

Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled



Art by Rebecca S. Ward

Worship Resources for the Creative Church - Lent/Eastertide 2019

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Sacred Seasons



Worship Tools for the Creative Church

These unique resource packets are available for the liturgical year, three packets a year for \$100 (\$125 for non-US subscriptions), one packet for \$50 (\$65 outside of the US).

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Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope, Inc., is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry of God's world, and acting on

Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled

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the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. Since 1991, the group has sought out people of faith who feel called to care for the poor; and to affirm, enable and empower a variety of responses to the problems of hunger and poverty.

Editorial Address

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A Word about This Packet

Once again, we have gotten carried away with this worship packet. There were so many good things we wanted to include, the pages filled up quickly. What you see here is what we couldn't bear to cut out.

The theme, "Do not let your hearts be troubled," was chosen by our liturgical team, Guilherme Almeida, Erin Conaway and myself, inspired by a conversation with Marsha Martie, the pastor of Crossies Ecumenical Community in Waco, TX. The theme interpretation on page 4 contains her thoughts about what the phrase means.

The liturgies were written by Guilherme Almeida and me. Guilherme Feitosa de Almeida, a native of Brazil, is a lecturer in Musical Theater at Baylor University, a Baptist minister specializing in music, and a member of the Seeds Council of Stewards.

Along with some of the liturgies for Holy Week and Easter Sunday, you will find quotes from "Walking the Labyrinth: A Holy Week Meditation Guide" by Eileen Campbell-Reed.

Eileen, a theologically trained freelance writer, originally wrote the guide for Glendale Baptist Church in Nashville, TN, for Glendale folks and others to use as they walked, every day during Holy Week, a labyrinth constructed at the church. Eileen graciously allowed us to print the meditations in the 2006 *Sacred Seasons* Lent/Eastertide packet, "What Does It Mean to Follow This Man?"

Daniel Headrick, Associate Pastor of Northside Drive Baptist Church in Atlanta, GA, shared with us a version of the wonderful Hunger Seder that Mazon, the Jewish Response to Hunger, and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs have produced, and which an interfaith group in Atlanta has sponsored for several years.

Daniel, along with Laurence Rosenthal, Rabbi at Ahavath Achim Synagogue in Atlanta, and Harold Kirtz, the co-chair of the Atlanta Seder committee, gave us permission to print excerpts from the Seder here. You will find five inspiring adaptations that augment the traditional Seder. (For a pdf of the entire 2018 Seder—or for information about this year's Seder in Atlanta, email seedseditor1@gmail.com.)

Also, the liturgical team wanted to incorporate drama with some of the gospel readings in the

liturgies, so we have pulled out a few monologues from the *Easter Walk* drama for children and from *With Our Own Eyes*, an *Easter Walk* sequel that includes monologues and dramatic scenes from the resurrection appearances. These collections include 18 monologues written by Sally Askins, Robert Askins, John Ballenger, Susan Shearer Ballenger, Crystal Carter, Katie Cook, Crystal Goolsby, Michael Long, Mark McClintock, Kelli Martin, Ann McGlashan, and Kimmy Scott.

You also will find in these pages a homily and guided meditation for Ash Wednesday and a litany for the fourth Sunday in Lent by Erin Conaway. Erin is the senior pastor of Seventh & James Baptist Church, where the Seeds offices are housed.

The art here is an eclectic collection from our archives. We are featuring some very early pieces (such as the piece on the cover and on this page) from Rebecca S. Ward, who did most of this work while studying Art History at the University of Texas. Rebecca is now an internationally acclaimed artist.

As always, these resources are for you and your congregation to use, adapt and share as you see fit. We hope you will find new challenge and a different kind of hope in the words, "Do not let your hearts be troubled." May God bless your Lenten journey.

—Katie Cook, for the Seeds of Hope Staff and Council of Stewards



Art by Rebecca S. Ward

Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled

A Theme Interpretation

by Marsha C. Martie

“Do not let your hearts be troubled” does not mean “Jesus has got this; everything will be fine.” It means you’re responsible for your heart. It’s our responsibility not to be afraid and not to give in to despair, but it doesn’t mean that we have a right to live unperturbed in the midst of the problems of the world.

It means “don’t be afraid of what Jesus teaches; don’t be afraid to do what Jesus teaches.” The Luke 4 reading of the scroll from Isaiah is one example.

Many people think they have no responsibility for how they feel, so they do nothing. When we’re confronted with corrupt government or war or hunger, we can’t afford to be afraid; we’re in charge of how we respond. We can’t sit around and wait for something to happen, for something to be fixed.

It means we’re not supposed to obsess over things. It means we can still have joy in the midst of great difficulty.

I think the greatest sin of our time is giving in to despair, and living a theology of fear, allowing ourselves to be overwhelmed by the challenges instead of acting.

The most appropriate discipline of Lent is to give up fear and despair and do something that is reconciling. We affect other people by how we control our hearts, and we usually do that poorly, so Lent is a time to challenge ourselves to live the fast that God chooses. We’re not about giving up sugar and caffeine; we’re about bringing healing in the world.

Above all else, we’ve got to understand and act on what Jesus taught. We’ve got to look at how we use our resources, our time and our ethic about how we respond to others.

—Marsha Martie is the pastor of Crossties Ecumenical Faith Community in Waco, TX and has been a strong voice for low-income people in that community for many years. Crossties operates the nationally acclaimed Gospel Café, which feeds hundreds of people during weekdays, as well as Talitha Koum, a therapeutic childcare center that is also nationally acclaimed.



Art by Rebecca S. Ward

I think the greatest sin of our time is giving in to despair, and living a theology of fear, allowing ourselves to be overwhelmed by the challenges instead of acting.

A Liturgy for Ash Wednesday

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

Prelude

Call to Worship

ONE: God of grace, by your great mercy, receive our worship this day.

MANY: *God, grant us pardon this day!*

ONE: We have failed to love our neighbors, to forgive their offenses, and have not listened to their troubles.

MANY: *God, grant us pardon this day!*

ONE: We are hasty to judge others; our lack of understanding demonstrates our inner greed.

MANY: *God, grant us pardon this day!*

ONE: Come and cleanse us, restore us, make our hearts anew, Lord!

MANY: *God, grant us pardon this day!*

Meditation of Confession

The church has failed to follow her appointed pathway of separation, holiness, heavenliness, and testimony to an absent but coming Christ; she has turned aside from that purpose to the work of civilizing the world, building magnificent temples, and acquiring earthly power and wealth, and, in this way, has ceased to follow in the footsteps of Him who had not where to lay His head.

—C. I. Scofield

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Joel 2:1-2, 12:17 or Isaiah 58:1-12

Hymn

“Sunday’s Palms Are Wednesday’s Ashes”

Text: Rae E. Whitney

Music: Attr. to B. F. White; harm. Ronald A. Nelson

Tune and Meter: BEACH SPRING, 8 7 8 7 D

Source: *The Faith We Sing* No. 2138

[Words © 1991 Selah Publishing Co., Inc.;

harm. © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*]

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 51:1-17



Art by Erin Kennedy Mayer

Hymn

“Beneath the Cross of Jesus”

Text: Elizabeth C. Clephane, 1868

Music: Frederick C. Maker, 1881

Tune and Meter: ST. CHRISTOPHER,

Irregular Meter

Source: *Celebrating Grace Hymnal* No. 184

Epistle Reading

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Hymn

“What Meekness and What Majesty”

Text: Terry W. York, 1992

Music: Ralph Manuel, 1993

Tune and Meter: MEEKNESS 8 8 8 6

Source: *Celebrating Grace Hymnal* No. 170

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Music © 1995 Broadman Press

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Meditation of Commitment

I imagine Lent for you and for me as a great departure from the greedy, anxious anti-neighborliness of our economy, a great departure from our exclusionary politics that fears the other, a great departure from self-indulgent consumerism that devours creation. And then an arrival in a new neighborhood, because it is a gift to be simple, it is a gift to be free; it is a gift to come down where we ought to be.

—Walter Brueggemann, *A Way Other than Our Own: Devotions for Lent*

Gospel Reading
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Homily
"A Working Fast" (Isaiah 58:1-12)
See page 7.

Guided Meditation
See page 9.

Imposition of Ashes
Benediction

Excerpt Number 1 from the Hunger Seder

Introduction to the Hunger Seder

LEADER: Each year, Jews across the world join with family, friends, neighbors and strangers to celebrate the holiday of Passover. *Seder* means *order*. The ordered rituals and symbols of the Passover Seder enable us to tell the story of the Jewish people's liberation from slavery in Egypt. For today's Seder we choose to recognize that, while the Jewish people may be free, not everyone has cause for celebration. Many people, even in a free society such as ours in the US, are bound by hardships and challenges that make them virtual slaves to their circumstances. Each day many men, women and children are virtual slaves to hunger or food insecurity. Tonight, we come together with them in mind, and with a determination to help erase the oppression of hunger.

LEADER: During the traditional Seder, we join together and drink four cups of wine: a cup for each of the promises of freedom God made to the Israelites as God led us out of bondage. Today we join together and make four new promises—promises not about breaking the shackles of Egyptian slavery, but about breaking the bonds of hunger. We do so standing together and calling for a better tomorrow.

—From the Mazon/Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Hunger Seder Haggadah 2014

All read in unison:

1. We will not turn away from the plight of those struggling with hunger and food insecurity.

2. We will educate ourselves and then others about the real dynamics and causes of food insecurity and not allow ignorance and bigotry to fuel uncompassionate and punitive actions.

3. We will urge our policymakers to make it a priority to end hunger, especially for children and seniors.

4. We will work to ensure that everyone has access to enough nutritious food.

Note: A statement from Mazon says this: "Dozens of cities and thousands of individuals across the United States host Hunger Seders to ensure no person in America goes hungry. Hunger Seder participants observe the ancient traditions of Pesach (Passover) in the context of a stark reality: that too many of our fellow Americans are still going hungry. The Seder serves a vital purpose and presents a call to action for the American Jewish community to end hunger in America." Seeds of Hope received this version of the Seder from an interfaith group in Atlanta, GA, which has been observing the Hunger Seder together for a number of years. Special thanks go to Daniel Headrick, Laurence Rosenthal and Harold Kirtz for sharing this with us. In addition to the excerpts included in this packet, the Seder is sprinkled throughout with personal stories of real people who are experiencing food insecurity. For a pdf of the entire 2018 Seder or a flyer about this year's Seder in Atlanta, email seedse-ditor1@gmail.com.

A Working Fast

A Homily for Ash Wednesday

by Erin Conaway

Text: Isaiah 58:1-12

I was sitting in the waiting room while the mechanics were changing the oil in my car. There was a woman sitting next to me and her toddler was running around the room. I smiled at the little one and he smiled back. Then he handed me something he'd picked up off of the floor. I thanked him and treated it like a treasure. The mom apologized but I told her not to worry, I love kids. We then started to visit about how old he was and what things he enjoyed doing.

Eventually we introduced ourselves to one another and then she asked me what I did for a living. I told her I was a minister at a church near downtown. "Like a priest?" she asked. "Yeah...."

Everything changed. She had this horrified look on her face, like my head had just rotated all the way around and I'd projectile-vomited across the room. She picked up her child and quickly gathered her purse and as she walked by said, "You people are sick! What you do to children—you should all be killed!"

I couldn't have been any more surprised if I'd woken up with my head sewn to the carpet. It took me a minute to even figure out what she was saying. It was around the time when all of the horrible news was first coming out about priests abusing children in their care. I wanted to run out after her. I wanted to tell her I never have nor would I ever hurt a child. I wanted to tell her it wasn't me.

I'm not even Catholic. In fact, in my church I'd get in trouble if I introduced myself as a priest. I don't even get

to wear a collar, though that would make getting dressed in the morning so much easier. I didn't move. I just sat there feeling defensive and then

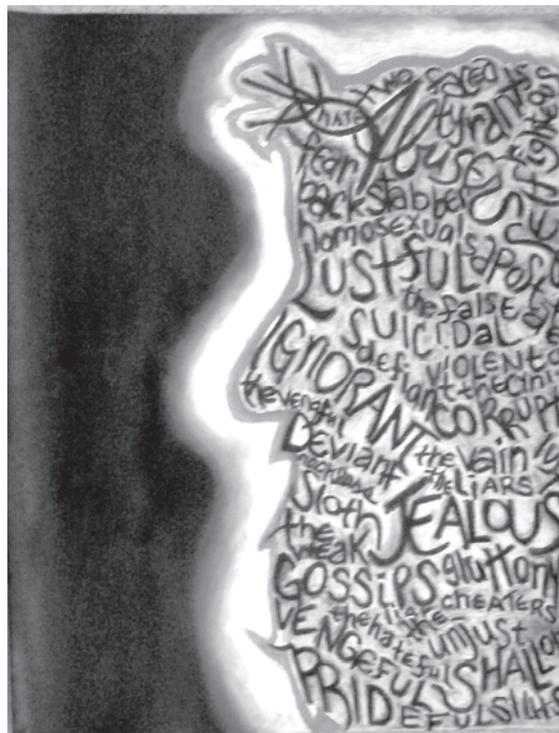
I wonder *what it is like for you, when we read together the corporate confession for Ash Wednesday? How many times do you flinch and think, "I don't do that!" or "I'm not a part of any of that!"*

angry. She doesn't know me. How could she treat me like I'm a monster? I didn't do anything wrong.

For a while after that, when people asked me what I did for work, I would tell them I worked at a church. Then, if they asked a follow-up, I would confess to being a minister. I'm back to leading with the fact that I am a minister. I figure if it goes poorly, I can try to pretend I'm an assistant prime minister from Canada—eh?

I wonder what it is like for you, when we read together the corporate confession for Ash Wednesday? How many times do you flinch and think, "I don't do that!" or "I'm not a part of any of that!" One article I read on collective guilt said, "Given that guilt is an aversive emotion, people are often motivated to avoid or reduce the experience by undermining its antecedents."

How do we do that? Just



Art by Kate Moore

like I did. “I didn’t do anything wrong.” We remove ourselves from the offending group so we can avoid association with them. And we are really good at this because we can slice up our allegiances and our alliances in a million different ways. Though

But what about me? I shared my bread with the hungry person I saw. Great; now work to make sure everyone has bread. This is our work to do because these are our problems.

I am an ordained Christian minister, just like the priests the woman hated, I could escape any sense of collective guilt by saying I’m Baptist (as if Baptist ministers have never abused children). I could say I’m Cooperative Baptist, that’s an even nicer group of Baptists.

I could tell her I don’t wear vestments. That no one calls me a priest. All in an attempt to separate myself from a group of people of which I am a part because I don’t want to share any of the collective guilt of the bad apples in our bunch—including the ones who actively try to cover it up or those who just ignore the problems.

We can divide ourselves out of just about any situation that might bring about collective guilt. I’m American, but when those bad things happened, the Democrats were in charge and I’m not a Democrat. Yes, I’m a Texan, but I’m from South Texas and the Legislators who aren’t spending enough on education are mostly from the big cities and the East. I am a Wacoan, but we live on the other side of town. I wasn’t around when that happened. I’m not a part of that group.

Yes, I’m a straight, white, Protestant male, but I’m not one of those guys who did all of the bad things—abusing and oppressing women or people of color. We can divide up in whatever way is necessary to avoid collective guilt, and we do it almost instinctually.

The other method we use is to portray the ingroup as a victim. Some psychologist call this “competitive victimhood.” Take, for example, the white supremacists who were marching in North Carolina a year and a half ago. In many of the interviews, they said their heritage was being taken away from them and they were losing jobs to people of color and to Jewish people and women.

They accused the outgroup of victimizing the ingroup. Then, no collective guilt is there—and it provides further justification for future harmful actions. This can include making the outgroup seem like a threat—thus the notion of minorities taking jobs from the white supremacists.

Before I talk too much about this, I’m not saying we in this church are white supremacists any more than I’m saying I’m a pedophile. But if we never account for corporate sin, how can we say we love our neighbors as ourselves?

A blacksmith, living in the South during the era of slavery could very easily say, “I’m not a part of slavery because I don’t own any slaves. But the entire economy, the water in which you swim, is filled with this system of oppression and abuse. The blacksmith may not be a slave-owner, but he should want to be a part of the solution and if he keeps himself separated from the ingroup of slave-owners, then he can live in willful ignorance to the atrocities all around him and never consider himself in any way a part of it.

But think about how powerful it would be if that blacksmith were able to confess to the sins of slavery. Not from an individual standpoint, but as a part of a whole that is wrong. Now the aversive emotion of guilt is working with his sense of righteousness to motivate him to make changes, to work in the community as a member of the community to stop this madness.

If our faith is only about us and Jesus, then we never engage the corporate sin all around us in any way that taps into our faith journey. One of the studies I read indicated that collective guilt was the best motivator of people to take demonstrative actions. It was stronger than anger and stronger than anxiety.

I think all too often that ministers, in our zeal to take up the prophetic mantle we are all called to bear, try to do it by creating anxiety or anger in the congregation. Anxiety around God’s punishment or displeasure and anxiety about the demise of our world. Anger about the wrong things happening and the wrong people who are doing them.

Or we just slice ourselves and our congregations out of the guilt by saying we’re not a part of that, or we make Christians out to be the victims. It’s like the “War on Christmas” where we pretend that something we deserve (the assumption of a Christian culture and the homogeny of our country around Christian holidays) is being taken from us, when it was never ours to begin with.

If we can get to a place where we recognize that we are a part of our corporate sins, then I think we can more boldly work to bring them to an end.

If we can get to a place where we recognize that we are a part of our corporate sins, then I think we can more boldly work to bring them to an end.

The prophet Isaiah was telling the people of Israel the same thing. “Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins.” Now, I’m confident there were plenty of people who were not being abusive in the way they fasted. And I’m sure there were plenty of individuals who were working to share their bread with the hungry and clothe the naked and free the oppressed. So does this mean God wasn’t proud of them? No, but it does mean that they had a problem together that they must work together to fix.

But what about me? I shared my bread with the hungry person I saw. Great; now work to make sure everyone has bread. This is our work to do because these are our problems. Regardless of our individual actions that may or may not be directly tied to the ills of our society, it is our society. We confess tonight not as guilty individuals, but as members of a broken community. We own the guilt of our sin in the corporate sense and we confess it to God and pray for courage and wisdom and grace to make it better.

Isaiah knew this association well. In his encounter with God, he cried out, “I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people with unclean lips.” Even if he could have skipped the first part: “God, there is no blood on my hands; my lips are clean,” he would still have to confess the second part: “I live among a people with unclean lips.” We have dirt on us, both from our own doing and because we live with dirty people.

But do you remember the response from God to Isaiah’s dual confession? Grace. Forgiveness. A touch with a

burning coal to his lips and a declaration that his guilt had departed him and his sin was blotted out. And then he was sent back out to love and tell the truth to his sisters and brothers. And so are we. Amen.

—Erin Conaway, a native of Midland, TX, is the pastor of Seventh & James Baptist Church, where the Seeds offices are housed. In his years as Seventh’s pastor, he has enthusiastically supported the Seeds ministry and generously shared his writings and ideas. He also serves on the Sacred Seasons liturgical planning team.



Guided Meditation for Ash Wednesday

by Erin Conaway

I would like to invite you into a time of guided prayer and meditation. Before the imposition of ashes, let us take a moment to confess in our hearts to God:

Lord, forgive us for the things we have done and bring them to mind that we might lay them bare before you.

Lord, forgive me, for the things I have done and bring them to mind that I might lay them bare before you.

Lord, forgive us, for the things we have left undone, for our silences, and for our turning away. Bring them to mind that we might lay them bare before you.

Lord, forgive me, for the things I have left undone, for my silences, and for my turning away. Bring them to mind that I may lay them bare before you.

And now, as you feel led, you may come forward in remembrance and repentance.

A Liturgy for the First Sunday in Lent

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

Prelude

Call to Worship

ONE: God is calling. Will you answer? You are summoned by the One who speaks your name.

MANY: *We are doubtful, full of questions. We are challenged by the One who formed our minds.*

ONE: God is calling. Will you answer?

MANY: *We are fearful. We are frozen. We are cradled by the One who gave us life.*

ONE: God is calling. Will you answer?

MANY: *We are stubborn. We are weary. We're forgiven by the One who heals our souls.*

—Based on Paul Tate's "If Today," © 2013, 2018

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Meditation of Preparation

We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

—Viktor Frankl

Reading from the Hebrew

Scriptures

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Hymn

"Why Stand So Far Away,
My God?"

Text: Ruth Duck (Psalm 10)

Music: Wyeth's *Repository of Sacred Music, Part Second*; harm. Charles H. Webb

Tune and Meter: MORNING SONG CM

Source: *The Faith We Sing* No. 2180

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Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16

Hymn

"Cross of Jesus, Cross of Sorrow"

Text: William J. Sparrow-Simpson, 1887

Music: John Stainer, 1887

Tune and Meter: CROSS OF JESUS 8 7 8 7

Source: *The Worshipping Church* No. 214

Epistle Reading

Romans 10:8b-13

Gospel Reading

Luke 4:1-13

Homily

Meditation of

Commitment

God of the desert,
as we follow Jesus
into the unknown,
may we recognize the tempter
when he comes;
let it be your bread we eat,
your world we serve and you
alone we worship.

—New Zealand Book of Prayer

Benediction



Art by Peter Yuichi Clark

A Liturgy for the Second Sunday in Lent

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

Prelude

Call to Worship

ONE: When our structures creak and our doctrines swirl,

MANY: *Lord, have mercy. Christ have mercy.*

ONE: Where angry poor from grinding need, stare at affluence,

MANY: *Lord, have mercy. Christ have mercy.*

ONE: With tears and thirst for truth and right,

MANY: *Lord, have mercy. Christ have mercy.*

ONE: Where money rules and greedy systems call the tune,

MANY: *Lord, have mercy. Christ have mercy.*

—Based on David Sparks' "Unsettled World" © 1994 Hope Publishing Co.

Meditation of Preparation

No act of virtue can be great if it is not followed by advantage for others. So, no matter how much time you spend fasting, no matter how much you sleep on a hard floor and eat ashes and sigh continually, if you do no good to others, you do nothing great.

—John Chrysostom

Reading from the Hebrew

Scriptures

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Hymn

"Unsettled World"

Text: David Sparks

Music: Hal H. Hopson

Tune and Meter: THUNDER BAY, 8

8 8 8 8

Source: *The Faith We Sing* No. 2183

[© 1994 Hope Publishing Co.]

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 27

Note: We suggest that you ask two readers to take turns reading each stanza, or ask the congregation to do so.

Hymn

"Do Not Worry"

Text and Music: Paul A. Tate

Source: *Celebration Series*, G-9092 © 2017 by GIA Publications, Inc.

Epistle Reading

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Gospel Reading

Luke 9:28-36, (37-43a)

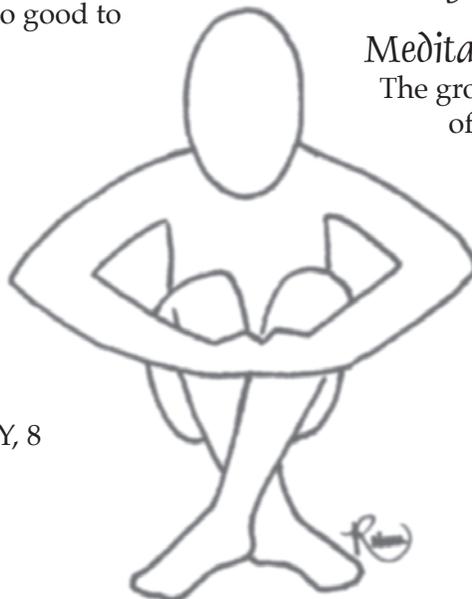
Homily

Meditation of Commitment

The growth of grace is like the polishing of metals. There is first an opaque surface; by and by you see a spark darting out, then a strong light; till at length it sends back a perfect image of the sun that shines upon it.

—Edward Payson (1783-1827)

Benediction



Art by Rebecca S. Ward

Excerpts Numbers 2 & 3 from the Hunger Seder

Excerpt Number 2

Maggid: Storytelling

Though many of us are blessed to be free, far too many people are not. As we gather for this Hunger Seder, nearly 50 million American men, women and children—including almost 5 million seniors—struggle to put nutritious food on the table each day. But if we extend our “strong hands and outstretched arms,” we can free them from the bondage of hunger.

The Haggadah states, “Let all who are hungry come and eat.” Although we cannot formally invite each hungry person to our table, we are not without recourse. Let us give modern meaning to these ancient words by doing everything we can to ensure that those who are hungry have access to the nutritious food we are fortunate to enjoy.

Passover not only reminds us of our journey from slavery to freedom; it also reminds us of how important leadership is in realizing such a journey.

Moses, who led our people out of Egypt and to the borders of the Promised Land, is often held up as *the* exemplary leader. A visionary, he saw the suffering of the past and present and he had a vision of the future that was hopeful and promising. During the forty years in the desert Moses led his people and crafted changes that would make them into a community grounded in the laws brought down from Mt. Sinai.

The need for strong leadership never comes to an end. We must raise our voices and call upon our leaders to enact just and responsible policies now that will eradicate hunger—policies that will strengthen us as a community, policies grounded in the very highest principles we hold dear. Only then will we be able to create a better future for our nation.

—From the Mazon/Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Hunger Seder Haggadah 2014

Excerpt Number 3

The 10 Plagues of Today

LEADER: On Passover, we read about the 10 plagues God unleashed on the Egyptians. But the plagues

we see today are not punishment from God. Some are the result of our own poor choices. Others may be the result of unfortunate life circumstances. As we read each of these plagues aloud, we dip a finger into the wine and touch a drop onto our plate. This reminds us that, even as we celebrate freedom, our freedom is not complete when others still suffer.

(Dip your finger in your glass of wine and place a drop on the plate for each plague.)

All read in unison:

1. The single mother who gives the last bits of food to her child while she goes hungry.
2. The father who must choose between paying for medicine or paying for food.
3. A neighbor who never invites you over because she can't offer you food. Children who never invite friends over to play because there is nothing in the fridge for an afternoon snack.
4. A recently unemployed mom who is too old to get a new job and too embarrassed to apply for food stamps.
5. A friend who feels alienated because she cannot join in on social events at restaurants.
6. The elderly man who brings plastic bags to Shabbat Oneg or a church lunch to take home food for the rest of the week.
7. A mother who does not apply for food stamps because she cannot understand the application system.
8. The childless widower who doesn't know how to shop or cook.
9. The couple who live in an urban neighborhood where there is no full-service grocery store, only fast food and convenience stores.
10. Apathy, the greatest plague of all—the failure to make ending hunger a national priority.

Editor's note: Information about the Hunger Seder can be found on page 6.

Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings

If I'm following Jesus, why am I such a good insurance risk? If I'm following Jesus, why, when I have done my giving, have I so much left over for myself? If I'm following Jesus, why do I have so many friends among the affluent and so few among the poor? If I'm following Jesus, why do I have so much privacy in a world that is starved for love?

If I'm following Jesus, why am I tempted to overeat in a world where so many beg bread? If I'm following Jesus, why am I getting on so well in a world that marked him out for death?

—Ernest T. Campbell, "Are You Following Jesus or Believing in Christ?"

The first social task of the church is to be the church—the servant community.... Calling for the church to be the church is not a formula for a withdrawal ethic, nor is it a self-righteous attempt to flee from the world's problems....

The gospel is political. Christians are engaged in politics, a politics of the kingdom. Such a politics reveals the insufficiency of all politics based on coercion and falsehood, and it finds the true source of power in servanthood rather than domination....

As Christians we are at home in no nation. Our true home is the church itself, where we find those who, like us, have been formed by a savior who was necessarily always on the move.

—Stanley Hauerwas, *The Servant Community: Christian Social Ethics*

The joyful news that He is risen does not change the contemporary world. Still before us lie work, discipline, sacrifice. But the fact of Easter gives us the spiritual power to do the work, accept the discipline, and make the sacrifice.

—Henry Knox Sherrill

Easter is not a time for groping through dusty, musty tomes or tombs to disprove spontaneous generation or even to prove life eternal. It is a day to fan the ashes of dead hope, a day to banish doubts and seek the slopes where the sun is rising, to revel in the faith which transports us out of ourselves and the dead past into the vast and inviting unknown.

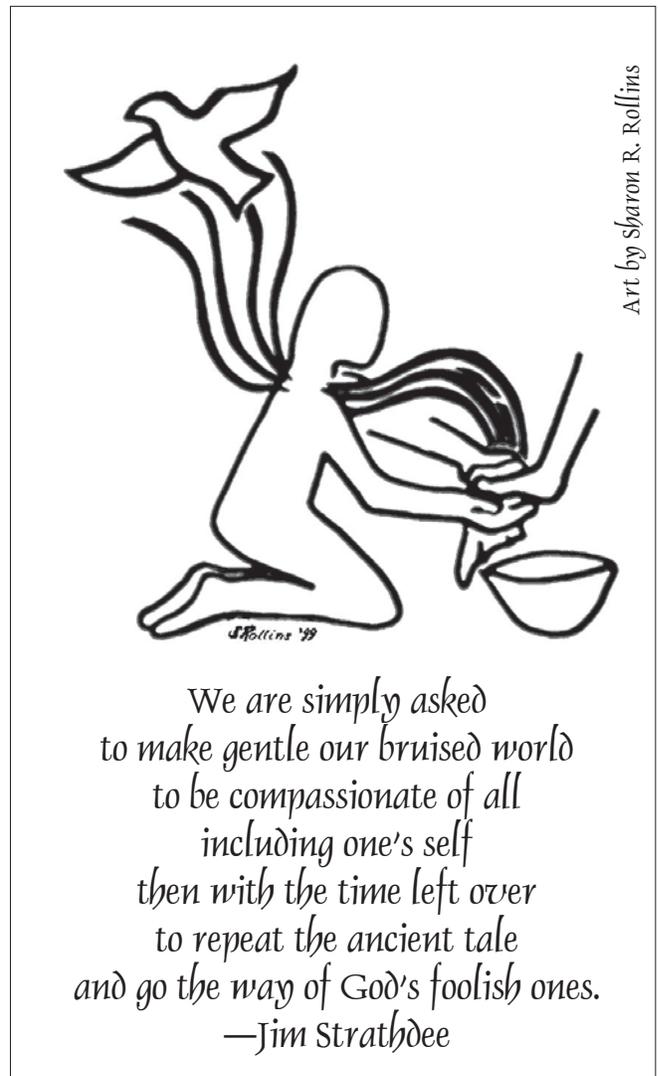
—Author unknown, quoted in the Lewiston Tribune

Your neighbor stands before you as a representative of every human being and of the God who has created and dignified every human being.... Neighborly love is at once an involvement in time and an orientation toward eternity.... Nothing human can be alien to those who have hope.

—Glenn Tinder, *The Fabric of Hope: An Essay*

The spiritual quest is not for interesting "spiritual experiences" but for the expansion of our capacity for mercy, the opening of our hearts wide enough to embrace the world, and not just the fragments of it, here and there, which at present we manage to feel with and care about.

—Martin L. Smith, *A Season for the Spirit*



We are simply asked
to make gentle our bruised world
to be compassionate of all
including one's self
then with the time left over
to repeat the ancient tale
and go the way of God's foolish ones.
—Jim Strathdee

A Liturgy for the Third Sunday in Lent

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

Prelude

Call to Worship

ONE: Seek the Lord.

MANY: *Call to the Lord in truth.*

ONE: Seek the Lord.

MANY: *Call to the Lord in justice.*

ONE: Seek the Lord

MANY: *Where compassion is needed.*

ONE: Seek the Lord

MANY: *Where kindness is needed.*

ONE: Seek the Lord

MANY: *Where love is rich, and grace is free.*

ONE: Seek the Lord

MANY: *While the Lord is near.*

ONE: Seek the Lord

MANY: *While the Lord may be found.*

Meditation of Preparation

Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to everyone that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people... re-examine all you have been told in school or church or in any book, and dismiss whatever insults your own soul....

—Walt Whitman

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Isaiah 55:1-9

Note: We suggest that you ask two readers to take turns reading each verse, or ask the congregation to do so.

Hymn

“Come and Find the Quiet Center”

Text: Shirley Erena Murray

Music: Attr. to B. F. White;

harm. by Ronald A. Nelson;

descant by Charles H. Webb

Tune and Meter: BEACH SPRING, 8 7 8 7 D

Source: *The Faith We Sing* No. 2128

[Words © 1992 Hope Publishing Co., Inc.;
harm. © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*;
descant © 1993 Abingdon Press,
admin. by The Copyright Co.]

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 63: 1-8

Hymn

“How Long, O Lord?”

Text: Barbara Woollett (Psalm 13)

Music: Christopher Norton

Tune and Meter: HOW LONG 8 6 8 8 6

Source: *The Faith We Sing* No. 2209

[Words © 1990 Jubilate Hymns, admin. by Hope Publishing Co.; music © 1993 Harper Collins Religious, admin. by The Copyright Co.]

Epistle Reading

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Gospel Reading

Luke 13:1-9

Homily

Meditation of Commitment

Each of us is called to prophetic agony—to speak the Word, to do justice and righteousness. We are most truly ourselves when we live within God’s insecurity, acknowledging Yahweh’s sovereignty over creation, taking full responsibility as contingent creatures who yet must decide and act. Future is created out of past by those who live the present. Wherever history is unfolding, faith demands response. In the face of God-encounter, indifference does not suffice.

—Martin Bell

Benediction

Art by Rebecca S. Ward

A Liturgy for the Fourth Sunday in Lent

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

Prelude

Call to Worship

ONE: When my heart stumbles,

MANY: *Stand by me.*

ONE: When my feet lack strength,

MANY: *Stand by me.*

ONE: When my mind measures the sacrifice too greedily,

MANY: *Stand by me.*

ONE: When my hands are idle and indifferent,

MANY: *Stand by me.*

Meditation of Preparation

People who have come to know the joy of God do not deny the darkness, but they choose not to live in it. They claim that the light that shines in the darkness can be trusted more

than the darkness itself and that a little bit of light can dispel a lot of darkness. They point each other to flashes of light here and there, and remind each other that they reveal the hidden but real presence of God.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Return of the Prodigal Son*

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Joshua 5:9-12

Hymn

“Penitential Act / Acto Penitencial from the Mass of Reconciliation”

Text: Roman Missal © 2010, ICEL

Music: Marty Haugen

Source: G-9730, GIA Publications, Inc.

[© 2018 by GIA Publications, Inc.]

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 32

Hymn

“Lamb of God”

Text and Music: Twila Paris

Text and Tune: SWEET LAMB OF GOD irregular meter with refrain

Source: *The Faith We Sing* No. 2113

[© 1985 Straightway Music/Mountain Spring Music]

Reading from the Epistles

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Gospel Reading

Luke 15:1-32

Litany of Lost and Found

See the sidebar below.

Litany of Lost and Found

by Erin Conaway

One: When Jesus walked the earth, the sinners and tax collectors gathered near to listen to his teaching and the pious people turned up their noses and said, “Of course, he even eats with *them.*”

Many: God, deliver us from our perceived piety and the myth of “them.”

One: You didn’t start an argument about the sameness of sin or the fact that we’re all stained and disfigured by it; instead you told a story about a little lamb who wanders off and the good shepherd who finds him.

Many: Help us to see how far we have wandered from your fold.

One: Lost sheep are pursued, misplaced coins are found, and spiteful sons are welcomed home with loving embraces. Your grace wraps us firmly in your loving embrace, and you clean us with your jealous hand.

Many: Turn us back to your love and mercy; lead us down the path of righteousness for your name’s sake; find us where we are lost.

Homily

Meditation of Commitment

For most of my life I have struggled to find God, to know God, to love God. I have tried hard to follow the guidelines of the spiritual life—pray always, work for others, read the Scriptures—and to avoid the many temptations to dissipate myself.

I have failed many times but always tried again, even when I was close to despair. Now I wonder whether I have sufficiently realized that during all this time God has been trying to find me, to know me, and to love me.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Return of the Prodigal Son*

Benediction

Excerpts Numbers 4 & 5 from the Hunger Seder

Excerpt Number 4

Dayenu of Today

The Dayenu is a song of thanksgiving that follows the remembrance of the 10 plagues in the Passover Seder. The following is the “Dayenu of Today” from the Hunger Seder.

1. We are grateful that so many among us do not suffer from the oppression and hardship of daily hunger.

All respond: Dayenu

2. We are grateful to live in a democracy in which we are able to influence our government’s priorities.

All respond: Dayenu

3. We are grateful for the opportunity to direct national attention to the crisis of hunger among older Americans.

All respond: Dayenu

4. We are grateful to those who use their hands to stock a food bank, their feet to march on Capitol Hill, and their voices to demand justice.

All respond: Dayenu

5. We are grateful we made the time to be present at this Hunger Seder to educate ourselves and be inspired to act.

All respond: Dayenu

6. We are grateful for each other—alone we are limited, but together we are a powerful voice for change.

All respond: Dayenu

Excerpt Number 5

Nirtzah: Conclusion

LEADER: Our Seder is now coming to a close. We celebrated our successes, learned about the hunger that still plagues our communities, and affirmed our commitment to work together to create a hunger-free world. We pray that, at this time next year, our fellow men, women, and children will be blessed with abundance and will be free from the yoke of hunger and poverty.

All read in unison

One day, God, may it be Your will that we live in a world perfected, in which food comes to the hungry as from heaven, and water will flow to the thirsty as a stream. But in the meantime, while the world is filled with hunger, empower us to stand on Your behalf, and fulfill the words of Your prophet: “To all who are thirsty bring water,” and “greet those who wander without food.” This Passover, bless us that we should sustain the hungry.

Editor’s note: Information about the Hunger Seder can be found on page 6.

About Face!

A Lenten Children's Sermon

by Mark McClintock

Text: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Note: When the children have come to the designated place for the children's sermon, turn your back to them before you begin.

Good morning. I'm glad to see you all this morning—that is, I'm glad you're here. How many of you know the story Jesus told about a son who ran away? Sometimes it's called the story of the Prodigal Son. No, don't raise your hands, I can't see them.

The story is found in Luke 15 in the Bible, and it's about a young man who asked his father to give him a lot of money. The son left home and wasted all the money. He had to work for a pig farmer, a really disgusting job, and he was so hungry, he wanted to eat the pig slop. The son began to understand that he had done something wrong.

Speaking of wrong, does something seem a little strange this morning? Usually I can see you, but today, I can't seem to find you. Oh! I'm facing the wrong way!

Turn around to face the children.

Oh, hi, there! What do you know? You were there all along, I was just turned around backward. It wasn't a very good choice to face that way, was it? No, this is much better.

Well, this young man in Jesus' story realized he had made some bad choices, too. He wanted a happy life, and he thought he could get it by running away and spending lots of money on silly things. That was the wrong way to go! When he understood that he was wrong, he had to make a choice. He could keep living with the pigs. Or he could go back to his father, who might be angry and might yell at him and might tell him to go away.

Should he stay with the pigs? Should he go back to his father? Even though it

was hard and he was a little scared, he decided to go back to his father.

Have you ever done something you knew was wrong? Something that might get you in trouble? Something that your parents might be angry about? Doing something wrong is like going the wrong way.

What should we do about it? Should we lie and say somebody else did it? Or should we run away and hide? No, even though it may be hard and we might be scared, it's much better to go to our parents and tell the truth. Then we're doing the right thing, going the right way, just like it's better when I face the right direction.

You know what? When that son in Jesus' story went back home, his father didn't yell at him or tell him to go away. His father ran to meet him, gave him a big hug, and threw a party to celebrate his son coming home.

And that's a story about the way God loves us. When we've done something wrong, if we turn and go the right way, telling the truth about our bad choice, God welcomes us back. And God helps us keep going the right way! Let's pray.

God, our Perfect Parent, thank you for loving us when we make good choices, and even when we make bad choices. When we're doing something wrong, help us stop and do what's right. Help us go the way you want us to go, just the way Jesus did. Amen.

—Mark McClintock is pastor of Speedway Baptist Church in Indianapolis, IN. He spent a number of years as a children's minister and as coordinator of PASSPORTkids!, a summer camp for third-through-sixth-grade children. Over the years, he has generously shared with Seeds of Hope many activities for children, as well as sermons and other writings for grown-ups.



A Liturgy for the Fifth Sunday in Lent

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

Prelude

Call to Worship

ONE: As we journey together, God of peace, grant us goodness

MANY: *To joyfully live into the fullness of life expressed in your love and grace.*

ONE: As we journey together, God of justice, grant us courage

MANY: *To make difficult decisions in the face of injustice.*

ONE: As we journey together, God of reconciliation, grant us mercy

MANY: *To make the inevitable work of compassion and wholeness.*

—Based on Desmond Tutu's "Believe" © 2007 Blue Mountain Press

Meditation of Preparation

God has extravagant possibilities for you and me. Every once in a while we feel the Spirit pulling us to do something new, something rare, something good. There's a relentless spontaneity about it. Every once in a while we should act on impulse with just the faintest impression that we heard



Art courtesy of Saint Mary's Press

God say, "Go."

—Brett Younger, "Extravagant Faith"

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures
Isaiah 43: 16-21

Hymn

"Come to Me, O Weary Traveler"

Text: Sylvia G. Dunstan, 1955-1993, alt.

Music: Paul A. Tate

Source: *Celebration Series G-9135*, © 2017 by GIA Publications, Inc.

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 126

Hymn

"Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"

Text: Charles Wesley, 1747

Music: John Zundel, 1870

Tune and Meter: BEECHER 8 7 8 7 D

Source: *The Worshipping Church* No. 558

Epistle Reading

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Monologue Based on Gospel Reading

John 12:1-8, Mary of Bethany

See page 19.

Meditation of Commitment

Mary's love was uncalculating. She wholeheartedly spent her life savings on one grand gesture. She didn't carefully weigh the alternatives. She did the unthinkable. A respectable Jewish woman would never untie her hair in public, but Mary was too caught up in her love for Jesus to be concerned with her own scandalous behavior. When God's grace overwhelms us we don't carefully weigh the alternatives.

—Brett Younger, "Extravagant Faith"

Benediction

Mary of Bethany

A Monologue from the Seeds Easter Walk

Scripture: John 12:1-8. See also Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-19—here it is an unnamed woman at the house of Simon the leper in Bethany; Luke 7:36-40—here it is an unnamed woman at the house of a Pharisee.

Setting: Mary is dressed simply but elegantly, as if she has some wealth but chooses not to use it on clothing. She is in a small, darkened room where it looks as though some people were gathered to eat and drink and relax. Her main props are a towel and an empty, fancy perfume jar. She will have cinnamon sticks or some other aromatic herb to give to the children as a token to remember her story.

My name is Mary, and I live in Bethany—that's a small town right outside Jerusalem—with my sister Martha and my brother Lazarus. You may remember stories about how my brother died and Jesus brought him back to life. Really!! And there was another time that I was listening to Jesus teach and my sister got mad at me for not doing the housework.

But Jesus took up for me. But I bet you all want to hear about the night Jesus and his disciples came to dinner at our house. Yes? I knew it! Everyone wants to hear about it, especially since I poured a really expensive jar of perfume on his head and feet, and everyone thought I was crazy. But I'm not crazy.... I just had a really strong feeling that it was the right thing to do. And I still think it was right.

About six days before Passover, I was helping Martha prepare for dinner one night when there was a knock at the door; and who do you think it was? It was Jesus and the disciples!

We had heard that Jesus had been in Jerusalem, so we were hoping that he would come to our house. Fortunately we had made plenty of food, so we helped them wash their hands and put the food on the table.

As they started to eat, I thought to myself, "This is Jesus—the teacher whom I loved, and who everybody was saying was the Messiah—eating at our table! Surely there is something special I can do for him."

I got up and ran into my bedroom as fast as I could and got an alabaster jar filled with an

expensive ointment my father had given to me as a little girl. I was so pleased with my idea that I ran up behind him, broke the alabaster bottle of ointment, and poured the perfume all over his head and his feet.

While I was washing his feet with my hair—that's how someone like me shows how much we love someone—I could hear some of the disciples complaining. Judas was getting angry at me for not selling the perfume and giving the money to the poor. I guess I could have done that; I know Jesus said to do all we could for the poor.

But you know what? Jesus defended me. Me! He said, "Leave her alone; why are you giving her a hard time? She is performing a good service for me. There will always be poor men and women around you can give money to, but I will not always be around. This woman, Mary, has done all she can, she has anointed me in preparation for my death. Whenever my story is told, let her story be told as well in remembrance of her."

Can you believe that? He stood up to his own disciples for me. He took up for me—again. I didn't like what he was saying about dying, but I really didn't understand all of that at the time.

Editor's Note: Easter Walk is a dramatic production, conceived and enacted yearly at Seventh & James Baptist Church, and published by Seeds. Sometime during Holy Week, children (and, in many churches, all congregants) go from scene to scene and hear monologues from characters who describe very recent encounters with Jesus during the last days before his death. The children carry baskets or bags in which they keep tokens from each scene to help them remember what happened. "Mary of Bethany" was written with the help of Mark McClintock. The Easter Walk collection includes 12 monologues and dramatic scenes from the events of Holy Week and Easter Sunday morning—although we recommend only producing seven in one evening. For a copy of Easter Walk or With Our Own Eyes, a collection of monologues about the resurrection appearances in the gospels, write to seededitor1@gmail.com or go to www.seedspublishers.org/worship.



A Liturgy for Palm Sunday

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

Note: The readings here are from the Liturgy of the Passion, except for the Gospel reading.

Prelude

Call to Worship

ONE: Lift up your heads, O you gates;

MANY: *be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.*

ONE: Lift up your heads, O you gates;

MANY: *search your hearts, renew your minds, seek the God who loves you.*

ONE: Who is this King of glory?

MANY: *The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.*

ONE: Who is this King of glory?

MANY: *The Lord of the widow and the orphan, the Lord of the poor and oppressed.*

ONE: Who is this King of glory?

MANY: *The Lord who seeks what is good, the Lord who seeks those who act justly and love mercy, the Lord who walks alongside us, whose presence is humbling and comforting.*

ONE: Lift up your heads, O you gates;

MANY: *Lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.*

Meditation of Preparation

The God we proclaim and worship will not be domesticated, “homebound,” shut in, confined by our temples, and stagnated by our stories. God does not quietly accept our own well-worn narratives, smoothed over and sweetened by complacency and comfort. [Jesus creates] a new narrative that is ours to follow AND to re-create.

Thoughts for Palm Sunday

by Eileen Campbell-Reed

We will never know fully the mind of Jesus. Yet, as we look at his life portrayed in the Gospels, we are compelled to wonder what must have been going through his mind as he approached Jerusalem, the city where prophets died. Did he anticipate a showdown with the religious establishment? Surely amid this waving of palms and cries of *hosanna*, he must have wondered if the reign of God was truly at hand. Maybe love was going to win the day! Were Jesus and his followers swept into the holy city on waves of hopefulness?

Ironies abound in the gospel stories of Holy Week. Poignant among them is the fickle nature of the crowd, which changes its cry in one short week. Even more heartbreaking is the turn of events that ended in a very dark day indeed. Yet we know something about walking through a day or week that quickly shifts from celebration to grief. A Thanksgiving celebration interrupted by heart pains becomes a trip to the emergency room and bypass surgery. A car ride from the ball game turns into a devastating wreck and then a funeral when someone drives drunk. A march for peace becomes a riot and a jail sentence when demonstrators are mistaken as criminals. The Highway of Hosannas turns into the *Via Dolorosa*—the way of suffering.

We may not know the mind of Jesus, but we may trust the presence of God to walk with us through devastating moments and dark nights of the soul that disrupt and change our lives.

—Eileen R. Campbell-Reed, from “Walking the Labyrinth: A Holy Week Meditation Guide,” in *Sacred Seasons, Lent/Eastertide 2006*: “What Does It Mean to Follow This Man?”

Art by Rebecca S. Ward

This is a dynamic, raucous God who jars us to wrath or to faithfulness, and who simultaneously provides us the opportunity to partner in the creation of a new narrative, woven with edge-people in edge-places, and in the particularities of daily living and daily people.

—David L. Ostendorf

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Hymn

“With Waving Palms and Shouts of Praise”

Text: Jan McGuire, 2008 (John 12:12-13)

Music: English folk song;

arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906

Tune and Meter: FOREST GREEN, CMD

Source: *Celebrating Grace Hymnal* No. 176

[Words © 2010 Celebrating Grace, Inc.]

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 31:9-16

Hymn

“Lead Me to Calvary”

Text: Jennie E. Hussey, 1921, alt.

Music: William J. Kirkpatrick, 1921

Tune and Meter: DUNCANNONCM
with refrain

Source: *The Worshipping Church* No. 211

[© 1921, renewal 1949,

Hope Publishing Co.]

Epistle Reading

Philippians 2:5-11

Monologue Based on Gospel

Reading

Luke 18:28-40, Triumphal Entry

See “Young Man with Donkey” on page 22.

Homily

Meditation of Commitment

Jesus’ ministry was clearly defined,
and the alternatives to the illusion and

temptations of the desert were spelled out. A choice was made—life abundant, full, and free for all. Make no mistake about it, the day that choice was made, Jesus became suspect. That day in the temple he sealed the fate already prepared for him. How was the world to understand one who rejected an offer of power and control?

—Joan B. Campbell

Benediction



Art by Sally Lynn Askins

Lord, it's too late for you to be quiet,
you have spoken too much;
you have fought too much;
You were not sensible, you know, you exaggerated;
it was bound to happen.
You called the better people a brood of vipers,
You told them that their hearts
were black sepulchres with fine exteriors.

You chose the decaying lepers,
You spoke fearlessly with unacceptable strangers,
You sat with notorious sinners, and you said
that streetwalkers would be the first in Paradise.
You got on well with the poor, the bums, the crippled.
You belittled the religious regulations.
Your interpretation of the Law reduced it
to one little commandment: to love.
Now they are avenging themselves.
They have taken steps against you; they have
approached the authorities, and action will follow.

—Michel Quoist,
Meditations and Prayers on the Way of the Cross

Young Man with Donkey

A Monologue from the Seeds Easter Walk

Scripture: Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11,
Luke 19:29-44

Setting: Outside, out of sight of any of the other settings. A real donkey would enhance the interest of the piece, but is not necessary. (The first year at Seventh and James there was a live donkey, and the children were encouraged to pet it before the young man—a high school youth—began his story.) The part could also easily be played by a young woman. He/she is dressed simply, in peasant garb, barefoot. He/she is holding a few palm fronds, from which he/she will give the children leaves for their baskets.

I am a peasant. There has never been anything very fascinating about my life. I've never been outside of the city walls and never owned anything fancy or expensive—in fact, I've never owned anything! I work hard just to be able to eat every day and sleep indoors.

That day, I was busy at my work—my master is a stable keeper. I was standing beside a donkey that was tied to the door of my master's house. Suddenly these two men came up to me and began untying the donkey. I wanted to stop them, but I didn't know what to do.

"What are you doing, untying that donkey?" I asked them. "That donkey belongs to my master, and I will not let you have it!" I wanted to sound firm, but to myself I sounded very small. I thought the men would laugh at me, but they just turned and smiled kindly.

"Our master has sent us for this donkey. He needs it and will send it back very soon."

Well, I decided, for some reason, to trust them. I allowed them to take the donkey. After they had walked off, I ran around the corner of the house to my older brothers.

"You won't believe what just happened," I cried. They just looked down at me uninterested.

"Ahh, go on," they sneered. "Leave us alone."

I tried to explain to them what happened, but they turned their backs to me, like they always do. So I walked back to the front of the house. I decided to walk into town to see if I could find the men with my master's donkey.



Art by Robert Askins

As I got closer to the city, I heard great, joyful shouts coming from the main street. I ran the rest of the way, wondering what was happening. All I could see when I got there were hundreds of people waving palm branches and crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in highest heaven!"

I hopped up and down trying to catch a glimpse of the person they were shouting about. Suddenly the crowd parted for a moment, and—to my surprise—I saw my donkey with a man sitting on it! My mouth dropped open as I watched this man enter into Jerusalem. Suddenly I thought to myself, "He is more than those two men's master. There is something very special about him. Maybe this really is the Messiah, the long-expected one, the one who is supposed to come and save my people."

Man, I wished my brothers could have been there to see it. Somehow, though, I knew that it didn't matter to me if they believed me or not. All that mattered is that I felt that I had been of service to my true master, the master of us all—the chosen one of God.

—For a description of the Seeds Easter Walk, see page 19.

A Liturgy for Maundy Thursday

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

Prelude

Call to Worship

ONE: Our loving Christ, on that night long ago, knew that his hour had come. Our loving Christ knew full well what lay ahead of him.

MANY: *The disciples loved him and followed him, but they had also failed him. They would fail him yet again that night, and one would betray him.*

ONE: Yet our loving Christ washed their feet, as a servant would. Even the feet of his betrayer.

MANY: *We have also loved Christ and followed him. We have also failed him, and we cannot comprehend the love that he showed us, the love that is our example, the love that tells us to do as he has done for us.*

ONE: May we be like him, Master, servants of all.

MANY: *May all see how we long to be Christ's faithful disciples.*

ALL: May all see how we love each other, just as he has loved us.

Meditation of Preparation

Christ lives in us if we love one another.

—Thomas Merton

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14

Hymn

"I Want Jesus to Walk with Me"

Text and Music: African-American Spiritual;
arr. J. Jefferson Cleveland (1937 – 1986), Verolga
Nix (b. 1933)

Tune: SOJOURNER

Source: *Sing! A New Creation* No. 130

[Arr. 1981, Abingdon Press,
admin. The Copyright Company]

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 166:1-2, 12-19

Hymn

"'Abba, Abba, Hear Us,' We Cry"

Text: Andrew Donaldson (b. 1951),
based on Romans 8

Music: Korean Traditional

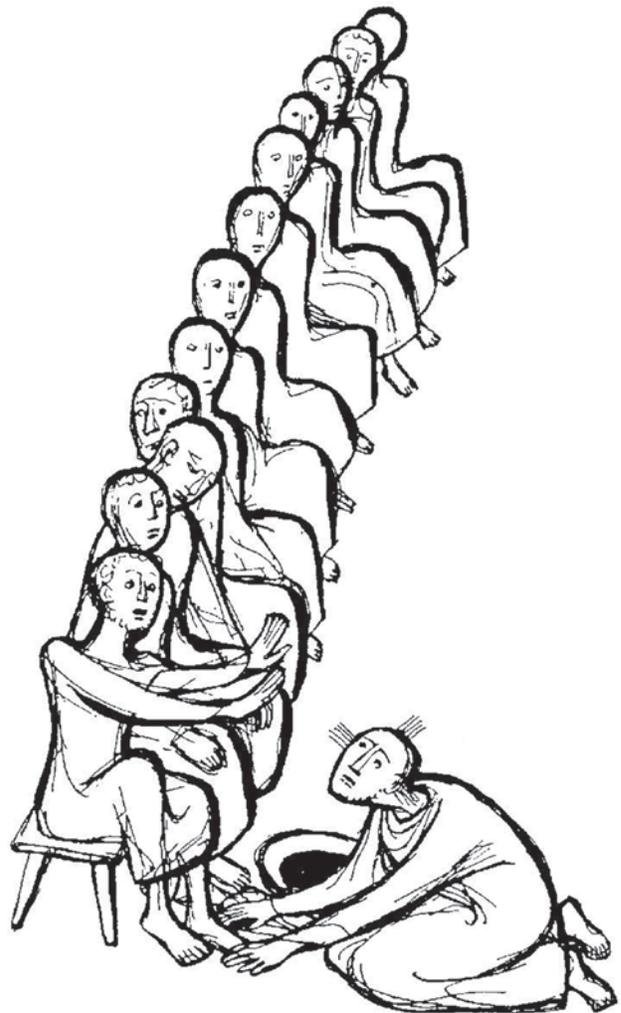
Tune: ARIRANG

Source: *Sing! A New Creation* No. 211

[Text 1996, 2001, Andrew Donaldson]

Epistle Reading

1 Corinthians 11:23-26



Art courtesy of the Franciscanos de Cruz Blanco

Monologue Based on Gospel Reading

John 13:1-17, 31b-35, the Last Supper

See "Witness in the Upper Room" on page 25.

Footwashing Ceremony

Гимн

"As Your Family, Lord"

Text: Anonymous

Music: African-American Spiritual

Tune and Meter: KUM BA

JAH 8 8 8 5

Source: *Sing! A New*

Creation No. 246

Invitation to the Table/Communion

Гимн

"Lamb of God"

Text: *Agnus Dei* (John 1:29)

Music: The Iona

Community

Source: *Sing! A New*

Creation No. 253

[1995, WGRG the Iona

Community (Scotland),

admin. GIA Publications,

Inc.]

Meditation of Commitment

We become more human as we discover we are able to love people. And when I say "love people," I mean to see their value and their beauty, to love people who have been pushed aside, humiliated, seen as having no value. Then we see that they are gradually being changed. At the same time, sharing our lives in community with the weak and the poor, we come in touch with our own limits, pain and brokenness. We realize that we, too, have our handicaps which are often around our need for power and the feeling

that our value lies in being powerful—a power that frequently involves crushing other people. So we're confronted by two visions of society: a vision of a pyramid, where you have to have more and more power in order to get to the top, or a vision of a *body* where every person has a place.
—Jean Vanier

Benediction

Thoughts for Maundy Thursday

by Eileen Campbell-Reed

In the fourth gospel, Jesus offers only one commandment: a new command to love (13:34-35). It is from the Latin word for commandment, *mandatum*, that we get "Maundy" Thursday. In John's recounting of this important evening the disciples gather not only for a Passover preparation meal, but also to be served one last time by Jesus, who washes their feet. The task of offering hospitality through washing the dusty, dirty feet of travelers was usually reserved for the lowest among the household servants. Jesus embraced the role and took up towel and basin in order to ritualize the one new commandment that he gave that night. Love each other in ways so clear that everyone will know you are my disciples. Love as I have loved you.

Remember...that you are God's creation, sent by God to this life. You are no greater than the One who sent you, and the One who sent you loves you so much that even washing your feet is not too much to ask. For servants, students, and messengers are not greater than their masters, teachers and senders. We can do no other than to love those to whom we are sent, those with whom we learn and walk and live. If someone were to watch your life closely, would they see a disciple who loves? As you watch your own feet taking the path of the labyrinth, first thank God for the servants who have been Christ to you, who have washed your feet literally or metaphorically. Then ask God to guide your steps to those who need your love and service. Ask Christ to show you those whose feet need washing.

—Eileen R. Campbell-Reed, from "Walking the Labyrinth: A Holy Week Meditation Guide," in *Sacred Seasons, Lent/Eastertide 2006: "What Does It Mean to Follow This Man?"*



Art by Lenora Mathis

Witness in the Upper Room

A Monologue from the Seeds Easter Walk

Scripture: Matthew 26: 17-35, Mark 14: 12-31,
Luke 22:7-38

Setting: An interior room with a long rustic table, set for a simple meal. Set up a regular banquet table with a long piece of fabric. Don't put chairs around it, so that the children can gather around it more easily. Set the table with wooden bowls and goblets, basket-type bowls, and earthenware pitchers. Pour a bit of grape juice into some of the goblets and arrange torn pieces of pita bread on some of the plates. A man or woman is there, dressed a little better than a peasant, but not extravagantly, with sandals. Jesus and the other disciples have just left the room. The witness has small wooden goblets or small pieces of a towel-like cloth to give the children for their baskets.

You just missed them. Jesus and the twelve just left to go and pray. They ate here at my home tonight. I offered them my upper room so they could have some privacy. Man, you all missed something big!

The first thing that happened was that, when everyone came into the room, Jesus took a bowl of water and a towel and went around the room, washing everyone's feet. When he came to Peter, Peter pulled away from him and said, "You shouldn't be washing our feet!"

But Jesus said, "If you don't let me wash your feet, then you can't be my follower." And he looked around the room and said, "I am showing you how to be a servant. This is the way I want you to be."

While Jesus and his disciples were eating, I came in and out of the room to check on them. In the middle of the meal, Jesus stood up to speak. I stood in the doorway of the room so I could hear.

"I tell you the truth," he said, "one of you in this very room will betray me in just a few hours."

I was shocked when I heard those words—everyone was! The disciples were outraged and dismayed at Jesus' accusation. Each one said over and over again that he had no intention of betraying the Master. I looked at Jesus, wishing I knew what he might be thinking. All I could see was that his eyes were filled with tenderness, love, and sorrow all at the same time. I felt both frightened and comforted by what was in his eyes. He held up his hand to

silence the men, and he continued to speak.

"It is the one of you who is dipping the bread into the bowl with me. That man will betray me."

All of them quickly dropped their bread and looked at one another. All except Judas—the one they call Iscariot. (He's a Zealot, one of those people who want to overthrow the Roman government.) He held his bread tightly and looked down at the table. That seemed kind of strange to me.

Once more Jesus spoke. "Woe to the one who betrays the Son of Man! It would have been better if that man had not been born."

Once again, the disciples began talking loudly, each defending himself to the others. But I continued to look at Jesus. I wish you all could have seen his face! Everyone was so busy talking about themselves that they didn't notice Jesus. As I watched him, I saw such sadness fill his eyes.

Then he held up a piece of bread and cleared his throat. After blessing it, Jesus passed the bread around the table. Someone leaned over and handed me a piece as well.

"This represents my sacrifice for you," Jesus said, "Eat this bread and remember me." Jesus put a piece of the bread into his mouth. As I raised mine to my lips, he caught my eye and smiled sadly at me. I knew what that look meant. He wanted me to remember him after he died. After that, he took up the wine and poured it into a cup.

"This cup that is poured out for you represents the new covenant between us. Drink this wine and remember me." We each took a sip from the cup. The room was very silent. The men finished their meals quickly and got up to leave. Judas walked off quickly, before anyone could speak to him. The rest of the men followed Jesus to the garden.

So here I am, left to clean up and think about what happened. I wish you all could have been here. I don't know what will happen now. I have a bad feeling about all of this. My rabbi, my master—my friend, Jesus—may have eaten his last meal in this very room. I will never forget this night.

—For information about the Seeds Easter Walk, see page 19. This monologue was written and is acted annually by William Cooper at Seventh & James Baptist Church.

A Liturgy for Good Friday

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

Prelude

Call to Worship

On this holy day,
we sit in darkness.

The one whom God loves
is dying.

The one with whom God is well pleased
is suffering.

The one whom God loves was wounded
for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that made us whole
was upon him,
and by his bruises we are healed.

Meditation of Preparation

Christians are distinguished by their radical esteem for Incarnation...by their reverence for the life of God in the whole of creation, even, and in a sense especially, creation in the travail of sin. The characteristic place to find Christians is among their enemies. The first place to look for Christ is in hell.
—William Stringfellow in *A Keeper of the Word*

Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Hymn

“Ah, Holy Jesus”

Text: Johann Heermann (1630),

Paraphr. by Robert Bridges, 1899; alt.

Music: Johann Crüger (1640)

Tune and Meter: HERZLIEBSTER JESU, 11 11 11 5

Source: *The New Century Hymnal* (UCC) No. 218

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 22

Hymn

“Jesus, Keep Me near the Cross”

Text: Fanny Crosby (1869); alt.

Music: William H. Doane (1869)

Tune and Meter: NEAR THE CROSS,
7 6 7 6 with refrain

Source: *The New Century Hymnal* (UCC) No. 197

Epistle Reading

Hebrews 10:16-25 or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

Monologues Based on the Gospel Reading

John 18:1-19:42

See “Joseph of Arimathea” on page 27 and “Mary of Nazareth and John the Apostle” on page 28.

Meditation of Commitment

Jesus calls us to be unpopular, to go against the grain, and to give away what we have worked for. He said, “Those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves?”

—Charley Garrison, “Good Mourning:

A Meditation for Holy Friday”

Benediction

Lift high the cross,

let the love of Christ be proclaimed to all.

In case we forget God’s pain,
when we are suffering.

Lift high the cross,

let the love of Christ be proclaimed to all.

In case we forget God’s justice,
when we go astray.

Lift high the cross,

let the love of Christ be proclaimed to all.

In case we forget God’s mercy,
when we are hurting.

Congregants leave the worship area in silence.

Art courtesy of the Franciscanos de Cruz Blanco

Joseph of Arimathea

A Monologue from the Seeds Easter Walk

Scripture: Matthew 27:57-66; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42

Setting: Outside. There should be an empty cross above where Joseph stands to tell his story. Joseph is dressed in the clothing of a wealthy man and a Jewish religious leader. He has large nails to give to the children.

Did you guys see what just happened? Did you see them force Jesus up the hill to be crucified? No? Well, the story must be told, even though this is hard for me to talk about.

After the Roman governor, Pilate, sentenced Jesus to be crucified, they made Jesus join two other men—thieves, someone told me—who were also to be executed. And they made him carry this big wooden cross up to a hill they call “The Place of the Skull.” Sounds scary, doesn’t it? It is! Once they arrived, they put Jesus on the wooden beams, in the middle between the two thieves.

While he was hanging there, the soldiers were throwing dice, dividing his clothes between them. People were pointing and laughing at Jesus, telling him that if he really was the Son of God, he could save himself—and other things like that. It was hard for me to listen to that.

I also heard Jesus talking to the men beside him. One made fun of Jesus, and he said, “If you really are the Messiah, save us all!” But the other one said to him, “We have been punished properly for what we have done wrong. But this man has done nothing wrong.” And then he turned to Jesus and said, “Please don’t forget me when you enter your kingdom.” Then Jesus answered him. He said, “Today you will be in Paradise with me.” I was a little confused by that, but I thought it was pretty amazing.

What happened next was very strange. It was only twelve noon and the entire sky turned black for three long hours. Right in the middle of the day! When the sun came back out, Jesus looked up to the heavens and said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” That was the first time I ever saw Jesus question God. That was really frightening for me.

After that, it was nearing the end of the ninth hour. By now, everyone knew what they’d done, but it was too late. With his last breath and the earth shaking beneath our feet, the people finally understood what they’d done. At least, some of them did. I stood at a distance with Mary and several other women from Galilee. They had followed Jesus as he went around teaching. We watched as one of the centurions who had nailed him up there turned around and looked at the others, and said, “Surely this was a righteous man.” Some of the other people beat on their chests when they realized what they had done. We, who knew him, watched from far away, because we were afraid.



Art courtesy of the Franciscanos de Cruz Blanco

Being an upright man, I was waiting for the Messiah to come. But there was something about this teacher that was different. I am a leader among my people, but I did not consent to the decisions or actions of the people today. I wanted something to do, I don't know why, but I couldn't think of anything. It seemed like it was too late to do anything. But then I realized that Jesus, who barely owned the robe he had on, wouldn't have any place to be buried. So I decided to bury him in my tomb. I had had it carved out of the rock myself.

I went to Pilate, and I was frightened—but I had to be bold. I asked him for the body of Jesus. He acted surprised that I asked this question. He was surprised that Jesus was already dead. People usually take much longer to die on crosses. I guess he did not believe me, and he summoned one of his centurions. Sure enough, the centurion stated what I already knew—that Jesus was dead. Pilate gave me permission to take Jesus' body. I bought clean linen cloth and carefully wrapped his body. Mary Magdalene and Jesus' mother Mary, and several other women were with me. We couldn't really prepare him for burial yet, because the sun was about to go down, and we can't do things like that on the Sabbath. We agreed that the women would go on the morning after the Sabbath and take the ointments for his body.

So I placed his body inside the tomb and rolled a heavy stone over the entrance. It was the most difficult thing I've ever done. There was some controversy, because someone said he would rise from the dead, and the Jewish leaders were afraid that someone would steal his body and pretend that he was alive—oh, I don't know.

I didn't feel like listening to them. Anyway, they placed a guard there to keep anyone from tampering with the body. I didn't care. I just went home. My heart was broken.

—For information about the Seeds Easter Walk, see page 19. This monologue was first performed by C. W. (Wally) Christian, whose poetry and meditations our readers have seen in these pages many times, and to whose memory the 2016 Advent packet was dedicated.



Thoughts for Good Friday

by Eileen Campbell-Reed

Whatever his role and purpose, a collusion of forces from his closest circle of disciples to the occupying forces of the Roman empire—including the religious authorities of his day—converged during the frenzy of a religious holiday and brought the work and life of Jesus to a screeching halt. We are left like the disciples to watch from the sidelines and wonder in frustration and anger at the injustice of it all. And we find ourselves asking: would we have been as useless as Peter, drawn to the trial in fascination and horror, yet denying any connection with our beloved teacher? When we open ourselves to the drama of Good Friday, the important question seems not to be: What would Jesus do? We have that on record. The more important question may be: What will we do in response to the strange and horrifying events of the story?

On Good Friday, ask yourself this question: What would I have done, had I been there to witness the events of Jesus' trial and crucifixion? Where would I have gone? What would I have said? With whom in the story do I identify? Attempt to answer these questions with brutal honesty. What do you learn about yourself? Ask God's mercy on the Church, who through the ages has unduly placed the burden for Jesus' death on the shoulders of the Jews, while failing to see its own shortcomings as persecutor of the righteousness and crucifier of love. Ask God's grace for yourself that you may find a renewed courage for living in the face of life's many dangers, toils and snares.

—Eileen R. Campbell-Reed, from "Walking the Labyrinth: A Holy Week Meditation Guide," in Sacred Seasons, Lent/Eastertide 2006: "What Does It Mean to Follow This Man?"

Mary of Nazareth & John the Apostle

A Dramatic Scene from the Seeds Easter Walk

Scriptures: John 19:16-37. See also Matthew 27:32-56, Mark 15:21-41, Luke 23:26-49.

Setting: Mary and John are sitting on a bench in a dark, secluded place. They are dressed in modest first-century clothing. Somewhere above or in the distance is a cross or the silhouette of a cross. This scene is usually enacted just before the empty tomb in the Easter Walk and is usually interchanged with the Barabbas scene and the Joseph of Arimathea scene. The token they give the children to remember the story could be small wooden crosses.

JOHN: Did you guys see what just happened? Did you see them force Jesus up the hill to be crucified? No? Well, the story must be told.

(Note: If you choose to use the Joseph of Arimathea monologue along with this one, leave out this section of John's part, or leave it out in Joseph's narration.)

It was awful. After the Roman governor sentenced Jesus to be crucified, they made Jesus join two other criminals—thieves, someone told us—who were also to be executed and they made him carry this big wooden cross up to a hill they call “The Place of the Skull.” Once they arrived, they put Jesus on the wooden beams, in the middle between the other two men.

MARY: John and I were standing nearby and heard Jesus say, “Forgive them, Father, for they don’t know what they’re doing. Even as they were killing him, my son prayed for his enemies.

JOHN: While he was hanging there, the soldiers were throwing dice, dividing his clothes between them. People were pointing and laughing at Jesus, telling him that if he was the Son of God, he could save himself and other things like that. It was hard to listen to that.

I also heard Jesus talking to the criminals beside him. One made fun of Jesus, and he said, “If you really are the Messiah, save us all!” But the other one said to him, “We have been punished properly



Art courtesy of the Franciscanos de Cruz Blanca

for what we have done wrong. But this man has done nothing wrong.” And he said, “Please don’t forget me when you enter your kingdom.” Then Jesus turned to him and said, “Today you will be in Paradise with me.” That was pretty amazing.

What happened next was very strange. It was only twelve noon and the entire sky turned black for three whole hours. Right in the middle of the day! When the sun came back out, Jesus looked up to the heavens and said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” That was the first time I ever saw Jesus question God. That was really frightening for me.¹

MARY: Do you know what the last thing he said to me was? He looked at me and John, who was standing next to me, and said to me, “Woman, here is your son.” Then Jesus said to John, the one he loved, “Here is your mother.” I believe Jesus wants us to take care of each other, but he especially wants John to take care of me. He was worried about me, even through all his pain.

JOHN: After Jesus said that, we heard him say he was thirsty. A soldier soaked a sponge in some sour wine, poured it over Jesus’ head and he drank it. Jesus’ last words were, “It is finished,” then he bowed his head and died. Right as he died, the curtain that hung at the top of the temple tore in half. The earth shook, like an earthquake, and like a huge storm at the same time.

I guess I’ll take Mary home now. This is a very sad time for us. I don’t understand why this had to happen.

—For more information about the Seeds Easter Walk, see page 19.

A Liturgy for Easter Sunday

by Katie Cook & Guilherme Almeida

Prelude

Call to Worship

ONE: Weeping, be gone!

MANY: *Sorrow, be silent!*

ONE: We hold onto the God of Life!

MANY: *We reach out to the God of Victory!*

ONE: We witness the God of Grace!

MANY: *We bind ourselves to the God of Truth!*

ONE: Precious God, Sovereign Friend, we joyfully
ask that you stretch our minds,

MANY: *enlarge our hearts,*

ONE: bind up our broken parts,

MANY: *share in our struggles,*

ONE: give us new life through Christ Jesus!

ALL: *Amen!*

Meditation of Preparation

*"Do not let your hearts be troubled" means we can still
have joy in the midst of great difficulty.*

—Marsha Martie

Hymn

"Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen!"

Text: Herbert F. Brokering
(b. 1926)

Music: David N. Johnson (1922 – 1987)

Tune and Meter:

EARTH AND ALL STARS

45 10 D with refrain

Source: *Sing! A New Creation* No. 150

[Text from *With One Voice*, © 1995,

Augsburg Fortress; music © 1969

Contemporary Worship I: Hymns, Augsburg Fortress]

Responsive Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures

Isaiah 65:17-25

Reading from the Psalms

Psalms 118:1-2, 14-24

Hymn

"Psalm 118"

Refrain text: James L. H. Brumm (b. 1962)

Music: Alfred V. Fedak (b. 1953)

Source: *Sing! A New Creation* No. 146]

[©1992, Choristers Guild]

—Adapted below with attention to inclusive language.

Note: The litany portions are spoken, and the refrain is sung.

Musical Refrain

ONE: O give thanks to the Lord, for the Lord is
good; God's steadfast love endures forever! Let
Israel say,

MANY: *"God's steadfast love endures forever."*

ONE: Let those who fear the Lord say,

MANY: *"God's steadfast love endures forever."*

Musical Refrain

ONE: The Lord is my strength and my might;
God has become my salvation.

MANY: *There are glad songs of victory in the tents
of the righteous: "The right hand of the Lord does
valiantly; the right hand of the Lord is exalted; the
right hand of the Lord does valiantly."*

ONE: I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount
the deeds of the Lord. The Lord has punished me
severely, but did not give me over to death.

MANY: *Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I
may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.*

ONE: This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous
shall enter through it.

Musical Refrain

ONE: I thank you that you have answered
me and have become my salvation. The stone
that the builders rejected has become the chief
cornerstone.

MANY: *This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our
eyes.*

ONE: This is the day that the Lord has made; let
us rejoice and be glad in it.

Art by Rebecca S. Ward

MANY: *Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!*

ONE: Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord.

MANY: *The Lord is God, the Lord has given us light.*

ONE: Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.

MANY: *You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you.*

ONE: O give thanks to the Lord, for the Lord is good, for God's steadfast love endures forever.

Musical Refrain

Epistle Reading

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

Monologues Based on Gospel Reading(s)

John 20:1-18, Mary Magdalene,
or Luke 24:1-12, Three Women at the Tomb.

Meditation of

Commitment

The resurrection does not solve our problems about dying and death. It is not the happy ending to our life's struggle, nor is it the big surprise that God has kept in store for us. No, the resurrection is the expression of God's faithfulness to Jesus and to all God's children. Through the resurrection, God has said to Jesus, "You are indeed my beloved Son, and my love is everlasting," and to us God has said, "You indeed are my beloved children, and my love is everlasting." The resurrection is God's way of revealing to us that nothing that belongs to God will ever go to waste. What belongs to God will never get lost.

—Henri J. M. Nouwen

Гимн

"Faith Begins by Letting Go"

Text: Carl P. Daw, Jr. (b. 1944)

Music: Charles F. Gounod (1818 – 1893)

Tune and Meter: LUX PRIMA 77 77 77

Source: *Sing! A New Creation* N. 172

[Text © 1996, Hope Publishing Co.]

Benediction

Congregants greet each other with "Christ is risen."

The response is

"Christ is risen indeed."



Thoughts for Easter Sunday

by Eileen Campbell-Reed

This may be the most difficult day of the Christian year for those of us who live comfortably with cynicism, scientific realism, or just healthy doubt. We know with certainty the hard realities of betrayal, death, grief, and injustice. Where we find ourselves uncertain is in the scores of theories about why Jesus died and what happened to him after that end. However, without giving up our passion for realism, may we accept this invitation today: May we set aside our doubts and disbelief long enough to glory in the miracle of birth, to revel in the



flowers blooming in the desert, to walk barefoot in the grass, and to join the shouts of children? May we rejoice that the story doesn't end in crucifixion, and death is denied the final word? May we simply celebrate that God's Beloved lives on in this community: the risen body of Christ? Alleluia! Sound the bells!
—Eileen R. Campbell-Reed, from "Walking the Labyrinth: A Holy Week Meditation Guide," in *Sacred Seasons, Lent/Eastertide 2006: "What Does It Mean to Follow This Man?"*

Art by Susan Daily, IBVM

Mary Magdalene

A Monologue from the Seeds Easter Walk

Scripture: John 20:1-18

Setting: First-century Jerusalem, in a garden, morning.
Mary is dressed in modest clothing of the time.

This is where I was when it happened. Jesus had been killed. That was so hard for me. I loved him very much. If you had known him, you would have loved him, too. He treated me—me, a woman—like I was an important person. He worried about poor people and orphans and widows. He talked about people who didn't have any way to take care of themselves, people who were hungry or thirsty or sick or in prison.

He loved us. We knew that, we had no doubt. And he allowed us to love him back. He taught us so much about God and about taking care of each other. He taught us about love. But then he was taken and killed.

I had to wait until the Sabbath was over, because you can't go very far or do any work on the Sabbath. I came out here to the tomb as early as I could on the next morning.

It was still dark, but I saw that the stone was taken away from the entrance, and I didn't know what to do! I thought that someone—maybe the religious leaders or the Romans, I didn't know—had stolen his body. I was so upset and confused!

I ran to where Simon Peter and the others were hiding, and I said, "Someone has taken the body!

Come and look!" And Peter and John came running to the tomb with me. They saw where the stone was rolled away, and they went inside the tomb.

They saw the linen cloth we had used to wrap the body, but there was no body. It was gone. They left, but I stayed there, outside the tomb. I was weeping.

I went to look in the tomb one more time, and what do you think I saw? I saw two angels sitting there! Really! They were sitting where the body had been. They asked me why I was crying. And then I turned around, and there was a man standing there. I thought he was the gardener. He asked me why I was crying, and I blurted out: "They have taken away the body of my Lord, and I don't know where it is! Do you know where it is?"

And he said, "Mary." And I recognized his voice. It was Jesus! Alive!

I ran again to where the disciples were, and I told them that I had seen him and that he had spoken to me—called me by name, but I don't think they believed me. Do you believe me?

—This monologue was written for *With Our Own Eyes*, a series of monologues based on the resurrection appearances of Jesus in the four gospels, from *Seeds of Hope Publishers*. This collection was written as a sequel to the *Seeds Easter Walk*. For more information about *With Our Own Eyes* and the *Easter Walk*, see page 19.



Art by Rebecca S. Ward

Three Women at the Tomb

A Dramatic Scene from the Seeds Easter Walk

Scripture: Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8 (9-11), Luke 24:1-12

Setting: The entrance to a tomb. At Seventh & James, we set this up by using an empty corner area under a stairwell. It should be an isolated area that is not well-traveled; it should be a space with which the children are not familiar. An outdoor tool shed would also work. We draped the area with fabric to create the tomb. We used papier-mache rocks at the entrance, with a stool covered in fabric for one sturdier rock. We also used a coffee table draped with a white sheet, with a white cloth folded at one end. The women are dressed like simple peasant women. They have a basket full of smooth stones to give to the children as tokens for their baskets to remember the story.

When the children arrive, the women are standing around the entrance. One could be sitting on the sturdy "rock." As they talk, they interrupt one another, and they nod their heads at what one another is saying. They are clearly agitated.

FIRST WOMAN: We came here, where they buried our friend and master, to anoint his body with spices, as is our custom of treating the dead. But, well...it's amazing! As we were walking to the tomb, we had been worried about how we would move the stone that had been placed at the entrance to the tomb. We knew that it was very heavy—too heavy for us to move, and we were hoping that someone would be there to help us. But, as we walked up the path toward the tomb, we saw—

SECOND WOMAN: We saw that the stone had already been moved! We were nervous and a little frightened, so we slowed down a little and we looked all around. "Who would roll away the stone from the door of the tomb?" we asked each other. These two pushed me in front and made me go into the tomb first!

THIRD WOMAN: Oh, but you should have seen what we saw! There was a young man sitting on the right side of the tomb—

FIRST WOMAN: Wearing a white robe!

THIRD WOMAN: Yes. And it was the most beautiful white I have ever seen. It almost sparkled! Well, as you can imagine, we were amazed and speechless. After a few moments, we dropped to our knees, out of fear and respect, and bowed to this radiant man.

SECOND WOMAN: Then he spoke! "Don't be amazed," he said, "you seek Jesus, the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He is risen; he is not here."

FIRST WOMAN: When we heard these words, we all began to cry. He is what?! Risen?! What was that supposed to mean?

SECOND WOMAN: But the angel went on. "Come, look at the place where they laid him!" We all got up slowly and walked toward where they had laid Jesus. His garments were there, but his body was gone! It was—

THIRD WOMAN: Incredible, amazing, wonderful! Then the angel spoke to us again! "Go quickly, and tell his disciples he is risen from the dead. He goes before you into Galilee; it is there that you will see him." See him!! We were going to see him alive again!

FIRST WOMAN: Well, we were so excited, we couldn't run fast enough!

SECOND WOMAN: The guys didn't believe us at first. They thought we were crazy! Well, all except for Peter, who got up and ran to the tomb to see for himself.

THIRD WOMAN: And we don't blame them, not really. We hardly believe it ourselves. That's why we came back to look again. But it's true! We just went back inside and He is gone! He is alive!

—This scene was written by Kimmy Scott for the Seeds Easter Walk and also appears in With Our Own Eyes, a series of monologues and dramatic scenes based on the resurrection appearances of Jesus in the four gospels, from Seeds of Hope Publishers. This collection was written as a sequel to the Seeds Easter Walk. For more information about With Our Own Eyes and the Easter Walk, see page 19.

Art by Robert Askins

Benediction



Art by René Boldt

*May the Lord bless you
and keep you.*

*May the Lord shine the divine countenance
upon you.*

*May the Lord give you peace,
but may that peace be a disturbing peace,
A peace that calls you to long
for the peace of all humankind.*

*May you find in the blessing of God,
The blessing of sharing in the service of God
And bearing the cross of Christ.*

*As you go forth from this place,
Go forth in the power of the spirit of God
To make a difference in the world.*

—Raymond Bailey