

Good Friday

Friday, April 2, 2021
Noon | Historic Sanctuary



by Jim LePage

Welcome to



PARKWAY

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

ALL ACCEPTED, NO EXCEPTIONS

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Limitless Love | Courageous Action | Spirited Inquiry

Purpose Statement

Parkway United Church of Christ strives to be an inclusive community embracing: spiritual nourishment, open-minded inquiry, courageous action, and interfaith partnerships to fulfill God's calling to create a just world for all.

Congregational Statement

Parkway United Church of Christ, with God's grace, seeks to be a congregation that includes all persons, regardless of race, ethnic, or socio-economic background while respecting differences of gender, marital status, age, sexual orientation, and mental and physical ability. We aspire to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God. We invite all to share in the life and leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities and blessings of participation in our open and affirming congregation.

Good Friday Prayer Service

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Meditation Upon Entering the Sanctuary

Peace be to all who visit this sacred house of God sanctified by years of prayer. Pause awhile...allow the past to speak words of comfort to your soul, then add your prayer to ours before you go forth from the calm of this shelter into the busy world.

Organ Prelude

Call to Worship

One: This is Good Friday. This is real. Too real.

Many: Things don't get heavier than this.

One: While it would be rather easy to avoid it,

**Many: We are faithful to meet the darkness, fear and dread.
Yet we don't want to see the deceit, desertion,
denial.**

One: This is all part of being human.

Many: God does not leave us to this work alone.

One: But partners with us so that we may have light and love -
even now.

**Many: We enter into this time of Word and worry and
wonder.**

We also embrace the mystery and grace of this day.

One: God brings us love all the way. *Be sure of this!*

**All: Let us worship our God together—Creator, Christ
and Spirit.**

Opening Prayer

Holy One, we're not sure we want to be here. There are so many other things we could be doing...things that could bring us joy, set us free, help us to feel truly alive. And yet we are sure that we need to be here. You have things to say to us, things to share with us, things to show us. Help us to open all of our senses to experience you now on this Good Friday. Amen.

Opening Hymn #98—*O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*

**O sacred head, now wounded,
With grief and shame weighed down;
Now scornfully surrounded with thorns, Thine only crown;
O sacred head, what glory, what bliss till now was Thine!
Yet, though despised and gory, I joy to call Thee mine.**

**What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered was all for sinners' gain;
Mine, mine was the transgression, But Thine the deadly pain.
Lo, here I fall, my Savior! 'Tis I deserve Thy place;
Look on me with Thy favor, vouch safe to me Thy grace.**

**What language shall I borrow to thank Thee, dearest friend,
For this Thy dying sorrow, thy pity without end?
O make me Thine forever; and should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never out live my love to Thee.**

Silence

Hebrew Scripture Lesson Isaiah 25:6-9

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Psalter Lesson Psalm 23 (King James Version)

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

New Testament Lesson Romans 8:35, 37-39

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Silence

Reflections

In the mighty name of God, In the saving name of Jesus,
In the strong name of the Spirit, We cry, we watch, we wait
We look, we long for you. ~*Celtic Prayer*

In the pain, misfortune, oppression and death of the people,
God is silent.

God is silent on the cross, in the crucified.

And this silence is God's word, God's cry.

In solidarity, God speaks the language of love. ~*Jon Sobrino, El Salvador*

The cross is the way of the lost

The cross is the staff of the lame

The cross is the strength of the weak

The cross is the hope of the hopeless

The cross is the freedom of the slave

The cross is the water of the seeds

The cross is the source for folk seeking water

The cross is the cloth of the naked ~*10th Century African Hymn*

The cross we bear precedes the crown we wear.

To be a Christian one must take up the cross,

with all its difficulties and agonizing

and tension-packed content and carry it

until that very cross leaves its marks upon us

and redeems us to that more excellent way

which comes only through suffering. ~*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

O Christ, thou didst sleep a life-giving sleep in the grave,
and didst awaken humankind from the heavy sleep of sin.

~*Byzantine Liturgy*

Christ our Lord, like the seed buried in the ground, you brought forth for
us the harvest of grace. Christ the Good Shepherd, in death you lay
hidden from the world. ~*Antiphons: Morning Prayer*

Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness. It took me years to
understand that this too, was a gift. ~*Mary Oliver*

There are so many ways to be brave in this world. Sometimes it is
nothing more than gritting your teeth through pain, and the work of
every day, the slow walk toward a better life. That is the sort of bravery I
must have now. – *Veronica Roth*

Don't expect us to follow the rules once we learn that the game is about
protecting your power with our lives. – *Brene Brown*

I believe we are invited to gaze upon the image of the crucified to soften
our hearts toward suffering and to know that God's heart has always been
softened toward us, even and most especially in our suffering. This
softens us toward ourselves and all others who suffer. – *Richard Rohr*

The Romans intended the cross to be a symbol of the consequences of defying the power of the empire. But the early Christians turned the symbolism of the cross on its head. Through Jesus' crucifixion, an alternative empire was being established on earth, in direct contradiction to the empire of Rome. Through the crucifixion, God's realm of peace, justice, equality, and charity was coming into being – not just in heaven, but on earth. A few hundred years after Jesus' death, the Roman Empire collapsed. But the cross remained, adorning the tops of Christian churches throughout Rome's former territory. – *James Burklo*

Many Christians have believed that Jesus or God suffered for us or in our place, which to me diminishes the fact that we too suffer and we too will die. Others of us have seen Jesus' death on the cross as God's suffering with us, the literal meaning of 'compassion' = 'to suffer with.' – *Chris Glaser*

Epistle Lesson Romans 8:26-27

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God who searches the heart, knows what is in the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Gospel Lesson

The Seven Last Words of Jesus from the Cross

Forgive them, for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34)

Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise (Luke 23:43)

Woman, behold your son: behold your mother (John 19:26-27)

My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? (Matt. 27:46; Psalm 22)

I thirst (John 19:28)

It is finished (John 19:30)

Into your hands I commit my spirit (Luke 23:46)

Pastoral Prayer and Prayers of the People

Lord's Prayer

Our [Creator/Mother/Father/Holy One] who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Hymn #92—*Beneath the Cross of Jesus*

**Beneath the cross of Jesus, I fain would take my stand,
the shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land;
A home within the wilderness, a rest upon the way,
From the burning of the noontide heat,
And the burden of the day.**

Upon that cross of Jesus mine eye at times can see
The very dying form of One who suffered there for me;
And from my stricken heart with tears, Two wonders I confess:
The wonders of redeeming love and my unworthiness.

I take, O cross, thy shadow for my abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine than the sunshine of his face;
Content to let the world go by, to know no gain nor loss,
My sinful self my only shame, my glory all the cross.

Reflection *The Way of Pain*—Wendell Berry

For parents, the only way
is hard. We who give life
give pain. There is no help.
Yet we who give pain
give love; by pain we learn
the extremity of love.

I read of Abraham's sacrifice
the Voice required of him,
so that he led to the altar
and the knife his only son.
The beloved life was spared
that time, but not the pain.
It was the pain that was required.

I read of Christ crucified,
the only begotten Son
sacrificed to flesh and time
and all our woe. He died
and rose, but who does not tremble
for his pain, his loneliness,
and the darkness of the sixth hour?
Unless we grieve like Mary
at His grave, giving Him up
as lost, no Easter morning comes.

And then I slept, and dreamed
the life of my only son
was required of me, and I
must bring him to the edge
of pain, not knowing why.
I woke, and yet that pain
was true. It brought his life
to the full in me. I bore him
suffering, with love like the sun, too bright, unsparing, whole.

Silence

PG-13 Reflection *Goddamn Evil*—David Henson

Goddamn abuse
Goddamn injustice, slavery and rape.
Goddamn racism
Goddamn war
Goddamn that strange fruit of bigotry and hate
Goddamn suffering
Goddamn hunger
Goddamn indifference, apathy and waste
Goddamn noose
Goddamn death
Goddamn despair, depression, the wait
Goddamn Good Friday
And a Goddamn cross
Goddamned it all,
Goddamned it too late
Yet we live like it's Easter
Like God has been raised
We live like it's light,
In spite of the dark.
We live like there's joy
With spite in our hearts
For all that remain of our Goddamned days
These Goddamned
Good Fridays.

Organ Meditation

Silence

Reflection *Good Friday's Cross*—Unknown

Good Friday's cross stood on the altar
skeleton shrouded in black, anonymous as anaesthetized death—
as if we could not face dying, pain, blood,
but wished their annihilation behind unseeing veil
and choir's harmonizing of the torn body and spilt blood
of the One whose life is sign and symbol
of all the calculated obscenities people endure
in the name of God or of anyone else for that matter.

Silence

Reflection *Good Friday* - Christina Rossetti

Am I a stone, and not a sheep,
That I can stand, O Christ, beneath Thy cross,
To number drop by drop Thy blood's slow loss,
And yet not weep?

Not so those women loved
Who with exceeding grief lamented Thee;
Not so fallen Peter weeping bitterly;
Not so the thief was moved;

Not so the Sun and Moon
Which hid their faces in a starless sky,
A horror of great darkness at broad noon –
I, only I.
Yet give not o'er,
But seek Thy sheep, true Shepherd of the flock;
Greater than Moses, turn and look once more
And smite a rock.

Silence

Reflection *Crosses—Unknown*

Almost all the crosses I have ever seen seem much the same
despite their differing size, shape, texture—
some are empty, others bear, cosmetic Christs
but few, if any, present the crosses of our world
crosses of plants and animals, under threat of extinction,
crosses of people suffering unjust imprisonment, starvation, torture,
personal and institutional violence.
Sometimes I wish I could place real bodies upon those crosses—
bodies of dead whales, dead native birds and trees,
bodies of dead, dying, emaciated and mutilated people;
for at the intersection of the horizontal and vertical elements of life
there is always a body
and in the Body of Christ I see all the bodies of this world.

Silence

Reflection *Strong Love* by George Stuart

Look at Jesus; hear the story; Probe the purpose of his life;
See the struggle and the glory, All the conflict, all the strife.
Was this man so meek and gentle; One who wanted peace and calm?
Was his talk of love so central? Was he one who did no harm?

Jesus often rescued others; Stood close by those pushed aside;
Called the outcasts sisters, brothers; Cared for those who had no guide.
But he did not bow to power; Nor accept the “status quo.”
Justice needed strength to flower; By his love he helped it grow.

Enemies who had no honor, Those with status, those with rank,
Bought him for some dirty silver; Full of woe, the cup he drank.
When accused he gave no answer, Did not flee the angry throng;
Looking at the Roman soldier Asked forgiveness for his wrong.

Have we seen such love in action? Have we seen such love so strong?
Love that would not bow or soften When the use of power was wrong.
Yet this love is pure and gentle For the weak and for the lost.
Love which God alone can kindle Given free but at great cost.

Silence and Some Questions to Ponder

A great number of people keep silent most of today. What role does silence play in your life and in the life of your spirit?

Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. When has money been a complicated arena for you and how might your relationship with money changed over time?

Peter, frightened by the forces aligned against Jesus, denied him three times. When have you denied God? Where do you find courage not to?

There is so much judgment in this story. There is so much judgment in the world today. Whom do you judge? How and why? Where do you feel judged? What can you do about it?

It is said that the Spirit helps us in our weakness and when we are unsure of our prayers, the Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. Try it—sigh deeply. Sigh again. Can you feel the Spirit? Sigh again.

Picture the scene of the crucifixion. Where are you standing in that scene? What are you doing? What is your relationship with Jesus at this moment? When have you come away from suffering and pain? How?

In what ways is Jesus being crucified in the world still today? In what ways might you be participating in that crucifixion? How can you resist?

What do you think of these two statements? Jesus didn't die to convince God to love you. Jesus died to convince you that God already loves you.

The cross has become a symbol of freedom and God's grace and love. Who needs to experience freedom today? What role can you play in helping them find it? Make a plan. Pray for those seeking freedom and those withholding it from them.

The cross, originally an instrument of torture and execution, has also become a symbol of victory and power. What is the meaning of the cross in your life? Are you a person of the cross? How so?

They put an inscription above Jesus' head on the cross—"King of the Jews". What terms do you use to talk about Jesus and his role in the Bible, in community and in your own life today?

Reflection

It's true that some expressions of Christianity and different denominations lean more heavily on the crucifixion and Jesus's death. Jesus, we know however, spoke for life and creation. Jesus looked for ways to include, to affirm and to love all beings, especially the ones who have been tossed aside. Jesus offered instruction, through teaching and acts of healing, that invited everyone listening to do their inner work and to find more and more ways to love publicly, generously, and inclusively so as to dismantle all forms of oppression and injustice. Jesus's death – literal or symbolic – is important, but Jesus's life and what the resurrection invites for His followers, is where Christian practice and community become engaging. – *Lauren Van Ham*

Scripture

Isaiah 43:1-7

But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth— everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

A Version of the Lord's Prayer

Eternal Spirit: Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and all that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, creation resonates with celebration of your nameless name.

Let justice and mercy flood the earth; let all creation harmonize in your imagination; let us recognize that every thought and thing belongs to you.

With the bread we need for today, feed us; in the hurts we absorb from each other and those we inflict on others, forgive us; in times of test and temptation, stand with us; from the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you alone are creating our universe, now and forever. Amen.

Question

What will you do the rest of this Good Friday and Holy Saturday? What role has waiting had in your life? What about grief? Reunion?

Poem *A Box of Pastels*—Ted Kooser

I once held on my knees a simple wooden box
in which a rainbow lay dusty and broken.
It was a set of pastels that had years before
belonged to the painter Mary Cassatt,
and all of the colors she'd used in her work
lay open before me. Those hues she'd most used,
the peaches and pinks, were worn down to stubs,
while the cool colors—violet, ultramarine—
had been set, scarcely touched, to one side.
She'd had little patience with darkness, and her heart
held only a measure of shadow. I touched
the warm dust of those colors, her tools,
and left there with light on the tips of my fingers.

Hymn *Were You There?*

**Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
O-O-O-O, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?**
Were you there when they nailed Him to the cross?...
Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?...

Departure in Silence and Peace

Peace does not always mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble or hard work. Sometimes it means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart. ~unknown

Return tonight to YouTube at 7:00pm for another Good Friday worship experience very different from this one.

Blessings to you as we wait, watch and wonder - alone and together – throughout this challenging weekend.

I am not alone in my tiredness or sickness or fears, but at one with millions of others from many centuries... and it is all part of life.
—Etty Hillesum

Noah's Advice

by Donna Schaper, UCC Pastor in New York

God said to Noah, "Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch." ... At the end of the forty days, Noah opened the window of the ark.

- Genesis 6:14 and 8:6 (NRSV)

Noah's ark is the boat God uses to spare Noah, his family, and a bunch of animals from the stormy torrent. It's not just a children's toy or fantastical book, but a profound memory of a deluge. The story of Noah's ark is told, with variations, across Abrahamic traditions. The tale of a great flood is found in the oral tradition of many ancient civilizations.

In other words, it ain't the first deluge and it won't be the last one.

When children play with their toy arks, they lose pieces along the way. Just one giraffe remains. The monkeys disappear, only to turn up years later under the bed. Today we have lost more than our toys. We have lost a lot.

We are desperate for a forty-day calendar invite – and none is forthcoming. We are counting the days one "slice" of toilet paper at a time; those paper perforations let us laugh at how scared we are.

We so want to come out of zombie zoom and unmute ourselves. We want to touch or be touched. For now we are all untouchables and very touchy.

I miss the future. And from within the ark, all I can see is a different future. The end of the office. The end of school. The end of church. The end.

Advice-givers say, "Lower your expectations." So, I will. I will make this journey without a suitcase, without a map, without guides. I'll travel itinerary-free. Noah probably did too, until the dove and the rainbow changed his mind.

Prayer:

God of flood and ark, calendars and eternity, draw near. Future us in new ways. Amen.

Watered by Tears

by Jennifer Brownell, UCC Pastor in Vancouver, Washington

*May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.
Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves. - Psalm 126:5-6*

In my first memory, I'm in a hospital bed with high bars like a cage. I'm holding onto the railing and I'm crying. There are other cages in the room, but I have the one next to the window so my back is to them, my eyes straining to see out into the night. My mother had pointed to some lights, a restaurant below. Told me she would be right there. Told me she would be right back.

But I'm scared and I'm lonely and I'm sobbing. Enter a nurse. "Ah, funny girl," she calls heartily to the back of my head, "why are you laughing?"

I would not choose that my first memory be this. I would not choose it, but I'm grateful for it. The seeds that were planted then—pain, fear, loneliness—rested in the ground for a long time. They grew slowly at first, tender seedlings poking their heads tentatively out of rocky soil. Those seedlings were not as fragile as they seemed. They branched out and revealed themselves as resilience, flexibility, humor, curiosity, faith, compassion.

Half a century later, I can hardly get my arms around the sturdy harvest that has grown from those tough little seeds first watered by the tears of my toddler self. Now I'm coming home bearing the harvest, songs of joy on my lips.

Prayer:

God, you do not cause us to suffer. Instead, you take the suffering we are given and plant it in the soil of your transforming grace and mercy. May we rejoice in the harvest. Amen.

The Image and the Mystery of the Cross

by Thomas Howard

At the center of Christian vision and imagery stands a great and enigmatic sign, the sign of the cross. The cross attracts the unceasing efforts of man's intellect and imagination and affection to respond....

It is carried in procession with great pomp in Rome and hangs on a string around the neck of an Irish farmer. It glimmers from a plaque next to a child's crib and shines from the pages of Aquinas.

It is hailed in sorrowful chants (O vos omnes...videte si est dolor sicut dolor mei) and in hymns of contrition ("When I survey the wondrous cross") and of triumph ("Onward, Christian soldiers").

There are gold crosses,
plastic crosses, wooden crosses,
jeweled crosses, and stone crosses.

There are huge crosses towering in the Alps and the Andes and tiny crosses on dashboards and shelves.
There are crosses on spires and crosses on gravestones.

There are Celtic crosses,
Crusaders' crosses,
crosses of Saint Anne,
and Coptic crosses.

There is the bare cross,
the crucifix, and the Christus Rex
(Christ crowned and in royal robes on the cross).

And of course there is no counting
the frescoes, mosaics, icons,
and oil paintings that have for their subject the crucifixion scene....

Christians see themselves, then, as a people under the sign of the cross. It is the sign of their salvation; it is their ensign, their banner, their cover, their plea, and their glory.

