



Good Friday March 29, 2024
Steps to the Cross

One United Church of Christ

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Visit our web site at www.oneucc.org

Pastor.....Rev. Rebecca Hoover
Lay Pastor.....Mrs. Nancy McNabb
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WELCOME

SONG “GO TO DARK GETHSEMANE” (VERSE 1)

*Go to dark Gethsemane,
ye that feel the tempter's power;
your Redeemer's conflict see,
watch with him one bitter hour.
Turn not from his griefs away;
learn of Jesus Christ to pray.*

1. Jesus is Betrayed and Arrested

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 22:47-53 (NRSV)

While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said to him, “Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?” When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, “Lord, should we strike with the sword?” Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, “Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did

not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!”

MEDITATION

SILENCE

SONG “GO TO DARK GETHSEMANE” (VERSE 2)

*See him at the judgment hall,
beaten, bound, reviled, arraigned;
O the wormwood and the gall!
O the pangs his soul sustained!
Shun not suffering, shame, or loss;
learn of Christ to bear the cross.*

2. Peter Denies Jesus

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 22:54-62 (NRSV)

Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest’s house. But Peter was following at a distance. When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, “This man also was with him.” But he denied it, saying, “Woman, I do not know him.” A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, “You also are one of them.” But Peter said, “Man, I am not!” Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, “Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean.” But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about!” At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

SILENCE

SONG “*AH, HOLY JESUS*” (VERSES 1-2)

*Ah, holy Jesus,
how have you offended,
that mortal judgment
has on you descended?
By foes derided,
by your own rejected,
O most afflicted!*

*Who was the guilty?
Who brought this upon you?
It is my treason,
Lord, that has slain you.
And I, dear Jesus,
I it was denied you;
I crucified you.*

INVITATION TO JOURNEY TO THE CROSS

At this time, worshipers are invited to follow the steps of Jesus to the cross. Please use the rest of the bulletin to guide your journey around the sanctuary. You may start immediately or you may remain in the pews for a time of prayer and meditation before you begin. Let the Spirit lead you when to start. Each stop in the journey will include some readings and a practice to connect with the readings. Please travel quietly between stops, and journey at your own pace. After the 8th, please return to the pews and we will end the service together. For worshipers with mobility issues, Pastor Becky will journey with you.

3. Jesus before Pilate—located in the back of the sanctuary

At this point in the journey to the cross, Jesus is brought to the Roman governor, Pilate, for his fate to be finally decided. Pilate

is caught up in the mob mentality that is demanding Jesus' death.

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 27:11-17, 20-24 (NRSV)

Now Jesus stood before Pilate, the governor; and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You say so." But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?" But Jesus gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!" So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves."

You are invited to wash your hands in the basin, imagining what it might have felt like to be Pilate and give up responsibility for an innocent man's life.

Prayer: Merciful God, help us to bear the responsibility for those around us. Give us the presence of mind when we need to speak words of justice and give us courage to do so. Amen.

4. Jesus is Mocked—located in the overflow room

The path to the cross leads us outside Pilate’s headquarters, where the Roman guards have some sport with a condemned criminal prior to his execution.

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 27:27-31 (NRSV)

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

You are invited to hold the crown of thorns. As you do so, reflect on the cost of our freedom and new life and how Jesus paid it willingly out of deep love for us.

Prayer: For those times when we witness others being mocked, bullied, or teased, help us find the courage to stand up for dignity and compassion. Give us your strength, O God. Amen.

5. Jesus Carries the Cross— located at the small wooden cross

By now in his journey, Jesus is too exhausted and beaten to carry his own cross, so the Romans grab a bystander off the street to do it for him.

SCRIPTURE READING: Mark 15:21-23 (NRSV)

They compelled a passerby, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander

and Rufus. Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it.

You are invited to take a marker and draw a cross on the back of your hand. As you carry the cross with you this evening, remember the people in your life who help you carry your burdens, and say a short prayer of thanksgiving for them.

6. Jesus is Crucified— located at the big cross

“And they crucified him.” A short phrase of four words to denote the unimaginable. Jesus is nailed to the cross, left to shamefully and painfully die. Even now, the mocking does not cease.

SCRIPTURE READING: Mark 15:24-30 (NRSV)

And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take. It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, “The King of the Jews.” And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!”

You are invited to take a piece of paper and write on it what sins (things that are interfering with you being in healthy relationship God and with others) or struggles you would like to ask God’s help with. Once you have written on the paper, “nail” it and leave it at the foot of the cross, trusting in God’s forgiveness and grace.

Silent Prayer

7. Jesus is Given Sour Wine—located at the back of the sanctuary

Jesus knew his scriptures well. Perhaps he may have had this passage in mind while on the cross: “You know the insults I receive, and my shame and dishonor; my foes are all known to you. Insults have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” (Psalm 69:19-21 NRSV)

SCRIPTURE READING: John 19:28-30a (NRSV)

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), “I am thirsty.” A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished.”

You are invited to take a Q-tip, dip it in the vinegar and place it on your tongue. As you do so note the taste and reflect on the sourness of death and defeat, the sensation of when hope dies. (When you are finished with the Q-tip, please place it in the trash container.)

Prayer: When the sourness of life consumes us, Holy One, may we find new life in you. Amen.

8. Jesus Dies—located at the back of the sanctuary

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 23:44-46 (NRSV)

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun’s light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Having said this, he breathed his last.

Throughout the Bible when people learn of the news of a death, they often rend their clothing. Tearing clothing is a sign of mourning symbolizing the tearing of the heart that comes with grief. The Temple curtain was torn at Jesus' death to symbolize the in-breaking of God's salvation on earth, the barrier between mortal and divine being ripped apart. You are invited to take a piece of cloth and tear it as much as you want as a sign of grief for Jesus' death and as a sign of hope that he will break the barrier between this world and the next.

******Please return to the pews for a time of meditation until all worshipers have gathered.******

9. Jesus is Buried

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 27:57-61 (NRSV)

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

SOLO

“Were You There?”

THE LORD'S PRAYER (*unison*)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

DEPARTURE IN SILENCE

(All worshipers are invited to leave tonight as the Spirit leads, and if you wish, as you leave the sanctuary touch the big cross up front in a moment of remembrance and hope prior to your departure.)

Copyright Information for Today's Service:

“Go to Dark Gethsemane” – author James Montgomery

“Ah, Holy Jesus” – by Johann Heermann, 1630

“Were You There?” – African-American Spiritual, Arr. Joyce Finch Johnson, 1992

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Scripture quotations from the New Revised Standard Version. (NRSV)