

**PRAYING OUR WAY TO THE CROSS:**

**An Easter Vigil for Holy Week**

*NOTES: Easter Vigil services vary in format and time; some include Holy Communion and some are incorporated into a shorter Easter Sunrise service. The following may be adapted for a service during the Easter Triduum (last three days of Holy Week), recounting the scripture story from Palm Sunday through Holy Saturday. The individual days could also be posted as readings/videos throughout Holy Week. Before the service (or after Holy Thursday reading), altar items may be removed or draped in black cloth, and after the Holy Saturday reading the black cloths are removed and altar items returned. Prayers of the People may be included at any point, and appropriate scriptures may be added after each reading. After midnight on Holy Saturday (or at Sunrise service), candles may be used with traditional "first fire," a small bonfire outside the church, and a procession following the "light" into the church.*

*Praying with stones relates to the Jewish tradition of placing stones at gravesites, to symbolize a "bond" with the deceased, their memory lives on in and through us. You may provide a selection of stones at entrance to sanctuary for folks to choose a stone for the service.*

*Use these and other resources to help guide folks through a prayerful Holy Week.*

*Communion elements are used if your conference approves of online communion.*

**PRELUDE**

**"Via Dolorosa"**

**Sprague & Borop**

**WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Grace Wallace, COSSO Coordinator

**INTRODUCTION**

Rev. Dr. Rebeka Maples, COSSO Spiritual Formation Director

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

This is the day that the Lord has made,  
**Let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

**OPENING PRAYER**

God our strength, you waken us morning by morning with your gracious Word:  
**Help us to stand together as we face the joys and trials of ministry, to preach your word, and to offer your mercy to the weary, in the name of Jesus who did not hide, but stood for love to save the world. Amen.**

**HYMN**

**"All Glory Laud and Honor"**

**UMH 280, v. 1-3**

**PALM SUNDAY**

It was on the Sunday  
that he took on the city.  
Humble and riding on a donkey,  
moving from peace of the countryside  
to the corridors of power.  
The crowds cheered and the children sang,

"Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest."  
*(lifting up a stone)*  
These stones remind us of Jesus' death,  
holding these stones, we remember our bond with him in life.  
*(hold stone and reflect on the joy in Jesus' humility)*

**HYMN            "All Glory Laud and Honor"**

**UMH 280, v. 4-5**

**HOLY MONDAY**

It was on the Monday  
that religion got in the way,  
Then, the holiest man on earth  
went through the stalls in the temple  
like a bull in a china shop,  
doves and pigeons flew, people scattered,  
and he showed them that God was for everybody,  
not just those who could afford him.  
He turned the tables on Monday...  
the day that religion got in the way  
*(hold stone and reflect on the wisdom in Jesus' resistance)*

**HYMN            "What Wondrous Love is This"**

**UMH 292 v. 1**

**HOLY TUESDAY**

It was on the Tuesday  
that he laid it on the line.  
If you had been there  
you would have thought it was a political rally.  
They wanted to know why  
and they wanted to know how.  
The questions they asked were trivial,  
about bigamy in heaven if you married twice on earth.  
They knew the answers already,  
they were just looking for an argument.  
So he told them what he thought.  
And that was on the Tuesday...  
the day when he laid it on the line.  
*(hold stone and reflect on Jesus' way of grace)*

**HYMN            "What Wondrous Love is This"**

**UMH 292 v. 2**

## **HOLY WEDNESDAY**

It was on the Wednesday  
that they called him wasteful.  
The place smelt like a perfume parlor,  
as though somebody had spilled a whole bottle.  
The woman was the poorest of the poor,  
giving away the only precious thing she had.  
She poured the perfume all over his head,  
and they called him extravagant and wasteful.  
Jealousy was in the air over a poor woman's generosity.  
That was on the Wednesday...  
when they called him wasteful.  
*(hold stone and reflect on Jesus' way of love)*

## **HYMN**

**“What Wondrous Love is This”**

**UMH 292 v. 3**

## **HOLY/MAUNDY THURSDAY**

It was on the Thursday  
that he became valuable.  
He didn't have anything to sell,  
he wasn't into making things anymore,  
after leaving his hammer and saw behind.  
He was into talking and listening,  
forgiving and encouraging,  
so his work wasn't worth much.  
Put him on a stage and he might attract an audience,  
worth a silver coin or maybe thirty.  
It was on the Thursday...  
that he became valuable.  
*(hold stone and reflect on ways Jesus meets our needs)*  
*(Silence as items are removed from the altar or draped with burlap/black cloth;*  
*see Stripping of the Altar, BOW 351, for this ancient practice)*

## **HYMN**

**“Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley”**

**TFWS 2112**

## **GOOD FRIDAY**

It was on the Friday  
that they ended it all.  
Of course, they didn't do it one by one.  
They threw their stones in crowds  
where they could feel safe:  
a crowd in the church, a crowd at the office,  
a crowd in the street, a crowd on the hill.  
And he said nothing.  
He took the insults, the sight of his friends

throwing stones, turning away.  
And he said nothing.  
He let them do their worst  
until the worst was done.  
And on Friday they ended it all...  
and that would have been the end  
had he not cried,  
"Father, forgive them..."  
And that was not the end.  
*(hold stone and reflect on the gift of new beginnings)*

#### **A READING from the Gospel of Mark 15:22-24**

They took Jesus to a place called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull. They tried to give him wine mixed with a drug called myrrh, but Jesus would not drink it. Then they crucified him and divided his clothing among themselves, throwing dice to see who would get each piece of clothing.

#### **AN ENDING**

Jesus, our friend, we meet beneath your cross,  
**Grieving our loss and the loss of the world.**  
So write your gospel on our hearts,  
**And when we betray you to suit our needs,**  
May we hear the cock crowing;  
**And when we deny you, turn us around,**  
**that we may try again to live your gospel,**  
**Amen.**

**HYMN                    "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"**

**UMH 298**

#### **HOLY SATURDAY**

It was on the Saturday  
that he was not there.  
Men shiver in an upstairs room.  
Women weep in a circle of grief.  
Memories flood in, they try to remember  
and memory fails. A panic sets in  
because he can't be remembered.  
It was on the Saturday  
that he was not there.  
*(hold stone and reflect burdens you carry;*  
*in silence items are returned to the altar/drapes are removed)*

#### **LAYING OUR BURDENS DOWN**

Holding our stones, let us remember our Lord's life.  
Stones are what people wanted to throw at Jesus;

stones are what surround him in the tomb,  
and on the third day he pushed his way back through stones.  
Holding our stones, we remember our bond with Jesus in life.  
Jesus said, Give me your burdens.

**Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world.**

I am the good shepherd,  
I know my sheep and I lay down my life for them.  
Holding our stones, we lay our burdens down.

*(If service ends here, all leave in silence and place their stones on altar or at cross)*

**HYMN**

**“What Wondrous Love is This”**

**UMH 292 v. 4**

### **HOLY COMMUNION FOR A HOLY ENDING**

*(after receiving communion, stones may be laid on the altar or at the cross)*

#### **IN THE WAITING**

God of life and death

**We wait in hope.**

God of all the world

**We wait in peace.**

God of all that is to come

**We wait with love.**

#### **IN THE BEGINNING**

They gathered in an upper room to share a meal. And the names of the apostles were these:  
Simon, called Peter; his brother Andrew; James and his brother John (the sons of Zebedee); Philip  
and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus; Thaddeus;  
Simon the patriot, and Judas Iscariot. *(Matthew 10:2-4)*

Seeing that we are surrounded with such a great cloud of witnesses to our faith – those who ran  
their races before us, and those who have entered into their rests – we join with them now to  
praise your name and sing your unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord.**

**God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

For us you were born, for us you healed, preached, taught and showed the way to heaven; for us  
you were crucified, and for us, after death, you rose again.

Our hands are empty, our hearts are sometimes full of wrong things. We are not fit to gather up  
the crumbs from under your table. But with you is mercy and the power to change. And so we offer  
ourselves to you in praise and thanksgiving, as we declare the mystery of our faith:

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays him." They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.

*(Luke 22:14-23)*

### **IN THE ENDING**

Before he died, he spoke from the cross, the only words that can set us free,  
"Father, forgive them." And so, we are forgiven in this holy meal. And that is why we are bold to pray Our Lord's Prayer,

**Our Father...**

Pour out your Spirit on us gathered here, and on this bread and wine. May they be for us a new beginning. May we know in our hearts what our lips say, Christ died for our sake.

Look, the Lord comes to us in the bread of life.

**Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world.** *(break bread and eat)*

And this cup is poured out for you and for your salvation.

**Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world.** *(drink from cup)*

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

**My God, my God, your words reach us from the cross and we thank you for this holy feast, may they lead us to know that we belong to you, and that we belong to each other. And may this be enough for us to know that we do not walk or cry alone. Help us to leave our burdens at the cross and find your light waiting there in the morning. Amen.**

### **A BLESSING FOR A NEW BEGINNING**

*(For a Sunrise service, the congregation may move outside gathering around the "first fire" of Easter. After the reading, a large candle is lit from the fire, individual candles may also be lit; after the reading they follow the "light" into the church and the altar candles are lit)*

Just before daybreak, Mary went to the tomb.

And she heard a voice, "Mary, why are you looking for the living among the dead?"

He is not here. Don't be afraid. Go and tell my friends that they will see me."

Praise the Lord for Christ is risen.

**He is risen indeed!**

Sisters and brothers, this is a great moment when we can declare

that the love of God is stronger than the sin of the world

and that nothing in the heights or depths can separate us from God's love.

The peace of the Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Praise the Lord for Christ is risen.

**He is risen indeed!**

*(The Easter celebrations begin!)*

**POSTLUDE      “He Lives”**

**UMH 310**

**RESOURCES** (prayers and readings adapted from the following):

Ruth Burgess & Chris Polhill, *Eggs and Ashes: practical & liturgical resources for Lent and Holy Week*, (Glasgow, UK: Wild Goose Pub. 2004).

Blair Gilmer Meeks, *Season of Ash and Fire: prayers and liturgies for Lent and Easter*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003).

*Lenten Resources for Worship Leaders: An Anthology* (Lima, OH: CSS Pub. Co., 1997).

*A Lent Sourcebook: The Forty Days, Volumes I & II*, ed by J.R. Baker, E. Koehler, P. Mazar (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1990)

Wild Goose Worship Group, *Stages on the Way: worship resources for Lent, Holy Week & Easter*, (Glasgow, UK: Wild Goose Pub. 1998).

UMC Book of Worship