

in the big love living liturgies

“Praying Light into the Shadows”

A Good Friday Service with Prayers, Music, Poems, and Candles

by Rev. Kathryn Schreiber ©2017

Preparing the Congregation

Participants unfamiliar with Christ’s Passion may wish to read a gospel account (Mark 14-15; Matthew 26-27; Luke 22-23; or John 12-19) before the service as worship does not tell the story of Jesus’ betrayal, trials, torture, death, and burial. However, congregants familiar with typical Good Friday services should be prepared for this different service. Please communicate to your community whatever will best help them prepare for this light-filled worship service.

Roles/Outfits

- *Musician/s: May replace congregational hymn-singing with instrumentals, solos or choral renditions.*
- *Worship Leader: Minister and Lay Leader/s may share these responsibilities.*
- *“One”: For responsive readings and poetry, may use as many, or as few, readers as suits your community.*
- *Participants: Wear black or dark clothing. Clergy may wear black or robes with no stoles.*

Set-Up/Props

- *Designate a “Table of Candles” - this may be your regular Altar or may be a portable table which the congregation can easily access.*
- *Altar: Undraped or with black or purple fabric swag.*
- *Cross: May be draped with black cloth.*
- *Candles+: On Table of Candles -- one unlit “Christ Candle” and 20 or more unlit neutral colored candles of diverse sizes and shapes in non-flammable containers or on fire-proof bases. Lighter/s or Matches and fireproof Container for spent matches, Candle Snuffer, Basket for offerings. If your regular Altar contains worship candles, please light them before or during the service.*
- *Musicians, Worship Leader, and Reader/s may need additional lighting.*

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Service Script

Please change any content to fit the needs of your community. This service is designed for evening, please adjust for daytime use.

Meditation Quote

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” - Jesus (NRSV Matthew 11:28)

We Gather

Prelude

Greeting

Welcome to ...[*name of congregation*]...

It is good that we are gathered here together on this Good Friday. Traditionally, this service is a time to vividly remember Jesus’s last days. We usually read a gospel account of Jesus’ betrayal, trials, humiliations, death on the cross, and burial in a borrowed tomb. However, tonight, we are approaching this Good Friday differently.

The scriptural accounts of Christ’ Passion fully reveal the shadow side of humanity as the most precious of God’s gifts is attacked. Our sacred story is filled with intense mortal suffering.

For us to focus so deeply on Jesus’ suffering this year seems harmful, maybe even needlessly traumatic. We are living through a string of tragedies, are we not? Our minds and hearts are full of betrayals, dangers, and losses. We know suffering in our local community, and see new levels of harm rising in our nation. Dear ones, daily, we witness new attacks upon Christ.

So we gather here traumatized, not unlike the first disciples. Tonight, we come together temporarily entombed with Christ in a safe, dark place where we can:

- * remember the ever-Living Jesus,
- * call holy light into this dark time,
- * cultivate new seeds of hope,

as we wait for a new dawn on Easter morning, with Christ who has, again, triumphed over evil and death.

This Lent, in honor and respect for the faith of Islam, we are spending time with Hafez, the beloved Sufi mystical poet. Tonight we will hear three of his sacred poems, one of which he wrote about Jesus the Christ. (*cont’d*)

May we be illuminated in God's ways by his words.

This is a meditative, reflective service.
 We will remain seated for most of the service.
 There will be no formal offering, however,
 when you come up to light candles,
 you may leave a donation in the basket.

Please seated for the postlude
 and refrain from socializing in the sanctuary.
 Tonight, this room will remain in prayerful silence,
 after the service, for all who wish to stay and pray.
 If you are the last to leave, please extinguish the candles,
 or ask one of us to do so. Thank you.
 If you wish to socialize, please do join us
 for refreshments and conversation in [*location of fellowship area*].

It is good we have gathered here together this evening,
 let us begin to harvest the blessing of God's Holy Light. (*kms*)

Worship Leader goes to the Table of Candles.

Invocation

Worship Leader: Will you join me in prayer:

Holy One, only You know fully
 the darkness in which we dwell
 on this Good Friday evening.
 While we are blessed with much,
 we also carry trials and troubles of our own,
 and deep worries about the well-being of others.
 We have come here tonight
 to receive from You,
 sacred light for this Holy Week's journey.

Source of all Light,
 may we experience Your presence tonight,
 in the dance of candlelight,
 in the beauty of music,
 in the wisdom of sacred writings,
 in the sincerity of our prayers,
 and in the grace of this community.

Come Holy One, shine among us. Amen. (*kms*)

Worship Leaders lights the Christ Candle.

Hymn “Abide With Me” EVENTIDE/Henry F. Lyte

- 1) Abide with me...
- 2) Swift to its close...
- 3) I need Your presence...
- 4) I fear no foe...
- 5) Hold not Your cross...

Hafez Poem “It Was Beautiful One Night”

Praying the Beatitudes with Light

(a responsive reading and candle-lighting ritual based upon Matthew 5:3-11)

One: May God bless the poor in spirit. *(light one candle)*

Many: Ours is the kingdom of heaven.

One: God bless all who mourn. *(light one candle)*

Many: We will be comforted.

One: May God bless the meek. *(light one candle)*

Many: We will inherit the earth.

One: May God bless those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. *(light one candle)*

Many: We will be filled.

One: May God bless the merciful. *(light one candle)*

Many: We will receive mercy.

One: May God bless the pure in heart. *(light one candle)*

Many: We will see God.

One: May God bless the peacemakers. *(light one candle)*

Many: We are called children of God.

One: May God bless those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

(light one candle)

Many: Ours is the kingdom of heaven.

One: May God bless us when people revile us and persecute us and utter all kinds of evil against us falsely on account of Jesus Christ. *(light one candle)*

Many: Let us rejoice and be glad, for our reward is great in heaven, for in the same way, the prophets before us were persecuted.

One: May God bless us as we call upon the Light of Christ. *(light one candle)*

Many: Illuminate our Good Friday shadows, O Holy Light. Amen. (kms)

Hymn “Love Divine, All Love Excelling” BEECHER/Charles Wesley

- 1) Love divine, all love excelling...
- 2) Breathe, o breathe Your loving spirit...
- 3) Come Almighty to deliver...
- 4) Finish then Your new creation...

Pastoral Prayer

Worship Leader: “We place our prayers...”

Response: “Into Your Light, O Lord.”

Let us pray:

O God of all Life, Light, and Love,
 on this Good Friday we gather in sacred community
 to be comforted by faith
 and to tend the promise of new hope.
 Yet, we are disturbed by the long shadows around us.
 We ask Your blessing upon all gathered here tonight,
 in body and soul, be with us this night.
 We place our prayers...“**Into Your Light, O Lord.**”

Holy God, You know so well that we are equally capable
 of noble acts and terrible sins,
 so on this night, remembering Jesus’ betrayals and suffering,
 we pray for the innocent ones who have experienced pain.
 May they be granted deep healing.
 We place our prayers...“**Into Your Light, O Lord.**”

As we recall Jesus’ deep compassion and his infallible integrity,
 during caustic times of betray and corruption,
 we ask a blessing upon those who have done likewise --
 who have risen in character at times of great challenge.
 We place our prayers...“**Into Your Light, O Lord.**”

We gather as a people who are hurting.
 You know the exact burdens we each carry,
 as well as which sorrows are our heaviest.
 Grateful for Your eternal care and companionship,
 We place our prayers...“**Into Your Light, O Lord.**”

Tonight we pray for our nation
 and for people around the world
 impacted by the actions our country has taken.
 We especially lift up the real costs of military action, (*cont’d*)

not only in Syria, but in many other places,
and the effects such actions have had
upon the people who serve in our name.
We place our prayers...“Into Your Light, O Lord.”

Mindful of a new climate of acceptable prejudice,
knowing that many feel increasingly vulnerable,
we pray not only for a change of spirit among us,
but for the courage to do what You would have us do,
that all might not only feel safe, but actually be safe.
We place our prayers...“Into Your Light, O Lord.”

This night, near the tomb where the Beloved lays,
we are awakened to the reality of human mortality,
and of physical illnesses and challenges which harm our bodies.
We ask for healing and ask wellbeing for all who are sick.
We place our prayers...“Into Your Light, O Lord.”

And now, we offer to You, Holy One,
our private, silent prayers,
already grateful for Your tender attention.
We place our silent prayers...“Into Your Light, O Lord.”

(silent prayer)
Amen.

Praying with Light, Special Music

Worship Leader: Give instruction to come forward to light candles or remain seated and direct prayers into the flames. Offerings may be left in the basket; no formal offering tonight. Meditative music plays as the community prays with light in private reflection. Please allow plenty of time in this safe, prayerful state.

Hafez Poem “I Have Come Into This World to See This”

Special Music

Choral or Duet; hopeful lyrics are appropriate.

The Prayer of Jesus *(unison prayer led by pastor)*

May use any version of the Lord’s Prayer, though we like Newell’s.

“Ground of all being, Mother of life, Father of the universe...” *(jpn)*

Hafez Poem “The Candle Burns Down”

Hymn “Now the Green Blade Rises” NOËL NOUVELET/John M. C. Crum

Good Friday Refrain: “Love WILL come again....”

- 1) Now the green blade rises...
- 2) In the grave they laid their...
- 3) Christ came forth at Easter...
- 4) When our hearts are wintry...

Benediction

Postlude

Please remain in the sanctuary for private prayer as long as you wish. If you are the last to leave, please extinguish candles or ask someone to do so. Thank you.

Worship Resources:

(h/dl) Hafez poems: A Year with Hafiz: Daily Contemplations, translated by Daniel Landinsky, ©2011, Penguin Books. (Poems also appear in other books by Landinsky)

(jpn) “The Prayer of Jesus”: Sounds of the Eternal: A Celtic Psalter, John Phillip Newell, ©2012, New Beginnings.

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