

**STATIONS OF THE CROSS
REFLECTION BOOKLET**





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PREPARING YOUR SPACE

Welcome to the Stations of the Cross.

This booklet will serve as your guide throughout the service.

To fully engage with this Stations of the Cross experience, you'll need a few ordinary elements close by.

Before you begin, gather the following:

- a candle and a way to light it
- one piece of paper
- a pen, a pencil, or another writing utensil
- a small bowl of water
- a salt shaker or a pinch of salt

You'll want to be seated comfortably and have a little room to move around.

Just before you begin to watch this service or move through this booklet, light your candle, and set it somewhere you'll be able to see it.

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STATION I

SORROW

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

Matthew 26:36–41



Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.” And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.” Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

STATION I

As you begin this journey through the Stations of the Cross and remember the disciples who came with Jesus to the garden, remember also those people who have accompanied you during your hardest times.

Maybe, like the disciples who were present with Jesus, the people you'll remember were also struggling.

Maybe, like the disciples, they faced their own sorrow, or couldn't completely enter into yours, but still came alongside you.

Write their names:

To begin, call to mind the face of one person who has been present with you in difficulty or sorrow.

Picture that face before you.

Hold your focus there for a moment.

Say thank you.

This “thank you” is a prayer of gratitude, not for this person’s perfection, but for their accompaniment, for their willing spirit.

Trust that as you journey through these stations, and as you journey through your life, you are held carefully, prayerfully, by your community.

You can extend this Station by repeating this process of letting that face fade from view and letting new ones emerge in your mind, each time saying thank you.

NOTES

STATION II

BETRAYAL

Jesus, Betrayed by Judas, is Arrested

Mark 14:43–46



Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him.

STATION II

As you remember the story of Judas, a faithful friend who turned Jesus over to the authorities, consider the ways you have sometimes rejected what matters most to you.

In this station, the following prompts will guide you through a prayer of confession.

Prayer of Confession

God, this story is difficult. It asks us to remember a heartbreaking time in Jesus' life and confront times in our own lives where we have betrayed what matters most.

Hear me now, as I offer my confession to you.

For the ways I have betrayed the call to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with you...

Loving God, I confess, and I call on your grace.

For the ways I have betrayed my call to embrace all your children...

Loving God, I confess, and I call on your grace.

For the ways I have betrayed my own identity as your beloved child...

Loving God, I confess, and I call on your grace.

Loving God, for all of this, we confess, and we call on your grace. **Amen.**

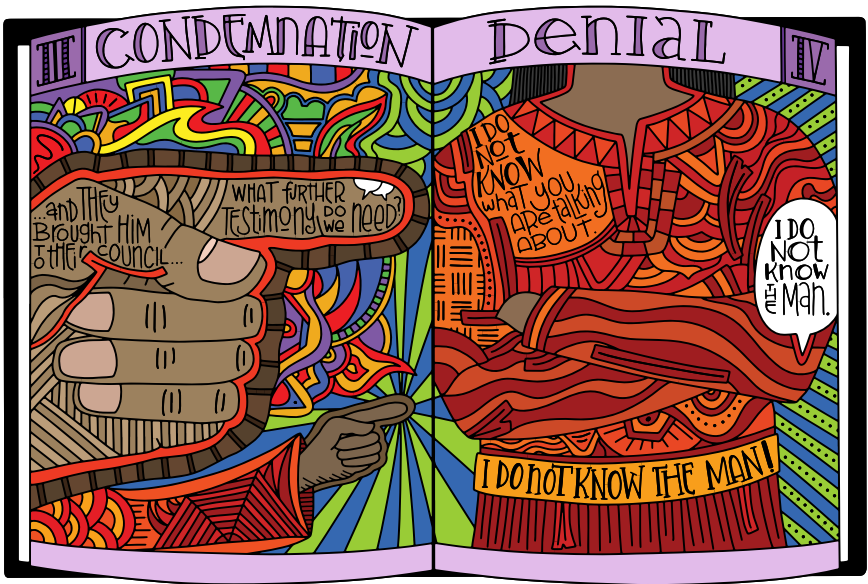
NOTES

STATION III

CONDEMNATION

Jesus is Condemned by the Sanhedrin

Luke 22:66-71



When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, gathered together, and they brought him to their council. They said, "If you are the Messiah, tell us." He replied, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I question you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." All of them asked, "Are you, then, the Son of God?" He said to them, "You say that I am." Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!"

STATION III

As you remember the condemnation in this story—which is really a confession, really a promise—that Jesus is the Son of God, take a moment to remember and reflect on the promise that you, too, are God’s child.

Whatever any other voice (your own or someone else’s) might tell you, this identity remains the deepest truth about you and about everyone else you will ever meet.

Use this space to remember and reflect on the promise that you are God’s child:

You are invited to pray with your body now as a way of remembering this truth.

Breathe in deeply. Breathe out slowly.

Place your hands on your lips.

Say aloud: **“With these lips, I will speak God’s truth.”**

Breathe in deeply. Breathe out slowly.

Fold your hands together.

Say aloud: **“With these hands, I will serve God’s world.”**

Breathe in deeply. Breathe out slowly.

Place your hands on your heart.

Say aloud: **“With all I am, I will share God’s love.”**

Breathe in deeply. Breathe out slowly.

Place your hands on your head.

Say aloud: **“I will remember I am God’s own.”**

Amen.

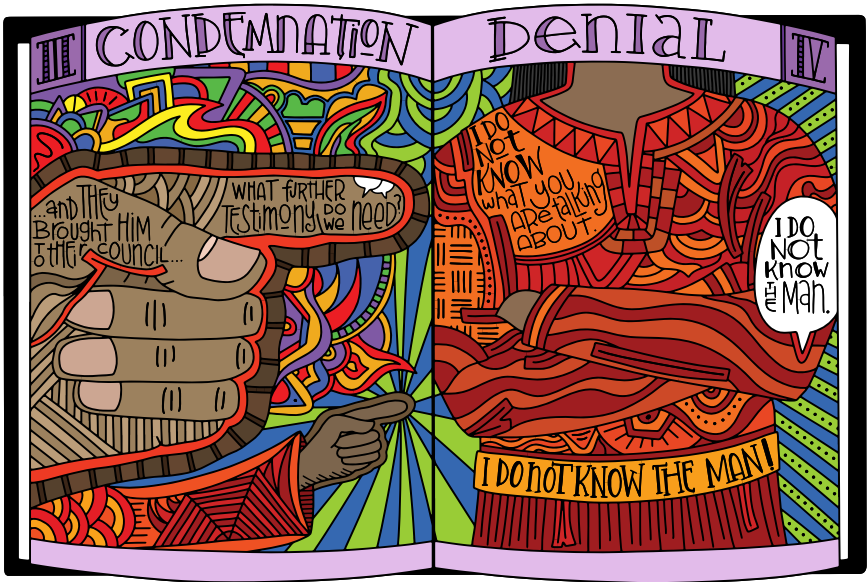
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STATION IV

DENIAL

Jesus is Denied by Peter

Matthew 26:69-75



Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.” But he denied it before all of them, saying, “I do not know what you are talking about.” When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” Again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.” After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.” Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, “I do not know the man!” At that moment the rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: “Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

STATION IV

We can imagine Peter's denial of Jesus breaks Jesus' heart—we know it breaks Peter's, too.

But it's not the whole story. Here, Peter says “no.” No, I don't know him. No, he's not my friend. No, I'm not part of what's happening here.

Peter denies Jesus, and when he does, he also denies himself.

Because before this, Peter has been saying “yes” to Jesus.

He's been saying yes to the call to discipleship, yes to this journey toward the unknown, yes to trusting in the promises of God and the hope of God's kingdom here on earth.

These “yeses” mean he's also been saying “no” in other ways: no to despair, no to injustice, no to a community where not all are recognized as beloved.

Here, Peter's fear gets the best of him. It convinces him to say no to what he's been saying yes to for so long.

It convinces him to deny what he trusts and who he is.

Think of a “yes” you’ve said that is central to your identity.

Write it down in the space below.

Then tear that portion of the paper out of the booklet by tearing along the dotted lines.

Fold up the paper, small enough to carry in your pocket.

When this service ends, carry it with you.

Whenever your fear threatens, unfold this paper. Let your rereading and remembering of this “yes” give you the courage to know who you are, even in the face of your fear.

A large rectangular area defined by dotted lines, intended for writing a personal response.

NOTES

STATION V

JUDGMENT

Jesus is Judged by Pilate

Mark 15:1-5, 15



As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so." Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed. So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

STATION V

Pilate begins well here.

He begins in curiosity.

He begins by asking questions.

He begins in that space where anything is possible.

He doesn't stay there long; it's a hard place to stay, especially when easy answers are being shouted all around, demanding attention, demanding action.

What if we could stay in that questioning place?

What if we could remain in the wondering—about Jesus, about ourselves, about each other—before we rush to judgment? Or instead of moving to judgment at all?

Use this space to wonder about what might happen if we can stay in the questioning space. What could happen?

In this time of silence, you're invited to call to mind someone you harbor judgment about. Think for a moment about the things you've already decided are true about that person.

Now, if you can, set those decisions aside, and begin to ask questions. Let any question, every question, come to your mind. Give yourself, and the person you're remembering, the gift of your wondering. Let yourself be curious.

**Curiosity is a kindness.
It can change us, and it can change our world.**

NOTES

STATION VI

CROWNING

Jesus is Scourged and Crowned with Thorns

John 19:1-3



Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face.

STATION VI

When the soldiers place a crown on Jesus' head and drape a robe over his shoulders, they do so in mockery.

They twist these gestures of honor and turn them into acts of ridicule and shame.

Earlier in the week, a woman anointed Jesus' head with oil, a sign of blessing.

Later, after he is crucified, women will come to the tomb with spices, again to offer a blessing to his body.

Our bodies are sites of so much; often, we carry honor and shame in the same spaces, even at the same time.

Sometimes our bodies are sites of pleasure and delight; sometimes, they carry pain and suffering.

Like it was with Jesus, our bodies can be how we know blessing and how we know sorrow.

It is important to pause and recognize our bodies as sacred.

It is important to honor them.

Take a deep breath in. Let it out slowly.

Become aware of your own body.

What do you notice? Is there any part of you that feels strong?
Is there any place in you experiencing pain?

Linger where you need to.

Take another deep breath in. Let this one out slowly, too.

Settle deeper into awareness of your body.

Place your hands on the part of your body you would like to bless: maybe your feet, for the journeys ahead; maybe your hands, for the work they will do; maybe on your head, for greater understanding; or over your heart, for healing of a hurt.

Give thanks for the gift that is your body.

Remember you are wonderfully made.

Remember God dwells in you and lives through you, too.

NOTES

STATION VII

BEARING

Jesus Bears the Cross

John 19:6, 15-17



When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him.” They cried out, “Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!” Pilate asked them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but the emperor.” Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha.

STATION VII

At this station, we meet Jesus bearing the cross by himself. But the story of the cross will come to be about all of us. The story is about Jesus and the people surrounding him, about the God he cries out to, about everyone who comes after and calls on Jesus' name. The shape of the cross evokes this expansive notion: one line reaches down, right into the depths of who we are; one line reaches out, to include every one of us.

Draw a cross on the next page. Trace it with your finger. Follow the line reaching down, then the line reaching out.

Trace it again. Imagine the line reaching down as God's gift to us. Imagine the line reaching out as our condition of need.

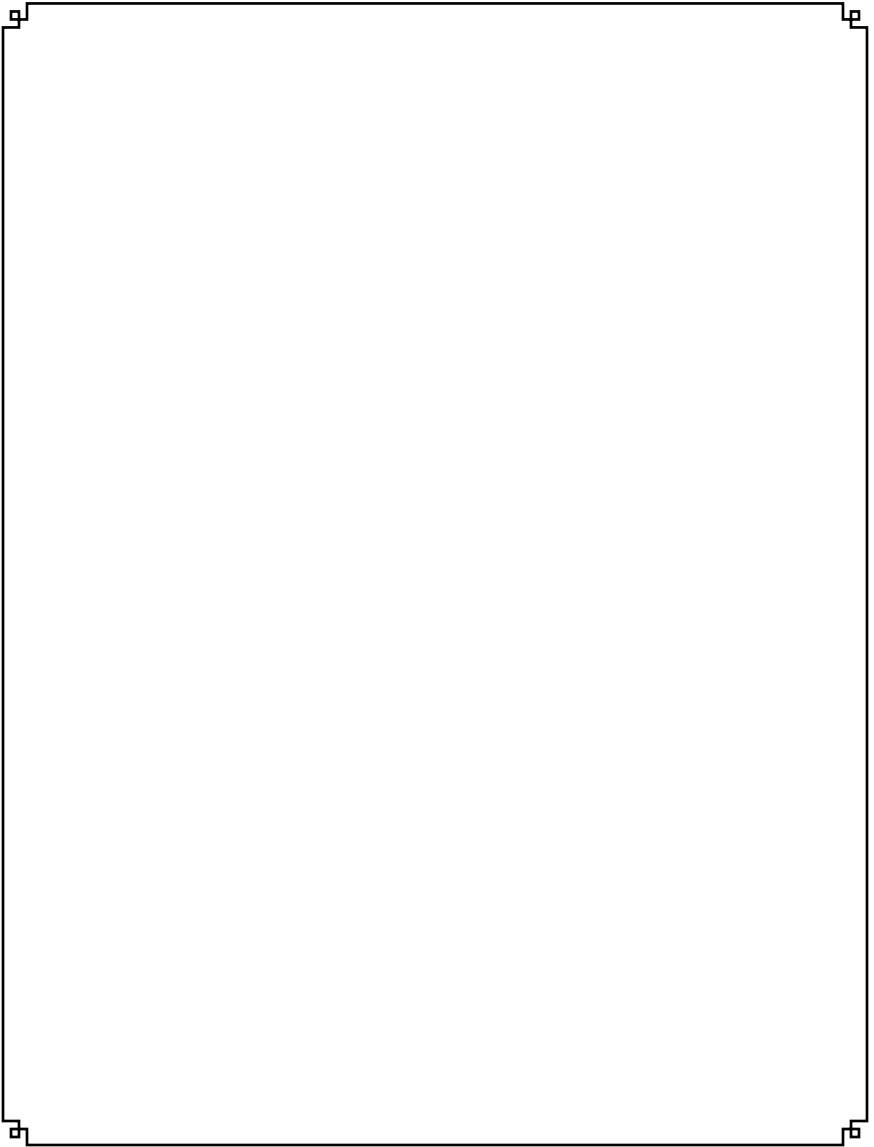
Trace it again. Imagine the cross as the place where God's mercy meets our ignorance.

Trace it again. Imagine the cross as the place where God's compassion meets our arrogance.

Trace it again. Imagine the cross as the place where God's embrace counters our fear.

Trace it one more time. Remember that in the life of Jesus, and in his bearing of the cross, our deepest needs are met by God's deep love.

Use this space to draw your cross.



NOTES

STATION VIII

HELPING

Jesus is Helped by Simon the Cyrenian to Carry the Cross

Mark 15:21



They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.

STATION VIII

We don't know why Simon was chosen from the crowd to help carry the cross. We don't know what his connection to Jesus, or to this movement, might have been before this moment; why he was passing by; what he knew of the events unfolding. But he was conscripted to join in, and he did, in a different way than many of the others gathered.

With angry voices and violent threats being raised all around them, Simon came alongside Jesus. Simon took some of the burden from Jesus, shifting the weight of the cross onto Simon's own shoulders. What a gift that kindness must have been to Jesus.

Do you know someone carrying a heavy burden now?
Someone weighed down by struggle?

Maybe it's a close friend or family member; maybe it's someone whose story you've only heard about or seen on the news.

Choose someone, and come alongside them in prayer in this moment. You don't need to know all the details of their pain to help, to hold them in your heart.

Spend a moment in silence, centering yourself in the story you're remembering, calling to mind the face of the person you're thinking of.

After a few moments, end with this prayer:

Gracious One,
You know every person and every story.
You are a part of all that is.
I pray now for this person and their story.
I pray they might know your presence,
that they might sense your nearness,
that they might feel their burden lightened.
I join my heart to their story now,
and I ask you to show me
how else I might come alongside them,
that they might know they are not alone in this.
Thank you for sharing with us in all things,
and for giving us to one another.
Amen.

NOTES

STATION IX

BLESSING

Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem

Luke 23:27-31



A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us;’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

STATION IX

Not everyone in the crowd surrounding Jesus was angry.

Not everyone was shouting.

Not everyone wanted to see him suffer.

Our stations take us from the kindness of Simon's helping to the sorrow of these women lamenting.

They were wailing for him. Mourning women played a fundamental role in Jesus' time and place, so common they could easily be ignored.

Jesus sees them, hears them, and addresses them. His words are not reassurance but warning: there are even more heartbreaking days ahead.

And yet Jesus' pausing from his own pain, giving his attention in spite of his own agony, is itself a kind of blessing.

Mourning and blessing, lament and kindness, take up equal space in this scene.

Jesus even mentions a time when a usual lament will be understood as blessing.

Take a pinch of salt. Sprinkle it into the bowl of water.

Use your finger to swirl it around.

Remember the tears of the women who followed Jesus on this path.

Remember the tears Jesus shed as he looked out over the city.

Reflect on the things over which you have shed tears.

Mourning is also a sign of profound care.

Use this as a space to write down your reflections.

As you swirl your finger in the saltwater, imagine your own tears mixing with others, all part of the mourning for what is broken in our world. Remember, too, the blessing of care poured out.

NOTES

STATION X

CRUCIFIXION

Jesus is Crucified

Luke 23:33-34



When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to divide his clothing.

STATION X

Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.

Can you imagine words more gentle? More compassionate?
More grace-filled?

Jesus speaks these words from the cross—one of the last things he says before he dies. He speaks them not as excuse, not as denial, but as profound understanding: the people putting him to death do not really know what they are doing. They are following orders.

Maybe they are grieving; maybe they are caught up in the crowd's emotion; maybe they are confused by the conflicting stories about who Jesus is. A promise or a threat? A messiah or a menace? The mechanisms of state violence demand action before understanding. They crucify him. They do not know what they do.

There is much we also do not know: about ourselves, about each other, and especially about those we would consider strangers or even opponents. Following Jesus' model here is one way to orient ourselves with grace toward all we do not know.

Here is another time of confession. After each prompt, spend time in prayer and reflection. After a few moments, say, "God, in your mercy, hear our prayers."

Holy One, for where I have caused harm on my own, I ask you to forgive me, and to help me forgive myself. It is sometimes true of me like it was true of those in the story:

I do not know what I do...

God, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

And Holy One, for where I have caused harm together with others, I ask you to forgive us, and to help me forgive. It is sometimes true of us like it was true of those in the story:

We do not know what we do...

God, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

And Holy One, for where others have caused harm, I ask you to forgive them, and to help me do the same. It is sometimes true of them like it was true of those in the story:

They do not know what they do...

God, in your mercy, hear our prayers. Amen.

NOTES

STATION XI

PROMISE

Jesus Promises His Kingdom to the Good Thief

Luke 23:39-43



One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

STATION XI

We often think promises tell us of good to come.

The men hanging beside Jesus on their own crosses didn't have a future in which to place their hope.

Jesus makes a promise to the one who addresses him, but it's not a far-off fantasy.

Jesus promises the man communion, belonging, right then and there. "Today you will be with me in Paradise."

He focuses the man in the present, and then he transforms the present—infusing that very moment with hope, with peace, and with mercy.

Paying attention to our breath is one way to center ourselves in the present moment.

Consider the promise Jesus makes: to be with us now, and until the end of the age.

Let your breathing take you deeper into that promised communion.

Breathe in hope.

Breathe out despair.

Breathe in peace.

Breathe out anxiety.

Breathe in mercy.

Breathe out judgment.

Breathe in love.

Breathe out love.

Breathe in love.

Breathe out love.

Breathe in love.

Breathe out love.

NOTES

STATION XII

CARE

Jesus Speaks to His Mother and the Disciple

John 19:25–27



Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

STATION XII

He took her into his own home. Into his own heart.

This part of the story is about giving and receiving care.

What Jesus has been, for his mother and his friend, he cannot be anymore.

He knows they will mourn.

He knows they will miss what he has been for them.

And so he gives them to each other that they might each experience care: both the giving of it and the receiving of it.

So they can share with each other what he has been for them while learning something new: the way his care for them continues—even after he's gone—because he has brought them together.

Hold your hands out in front of you. Turn one palm up, ready to receive. Turn the other palm down, ready to give.

Imagine receiving care as a tangible thing in your upturned hand. What is it that's being given to you?

Now, imagine giving care with your hand that's facing down. What is it you're offering?

Bring your hands together and offer a brief prayer of gratitude for the care you receive and the care you give.

Amen.

NOTES

STATION XIII

DARKNESS

Jesus Dies on the Cross

Luke 23:44-46



It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last.

STATION XIII

Darkness fell over the land, like a covering.

Like the curtain in the Temple was a covering.

In the hardest times, like when Jesus is on the cross, and in the most sacred spaces, like the Holy of Holies in the Temple, reality is sometimes obscured.

Clarity is sometimes sacrificed.

Darkness makes space for the unknown: a sometimes beautiful, sometimes terrible allowance.

When the Temple curtain is torn, when that covering rips in two, the notion that God could be contained there was challenged.

The holy space the curtain had concealed, had kept in darkness, was suddenly revealed.

We can never build anything—in our structures or our hearts—that keeps God from reaching us.

On a separate piece of paper, write down what seems to separate you from God.

Maybe you'll write thoughts, emotions, habits, convictions. Maybe for you there's just one thing; maybe there's a long list.

Whatever it is, take this time to write it down.

When you're ready, rip it up.

You can make one big tear, like the story tells us about the Temple curtain. Or you can tear your paper into lots of tiny pieces.

Let the tearing be a denial of artificial boundaries and an affirmation of God's ever-presence: behind a curtain, on a cross, in the darkness—God is always with us.

NOTES

STATION XIV

BURIAL

Jesus is Placed in the Tomb

Matthew 27:57-60



When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away.

STATION XIV

At this station, we witness how a friend honored Jesus by caring for his body, treating it tenderly, and providing a place for burial.

The honor given in death is a reflection of the respect felt in life, a testimony to the connection these two men shared.

By offering his tomb, Joseph found a way to extend his care for Jesus even past death's boundary.

Turn to the candle you lit at the beginning of our time together.

Watch it for a few moments.

See how the flames flicker and dance.

Observe how the light stretches and shrinks.

Pay attention to the life in the fire.

In just a moment, you'll blow out the candle. Remember what remains, even as the flame is no more.

Before you do that, say this prayer:

I extinguish this candle
but not the flame of truth,
not the light of hope,
not the warmth of love.
These, I carry in my heart
and I know they will carry me
through the days to come.

(Blow out the candle.)

Amen.

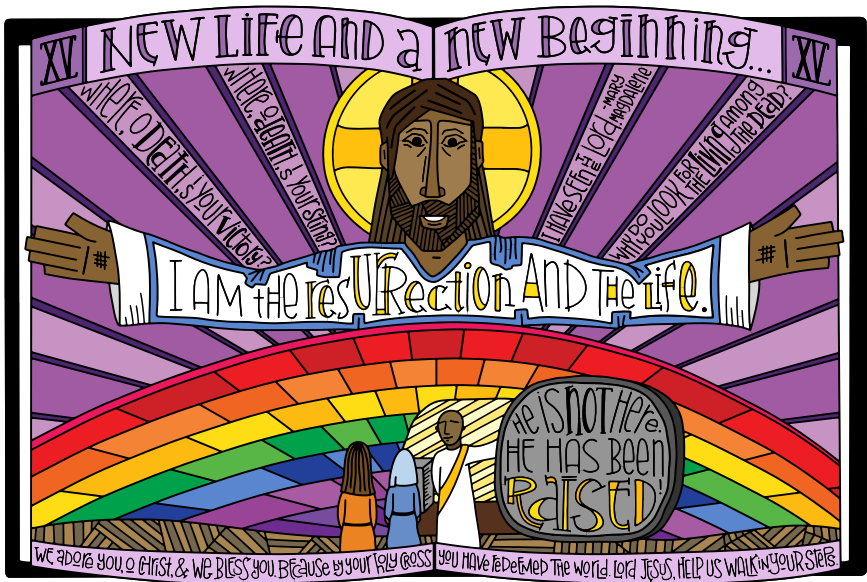
NOTES

STATION XV

NEW LIFE & A NEW BEGINNING

The Resurrection of Jesus

Mark 16:1-6



When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?” When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him.”

STATION XV

If the cross is expansive—reaching down, into the depths of who we are; reaching out, to include every one of us—so is the resurrection.

The women arrive at the tomb only to find out the body, and the story they thought it held, could not be contained.

Death burst forth into life!

The resurrection is God’s reaching into the world, with a boundless love, to gift us all with new life and a new beginning.

Practice the traditional Easter greeting while you reach to embody the scope of this good news.

Say or read, “Christ is risen!”

Then respond with “Christ is risen, indeed!” with the fullness of your voice and your body.

Reaching high up to the sky: Christ is risen!

Christ is risen, indeed!

Reaching way out to your sides: Christ is risen!

Christ is risen, indeed!

Reaching far out in front of you: Christ is risen!

Christ is risen, indeed!

Alleluia!

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