

Community-Developed

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Restore Us, O God! We Come to the Cross

A Good Friday worship service

Lectionary, Year A

Instructions:

We had a large Christ candle and 8 small votives burning on the table at the front. Communion elements were also there. As each of the first 8 prayers of confession were prayed, one votive was moved from the central table to be around the cross which was off to the side. With the final prayer of confession (for hope), a taper was lit near the cross, so during our communion time, people could use it to light a tea light and offer their own silent prayer of confession & restoration. The short prayers of confession are intended for the whole congregation to read together. There are 4 spaces where individuals could be asked ahead of time to share their own reflections.

Prelude

Opening

We will offer words of confession in this service. Confession is not only a naming of sin or an identification of what needs change. Confession is truth telling, it is openness before God or others. We confess what we believe, we confess what we feel, we confess what we fear, and we confess our need for restoration. We confess not only what is broken within us, and our world, but all that we must lay before God in our path toward wholeness.

Prayer

We come sincerely
Or we come reluctantly
We come with a sense of awe
Or we come out of habit
We come to your cross, Jesus,
To sit with you a while.
Whatever our rough edges and dry places within,
Restore us, O Christ, to walk this path with you. Amen.

Hymn What wondrous love is this HWB 530

Scripture Matthew 26:36-46

Reflection *(Ask someone ahead of time to prepare a 2-3-minute story of when they have felt a need for God to restore them with strength)*

Prayer *(unison)*

We confess our weariness & disconnection
Restore us, O God, we long for your strength

(leader – move candle while speaking)

Hymn Stay with me HWB 242

Scripture Matthew 26:47-50

Reflection

With swords and clubs, at least we know what's coming
But sometimes promises are broken with a kiss
And with words that are false
Words that pretend to comfort the listener, but actually protect the speaker
Words that were courageous privately but fearful publicly
Words that seek to breeze past another's pain
Words that seek the easy way out
With our words we try to hide the promises we break
But Jesus says: "Do what you are here to do"

Prayer

We confess our broken promises
Restore us, O God, we long for your faithfulness

(Move Candle)

Scripture Matthew 26:51-56

Reflection *(Ask someone ahead of time to prepare a 2-3-minute story of when they have felt a need for God to restore them with peace, perhaps like Peter's experience of fear and lashing out. Could be on a personal, communal, or societal scale)*

Prayer

We confess our fear and defensiveness
Restore us, O God, we long for your peace

(Move Candle)

Hymn O Lamb of God (Ya hamalaLah) STS 69

Scripture Matthew 26:57-75

Reflection

Everyone has something to say about someone else's sin
In the court of the high priest, false witnesses pour forth testimony
"I heard him say this"
"I saw him do that"
"I know he believes this"
"I think he threatened that"
Theological accusations of moral indecency
But Jesus is silent.
The religious institution entertains arrows of judgment, grenades of denunciation
Shot from side to side:
Blasphemy! Heresy! Immorality!
"We must decide for ourselves who he is", they say,
"He must fit into the boxes we check off".
And Jesus says: "You have said so"

Prayer

We confess our disengagement and division
Restore us, O God, we long for your unity

(Move Candle)

Hymn I bind my heart this tide HWB 411

Scripture Matthew 27:1-10

Reflection

I have sinned against heaven and before you

I have sinned against heaven and before you
I have sinned against heaven and before you
Repeated enough times, does it take away the stain?
Does it turn back the clock
On what I did
On what I said
On what I neglected to do
Roll the film again in your mind
Imagine what you should have said
What you should have done
What you can't take back
What you regret
And regret
And regret...
But Jesus says: "It is finished."

Prayer

We confess our regrets
Restore us, O God, we long for your grace

(Move Candle)

Hymn When I survey the wondrous cross HWB 260

Scripture Matthew 27:11-26

Reflection *(Ask someone ahead of time to prepare a 2-3-minute story of when they have felt a need for God to restore them with vision, especially in terms of the blindness we can have to our privilege, as Pilate washed his hands and denied his own power)*

Prayer

We confess our blindness to privilege
Restore us, O God, we long for your vision

(Move Candle)

Hymn Jesus remember me HWB 247

Scripture Matthew 27:27-34

Reflection *(Ask someone ahead of time to prepare a 2-3 minute story of when they have felt a need for God to restore them with courage to do what is needed)*

Prayer

We confess our fear of inadequacy

Restore us, O God, we long for your courage

(Move Candle)

Scripture Matthew 27:35-44

Reflection

Do we mock you, Lord?
Do we turn our backs to you and divide your clothing?
Casting lots as if to say – we earned this; this is ours.
We earned this laptop
And turn our backs on the child workers mining coltan in the war zone of the Congo
We earned this home
And turn our backs on indigenous communities crowded into the spaces reserved for them
We earned this degree, this job, this raise,
And turn our backs on the ones benignly overlooked for their skin, their accent, their gender
We didn't do these things, Lord, it's not our fault,
It's just that it's easier sometimes to follow the crowd.
Jesus says: "Abba, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing"

Prayer

We confess our complicity in suffering
Restore us, O God, we long for your healing

(Move Candle)

Hymn Jesus walked this lonesome valley STS 80

Scripture Matthew 27:45-54

(Extinguish Christ Candle)

Silent Reflection

Scripture Matthew 27:55-61

Reflection

We look on from a distance
The distance of time
The distance of geography
The distance of culture
The cross is strange to us
But we know grief
We feel grief
Grief for a friend who is lost forever

