



Meditations on the Cross

A Service for Good Friday

First Congregational United Church of Christ, Rapid City, SD
March 25, 2016

Our service includes simple motion. Please pause in the entryway for the preparation. When we enter the sanctuary, please sit in the back of the room. You will be invited to move forward at each reading. The service will conclude at the front of the church.

Preparation:

Leader: Peace be with you

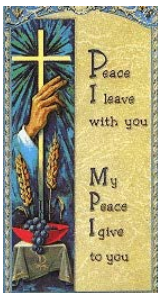
People: **and also with you**

Leader: Let us greet one another with the peace of Christ.

Reading: John 13:2b-5 (*Remembering Jesus' last meal with his disciples*)

Prayer (in unison):

O God, Redeemer of the world, we stand at the doorway to your sanctuary. We are a broken and imperfect people who have come to worship you and grow in our faith. Bless the meditations of our hearts this day that we may draw closer to You.



Remembering Jesus in the Garden:

Reading: Matthew 26:36-41

Prayer (in unison):



O God, Giver of human freedom, we sometimes are confused between what we want and what You call us to do. Sometimes we avoid pain or hard work and choose the path of least resistance. Help us to discern your calling for us. Give us courage to follow in your way.

Remembering Jesus' Arrest:

Reading: Mark 14:43-46

Prayer (in unison):

O God of all the world, we can be quick to point the finger of blame at others. We want to think of ourselves as innocent. But when we pause to think, we know that we, too, can be the cause of pain in this world. Accept our sorrow for the things we have done. Grant us your grace to confess our sins that we might open ourselves to your forgiveness.



Remembering the Condemnation of the Sanhedrin:

Reading: Luke 22:66-71

Prayer (in unison):

O God of truth, there have been many times when we have wanted to distance ourselves from people or events that we do not understand. Instead of seeking the truth, we push others away. Instead of solving problems, we avoid places of trouble. Forgive us for the times when we have acted when we should have listened.

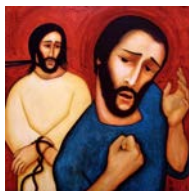


Remembering Peter's Denial:

Reading: Matthew 26:69-75

Prayer (in unison):

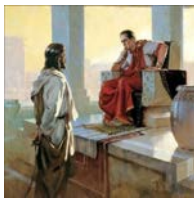
O God who knows our every thought, we too have sought to fade into the crowd and avoid being recognized. We have suffered failures of courage when we have had the opportunity to take a stand. Renew our faith. Restore our trust. Grant us the wisdom to stand boldly as your disciples.



Remembering Pilate's Judgment:

Reading: Mark 15:1-5, 15

Prayer (in unison):



O God of compassion, we have too often been swayed by the voice of the crowd. The small inner voice that calls us to question our actions can be drowned by the influence of others around us. Help us to develop an ability to listen more carefully for your voice that calls us to act in faith without regard for the consequences.

Remembering the Crown of Thorns:

Reading: John 19:1-3

Prayer (in unison):



O God, ever present, we fear pain. We do not want to suffer physical pain. We cringe at the thought of the pain caused by harsh and unfeeling words. We wonder if we will be able to endure the pain that may lie ahead for us. Teach us to share the suffering of others. Help us to form a genuine community to share the pain of this life.

Remembering Jesus Bearing the Cross:

Reading: John 19:6, 15-17

Prayer (in unison):



O God, always faithful, we find the struggles at the end of this life to be painful to witness. We turn aside. We look away. We pretend that such struggles happen to others and that we will be spared. Free us from our tendency to deny and help us build our capacity to endure.

Remembering Simon's Help for Jesus:

Reading: Mark 15:21

Prayer (in unison):

O God of strength, we would like to think that we, too, might help to bear the burdens of others. But we know that there are many times when we do not seek opportunities to serve in such a way. Lead us to the path of service. Help us to bear one another's burdens and share the load.

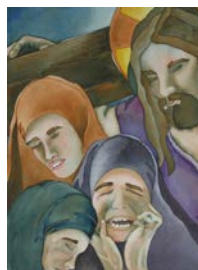


Remembering Jesus Meeting the Women:

Reading: Luke 23:27-31

Prayer (in unison):

O God who shares our grief, receive our tears and our sorrow. We know that we are not in control of the waves of emotion that sometimes sweep over us. Help us to find opportunities for healing in the midst of the journey of grief. We do not pray that you would take our tears from us, rather that you might turn our tears of sadness into tears of joy.



Remembering the Crucifixion:

Reading: Luke 23:33-34

Prayer (in unison):

O God of life and death, we know that for you death is not the end. But it seems so final to us. Help us to release our desire to turn back and let go of things that bind us with fear and sadness. Remind us that there is no place—in life, in death, in life beyond death—where you are not with us.



Remembering the Promise to the Thief:

Reading: Luke 23:39-43

Prayer (in unison):



O God who knows all, we ask you to remember us. Sometimes we act as if we are the center of your creation, sometimes we feel so insignificant that we might not even be noticed in the great stream of history. Help us to gain a proper perspective on our lives and our meaning. Tell us again us that you always remember your people.

Remembering Jesus Speaking to his Mother:

Reading: John 19:25-27

Prayer (in unison):



O God of every generation, give us the ability to release those whom we love into your everlasting care. We would cling to the people we have come to love, but we know that your love is larger and more encompassing than we can begin to imagine. Trust is difficult for us when it comes to those we hold dear. Free us to trust in you.

Remembering Jesus' Death:

Reading: Luke 23:44-46

Prayer (in unison):



O God who came to us in Jesus of Nazareth, we confess that we do not understand death. It remains a mystery that is beyond our capacity to conceive. But we know that death is not foreign to you. How grateful we are for the stories of Jesus that point us beyond what we already know. May we continue to reach for the holy mysteries of this life.

Remembering Jesus in the Tomb:

Reading: Matthew 27:57-60

Prayer (in unison):

O God whose story has no ending, help us to trust the integrity of your creation.

In our actions of committal may we understand your deepest blessing.

Rather than seek quick consolation, easy understanding or a sense of control, may we let go and give to you that which we love most deeply. Grant that we may have the ability to turn our backs and walk away from the graves of our lives, knowing that we have yet more to learn of the depth of your love.



You are welcome to remain in the sanctuary for as long or as short as you choose. Our service has no benediction as we continue in the spirit of worship throughout these days, awaiting Easter that is yet to come.



**JOIN US FOR THESE
EASTER EVENTS**

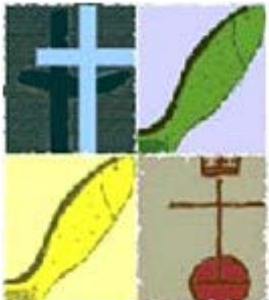
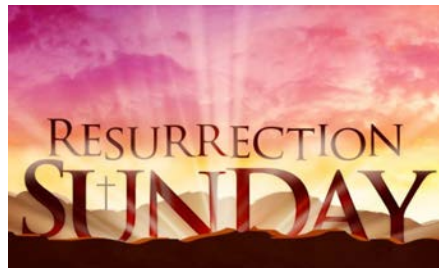
**Great Vigil of Easter
Saturday, March 26, 6:30pm**

**Easter Sunrise at
Main Street Square
Sunday, March 27, 6:00 am**



**Easter Breakfast
Sunday, March 27, 8:00am**

**Resurrection Celebration
Sunday, March 27, 9:30am**



**First Congregational
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**

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