the coins and said, "It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money." So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price set on him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."

Jesus Before Pilate (Matthew 27:11-23)

Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "You have said so," Jesus replied. When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor. Now it was the governor's custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus Barabbas. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him. While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him." But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed. "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor. "Barabbas," they answered. "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!" "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

Station 3 *Jesus Condemned by Pilate*

Read Matthew 27:11-26– Jesus before Pilate

As you read through this text, what were your feelings as you heard the crowd shouting at Jesus? Were you angry? Were you annoyed with them and what they were saying? Could you sympathize with Pilate just wanting to give into the demands of the crowd?

Think about times in your own life when you give in and take the easy road because it is the easiest path. Are there times when you take part in injustices because you don't want to go against the crowd?

"Wash" your hands in one of the basins on the table. As you are washing, thinking of areas in your life where you find yourself acting like Pilate – participating in injustice, both personal and corporate, because it is easier than fighting for what is right. Pray for courage and strength to stand up against injustice you see in your life and in the world.

Station 2
In the Garden of Gethsemane

Read Matthew 26:36-46 – Gethsemane

This scene reveals the sorry in Jesus' heart that night. He prayed to the Father that he would not have to go to the cross if there was any other way. In that moment, he prayed the hardest prayer that can be prayed: "Yet not as I will, but as you will."

When Jesus said, "May this cup be taken from me," he was referring to the difficult thing that he was being asked to bear. In the end, he chose to drink the cup, even though he did not want to, and even though it was painful.

Pour a cup of grape juice and drink it. As you do, remember that Jesus chose to bear the suffering of the cross- to drink the cup- because of his love for all of humanity.

Is there a cup that you feel God is leading you to drink – something about which you need to pray the prayer of Gethsemane: "Yet not as I will, but as you will." As you drink the cup, pray these words.

Pilate Hands Jesus over to Be Crucified (Matthew 27:24-26)

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!" All the people answered, "His blood is on us and on our children!" Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus (Matthew 27:27-31)

Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

The Crucifixion of Jesus (Matthew 27:32-44)

As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. They came to a place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull"). There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He

trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

The Death of Jesus (Matthew 27:45-56)

From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"). When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him." And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people. When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!" Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

The Burial of Jesus (Matthew 27:57-61)

As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

Station 1 *Jesus is Anointed*

Read Matthew 26:6-13 – Jesus is anointed at Bethany

This woman poured our expensive perfume on Jesus' feet as an act of worship. Place a drop or two of oil on a cotton ball. Smell its fragrance. It may not be strong at first, but you will find yourself smelling it for hours – it is long lasting.

This act of worship was pure... passionate... real... expensive... extravagant... And it touched the heart of Jesus. He knew that he was heading to the cross and this act of worship was a blessing to him.

How can you pour out your love to Jesus extravagantly – in a way that will spread the beautiful fragrance of Jesus where you are and where you go?

When you leave this station, take the cotton ball with you. Let its fragrance remind you that we are called to live every moment of our lives in worship of Jesus.