

Welcome!

First Congregational Church
of Webster Groves United Church of Christ



Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.

APRIL 2, 2021



Good
FRIDAY

*We respond to God's call by welcoming everyone
regardless of ability, age, ethnicity, race, gender identity,
sexual orientation or socio-economic background.*

*To proclaim in word and deed the love of Christ,
we affirm that all may share in the full life, ministry, fellowship,
responsibilities and blessing of our congregation.*

*No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here.*

ORDER FOR WORSHIP

OPENING WORDS

from Isaiah 53

Blessed be our God for ever and ever.

Amen.

See, my servant shall prosper.

My servant shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.

My servant was oppressed, and afflicted, yet did not reply.

Like a lamb led to the slaughter, the servant did not reply.

By a perversion of justice my servant was taken away.

Who could have imagined this future?

PRAYER OF APPROACH

Almighty God, we ask you to look with mercy on your family for whom our Savior Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, to be given over to the hands of sinners, and to suffer death on the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

From the Epistles

Hebrews 10:16-25

Merrimon Boyd

[The Holy Spirit testifies for us:]

¹⁶ “This is the covenant that I will make with them
after those days, says the Lord:

I will put my laws in their hearts,
and I will write them on their minds,”

¹⁷ [The Spirit] also adds,

“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”

¹⁸ Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

¹⁹ Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

JOURNEY TO THE CROSS

Stage 1

“Jesus Is Sentenced to Death”

Roger Barnes

We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

By the tree of the cross your broken body offers healing to the world.

Jesus began his journey to the cross by being betrayed. Now Pilate knows that Jesus is

innocent, but he does not want any trouble, so he turns away from Jesus and does not help him.

How often do we let something happen to others because we don't want to be bothered? How often do we look away? We must move beyond our privilege or any desire not to get involved in a tough situation, let us remember the words of Jesus now: "I was hungry and you did not feed me—naked and you did not clothe me." Let us never again turn away from those in need and "sentence" them.

O God, give us generous hearts.

Interlude

Stage 2

"Jesus Is Given a Cross"

Jane Porchey

We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

By the tree of the cross your broken body offers healing to the world.

Jesus is taken out to the street and a heavy wooden cross is placed on his shoulders. He is already weak from hunger and beatings, but he carries it because he is willing.

Each of us has something we are enduring that feels overwhelming and burdensome. For each of us there is something ahead of us we need the courage to face. Jesus challenged us, at one time, when he said: "Unless you take up your cross and follow me you cannot be called my disciple."

O God, give us the courage to face hard and difficult things, so that our hearts and spirits can grow to be like you.

Interlude

Stage 3

"Jesus Falls to The Ground"

Marilyn Davis

We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

By the tree of the cross your broken body brings healing to the world

The road to the place of execution is outside the city. It is long and sometimes steep. As Jesus carries his cross, he begins to feel weak and dizzy. Eventually he falls to the ground and has to be helped up again.

Whenever we see another who is staggering and falling down from weakness, whether in body or spirit, let us remember the suffering of Jesus, and help them up if we can. They are carrying a heavy burden, just as we are, and we must love them as we love ourselves.

Jesus said, "Do not judge, unless you want to be judged."

Interlude

Stage 4

"Jesus Meets His Mother"

Herb Niemeyer

We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

By the tree of the cross your broken body brings healing to the world.

Jesus looks up and sees his mother Mary who is at the side of the road. The two do not

Jesus falls to the ground again. He has lost a lot of blood and he struggles hard to get up on his feet. Finally he gets up and continues down the road. Jesus knows he must get to the top of this hill and keep his promise to die for his friends.

We know what it means to fall hard and have to get up again. We feel ashamed and discouraged, and it is difficult to pick ourselves up again and try once more. We have to have faith in ourselves and faith in God to help us.

Jesus used to say, “Your faith has made you well!”

Interlude

Stage 8

“Women Cry for Jesus”

Gwen Denoon

We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

By the tree of the cross your broken body brings healing to the world.

Jesus looks up again and this time sees a group of women crying for him. All they can give him are their tears now. Jesus, who is suffering so much himself, feels sorry for them and tells them to take care of themselves and their own children.

Sometimes all we can do for others is to listen to them and cry with them while they are suffering. Words are unnecessary: Our presence and our tears are enough to show we care.

Jesus knew this when he said, “Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

Interlude

Stage 9

“Jesus Falls the Third Time”

Cliff Aerie

We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

By the tree of the cross your broken body brings healing to the world.

Jesus falls for the third and last time. It seems as if he cannot get up and the soldiers help him up because they are worried that he will not get crucified. They do not really care about him. They want to get their job done.

Sometimes our attitudes are like theirs, because we help others, but we only do it because we are thinking about how we are inconvenienced and want to get the task out of the way. We do not really see what others need, yet what they need most from us is respect and the freedom to be themselves. How do we really love someone?

Jesus told us, “You must love your neighbor as yourself.”

Interlude

Stage 10

“Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross”

Merrimon Boyd

We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

By the tree of the cross your broken body brings healing to the world.

Jesus’ hands and feet are nailed to the cross, and then he is lifted up for all to see.

Some people who are there make fun of him and tell him to come down if he is really

the Son of God. But he this is his place for now. He is the one Begotten of God, who is suffering that we might live.

God thus takes a cross of death and turns it into a tree of life instead. Jesus showed us God's heart and the lengths to which God is willing to go for the love of us. Some think the cross is foolish, but we, by God's grace, recognize its wisdom.

Jesus said: "I praise you, God, because you have let little ones understand this!"

Interlude

Stage 11

"Jesus Dies on the Cross"

Erick Falconer

We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

By the tree of the cross your broken body brings healing to the world.

To some, Jesus appears poor and weak on the cross when he dies. It seems to them as if he has lost the fight. But to those who open their understanding, he is a conqueror, brave and strong, who has won a surprising victory: the healing of our spirits. When the end comes, he cries out in a loud voice: "Father, I place my life in your hands!" It is finished, and he has kept his promise.

"No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

Interlude

Stage 12

"Jesus Is Taken Down from the Cross"

Corinne Denoon

We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

By the tree of the cross your broken body brings healing to the world.

There are no words to say how it feels when someone you love dies. So it is for the mother of Jesus and for the followers who come to take his body down from the cross. Without speaking a word, they take out the nails, hold his body for a moment, and then wrap it in a linen cloth.

The night before all this happened, Jesus took a loaf of bread and broke it into pieces, saying: "This is my body, broken for you." And he took a cup and said: "This is my blood poured out for you."

Now here is his body broken. His mouth may no longer speak, but his body still teaches us about love.

Interlude

Stage 13

"Jesus Is Buried in the Earth"

David Denoon

We honor you, Jesus, and thank you,

By the tree of the cross your broken body brings healing to the world.

Jesus was a poor man who did not own anything, so his friends had to borrow a grave from someone else. Jesus said about himself once: "Even the foxes have holes, but I have nowhere to lay my head."

As they lay his body in the grave, his friends are afraid that this is the end of Jesus. But as surely as morning comes after a dark night or spring comes after winter, Jesus will live again, showing us that death will not get the last word.

Jesus stood in a wheat field once and said: “Unless a seed falls to the ground and dies, it can never grow up and bear fruit.” And so it must be with us!

Interlude

Meditation upon the Cross

Behold the cross on which hung the salvation of the whole world.

Come, let us worship the Christ, the Child of God.

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

By your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Silence.



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Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.

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