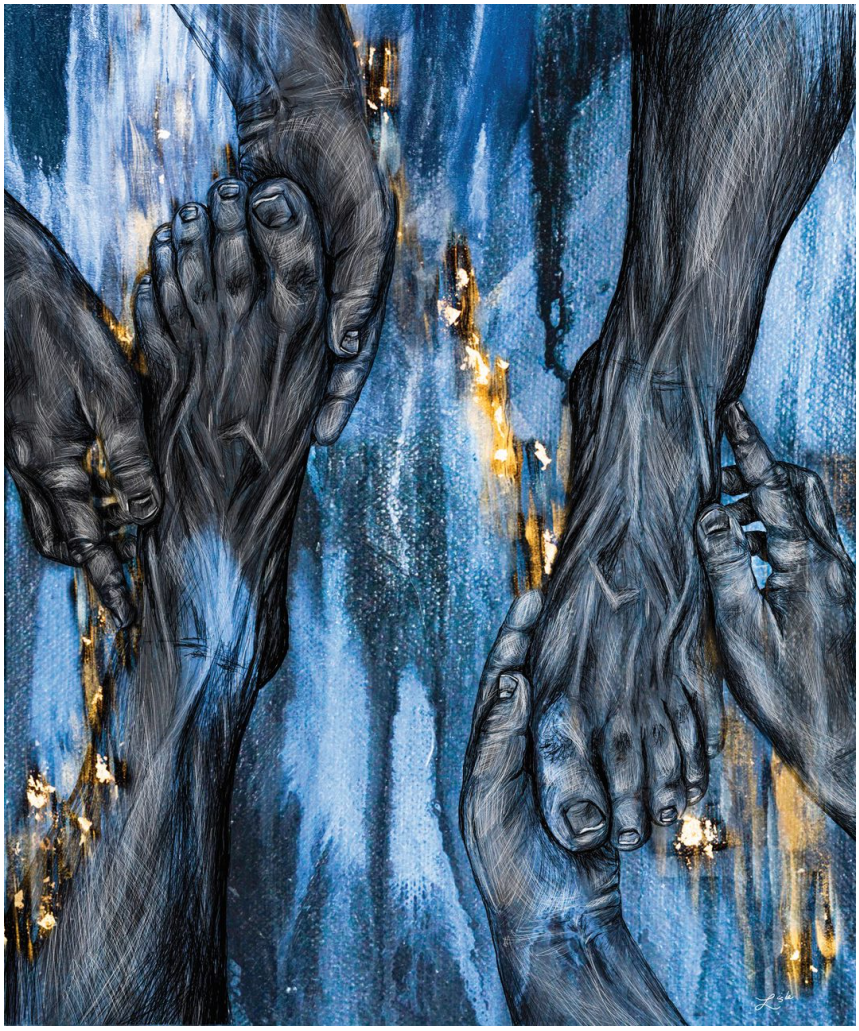
First Presbyterian
above all, love
CHURCH OF WEST CHESTER

GOOD FRIDAY

April 2, 2021

7:00pm



Please have a piece of paper and pen or pencil with you for the service.

Prelude — Vocalise
Sergei Rachmaninoff

Welcome

Call to Worship

We have tasted the goodness of God.
And yet, we often fall away from it, crucifying Jesus anew.
Again and again we tell the story.
Again and again we find ourselves in the story.
We remember so that, with God's help, we may find a new way.

Opening Prayer

Holy God, as we journey through this familiar story, help us to understand it anew. Show us, O God, where and why we find ourselves here again and again, and move us toward a future that reflects your love, your mercy, and your justice.

Hymn #220 — Go to Dark Gethsemane

Station 1: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane — Ellen Endslow

Scripture Reading — Matthew 26:36-41

Written Reflection
Consider a person in your life who is having a particularly difficult time at the moment. On your piece of paper, write a prayer for that person.

Station 2: Jesus is Betrayed by Judas & Arrested — Pete Galloway

Scripture Reading — Mark 14:43-46

Lament
Again and again, we betray one another and God.
We confess our part in the fragmentation of the human family, and we lament our brokenness.
Tear up the prayer you wrote in the last station, but leave the shreds of paper in front of you.

Hymn # 218 — Ah, Holy Jesus

Station 3: Jesus is Denied by Peter — Kira Boros

Scripture Reading — Matthew 26:69-75

Lament
The good that we would do, we do not do. Even when we have no evil intentions, we still fail the human family through our fear and timidity. We neglect to stand up for what's right, or to come to another's aid when they cry out.
Sometimes we hide from the world's ills. We seek our own comfort and not God's peace.
You are invited to tear your prayer into smaller pieces.

Station 4: Jesus is Judged by Pontius Pilate — Bob Smith

Scripture Reading — Mark 15:1-5

Jesus was wrongfully convicted. He suffered for a sin he did not commit.
As we gather together, we know that there are people condemned for crimes they did not commit:

Kennedy Brewer – sentenced to death by the State of Mississippi for murder. Even when exonerated by DNA evidence, prosecutors kept him in prison for five more years.
Lord, have mercy.

Habib Wahir Abdal – served sixteen years in prison for a crime he did not commit.
Christ, have mercy.

George Allen Jr. – falsely convicted of capital murder and burglary. He served 30 years before being exonerated.
Lord, have mercy.

Steven Barnes – falsely accused of murder and assault and sentenced to 25 years-to-life in prison. Served 20 years before his conviction was overturned.
Christ, have mercy.

For the many more whose names we do not know but who suffered or are currently suffering due to false convictions, **Lord have mercy.**

Again and again, our lips and laws bear false witness against our neighbors.
Holy One, save us from this appetite for injustice that masquerades as certainty, and turn our hearts toward your truth.

Hymn # 221 — O Sacred Head, Now Wounded

Station 5: Jesus is Scourged at the Pillar & Crowned with Thorns — Kathy Bird

Scripture Reading — John 19:1-3

As the music is played, you are invited to try to reassemble the paper that you tore during the first two stations. What were you able to reassemble? Where are the scars? What feelings are evoked as you reflect on the fragmenting and violence done to something you created with care?

Station 6: Jesus is Crucified — Kathy Bird

Scripture Reading — John 19:16-22

In the silence after the Scripture passage is read, use the chat feature to share who Jesus is to you. What title or description would you give to him on the cross?

Special Music — Crucifixion, Samuel Barber

Station 7: Jesus Promises His Kingdom to a Thief — Tom Sicoli

Scripture Reading — Luke 23:39-43

Reading — Last Words of James Bigby before his execution, March 14, 2017 — Kathy Westhafer

"I hope this will bring you closure and answers to some questions. I hope this will bring you peace and I'm sorry for all the pain and suffering. I'm sorry it went on for a terribly long time. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I hope that my death will bring you peace and closure. I pray that maybe someday will bring you peace. I hope that you could forgive me, but if you don't I understand. I don't think I could forgive anyone who would of [sic] killed my children. I'm sorry for your suffering you've had for a long time. I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I love you Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus."

Hymn # 227 Jesus, Remember Me

Station 8: Jesus Speaks to His Mother & the Beloved Disciple Jenn Carle

Scripture Reading John 19:25-27

Video: Pietà: Telling the Story of Mamie Till-Mobley

The video we will view together reflects on the experience of Mamie Till-Mobley, mother of lynching victim Emmitt Till. Only 14 when he was murdered, his death, and his mother's insistence that its violent details be revealed to the public, inspired the Civil Rights movement. In bearing witness to his mother's anguish, we remember Mary and the countless mothers throughout history whose suffering invites us to long and work toward God's redemption of this world.

Litany Russ Buckley

Who is my mother?
Those who suffer the greatest losses, yet commit to doing the greatest good.
Who are my siblings?
Those who bind our wounds in our time of need.
To whom must we turn our attention?
To the vulnerable and the oppressed.
To those in the crosshairs of discrimination, exploitation, racism, and hate.
To the neighbors we have yet to fully behold.
Again and again, Jesus calls us to see one another and be a family.

Station 9: Jesus Dies on the Cross David Stone

Scripture Reading Luke 23:44-46

Special music Were You There
arr. John Behnke

Station 10: Jesus is Placed in the Tomb Sandor Kádár

Scripture Reading Matthew 27:57-60

Hymn # 228 Were You There

Dismissal

Do not look away. Do not rush to excuse or redeem this violence.
Do not carry on as if nothing is wrong.

Grieve this. Mourn this. Ache with this.
And if you cannot,
mourn with those who mourn. Grieve with those who grieve.

Go in peace, understanding that peace is not the absence of tension,
but the presence of justice.
May God's Spirit direct us to create the kind of justice denied to Jesus.
Amen.

FIRST PRES

Leading us in worship today are Rev. Bob Sheldon, Interim Pastor; Rev. Caroline Cupp, Executive Pastor; Sandor Kadar, Director of Music; Kira Boros, Choir Accompanist; Lyndsay Varsaci, soprano; Adriana Park, violin; The JuBellation Ringers; members of The Chancel Choir.

The liturgy for this service was developed by Rev. T. Denise Anderson, a PC(USA) minister and former co-moderator of the General Assembly. She is a painter, theologian, historian, and racial theorist. To learn more about Rev. Anderson visit her blog, soulascriptura.com.

Easter Sunday Schedule will be outdoors and at home. We will gather together at the Abbott's Farm for a special celebration of resurrection and eternal life. Service times will be 6:30, 8:00, and 9:30, as well as an 11:00am contemporary service. Please sign up on the church website to reserve your spot. In addition, we will broadcast Easter services at 9:00 and 10:42am on our website and Facebook.