



Resurrection

A UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

West

The Way of the Cross Prayer Trail

PERSONAL PRAYER WALK BOOKLET

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Background

This Way of the Cross is a modern adaptation of an old Christian tradition dating back to the fifth century. The fourteen traditional Stations of the Cross mark the passages from the moment Jesus was condemned to death until his burial in the tomb. We have added a 15th to reflect on our church's namesake, "The Resurrection of the Christ". The Way of the Cross was originally developed and used by Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land, and it came to be identified with the Lenten season to prepare the people of God for the season of repentance that Lent represents — although it can be used at other times of devotion.

Protestant churches objected to this devotional form because some of the traditional stations include some "stations" that are not grounded in Scripture. Those used here all have a biblical basis. In any case, the "Way of the Cross" as a devotion went out of style for many, and it slowly lost its place as a form of prayer for the people. This resource seeks to make accessible again a rich experience of Christian prayer and participation in the moments of Christ's passion.

This form of the Stations or Way of the Cross was adapted from a small-membership church in Pulaski, Tennessee, that made an effort to re-establish the tradition for its use. Bethel United Methodist Church found the Way of the Cross to be a means whereby the people of God could reflect on the meaning that our Lord's sacrifice has in our daily lives. It is a means of grace and rededication of ourselves to Christ.

Using This Act of Prayer

This devotional act has been designed to help the people of God — through Scripture, reflection, and prayer — relive the experience of suffering and sacrifice that our Lord went through on Good Friday some 2000 years ago. The Way of the Cross also helps to bring back the meaning of Holy Week and make it truly a significant period for all Christians.

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First Station: "Jesus Prays Alone"

Luke 22:39-44 - *Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.*

Reflect: Consider, if you will, how you would feel if you were faced with the absolute knowledge that all you ever loved was about to be taken from you. Jesus prayed in the garden alone, knowing that his death was about to take place and knowing that his beloved disciples would abandon him in his most dire need.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, forgive me for my forgetfulness and the times I take you for granted. Help me to be mindful that in my sinfulness I have offended you and grievously hurt you. Have mercy and forgive my shortcomings.*

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Second Station: "Jesus Is Arrested"

Matthew 26:47-56 - *While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him.*

Jesus replied, "Do what you came for, friend."

Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

"Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"

In that hour Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Reflect: Think about how Jesus must have felt, having had compassion on so many and having healed so many of their infirmities, only to be met with angry, cursing people who intended to repay his goodness with harm. A betrayal from a trusted friend became an additional torment.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, so many times have I abandoned your teachings in favor of expediency. I have left behind all that you taught so many times and have neglected to love others as you have loved me. Forgive me and bless me with your strength.*

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Third Station: "The Sanhedrin Tries Jesus"

Mark 14:61-64 - *But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.*

Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?"

"I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?"

Reflect: Think of how Jesus must have felt being tried by the very spiritual leaders with whom God the Father entrusted his Holy Word. We might at least have called them hypocrites, but Jesus never said a word in his own defense. Instead of an angry outcry, his loving heart forgave them for their deceit and lack of love.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, sometimes I have found myself confronted by unjust accusations from people I considered to be my friends. The pain I felt was so terrible at this betrayal; yet in your case, you forgave them before they did you harm and attempted to defame you. Teach me how to be humble and forgiving, but most of all how to love so completely.*

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Fourth Station: "Pilate Tries Jesus"

John 18:33-37 - Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

Reflect: Consider how Jesus must have felt being abandoned by his own people and turned over to heathen unbelievers for judgment. Jesus was not guilty of anything, yet he was being tried by one who knew nothing of the Scriptures or of God's kingdom. Think of what it must have felt like to be accused by liars and deceivers before someone so powerful as the Roman governor from a foreign land.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, sometimes when I feel I have been let down by those I care about the most, I want to abandon them and go my own way. I have no right to be this way nor to feel as I do. Teach me always to be just and compassionate if ever I am in a position when I must make a decision concerning someone else.

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Fifth Station: "Pilate Sentences Jesus"

Mark 15:6-15 - Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested. A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

"Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

"What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them.

"Crucify him!" they shouted.

"Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Reflect: Jesus stands falsely accused by some of the same people with whom he walked, who likely witnessed his miracles and heard his teachings. These people now cry out and demand his death, for him to be crucified. Still, Jesus continues to say yes to God and trusts Him fully. What might it have been like for Jesus to have been condemned to such a horrible and humiliating death on a cross, while knowing that at any time he had the power to stop it all? Consider how Jesus was unjustly condemned by Pilate to die on the cross.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, it was my sins that condemned you to the cross; and I ask you to assist my soul in its journey toward eternity. Never permit me to separate myself from you again, and help me to grow in my love of God the Father and appreciate your sacrifice for me.

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Sixth Station: "Jesus Wears a Crown"

John 19:5 - *When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"*

Reflect: He was stripped of his clothes and a purple robe was placed upon him signifying the color of royalty. Then a crown of thorns was twisted together and placed on his head. All so they could kneel in front of him and mock him as someone who was called a "King". They then spit on him and took a staff to strike him on the head again and again. Consider the pain of having sharp, hardened thorns shoved violently onto your head. Consider the blood flowing freely down your face and burning your eyes, blurring your vision so you cannot even see your tormentors. Remember Jesus' last commandment, "Love one another as I have loved you."

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, open my eyes when I am troubled so I don't lose sight of the suffering of others. I have never thought about how it must have felt to be tortured as you were: beaten, scourged, and forced to wear a crown of thorns that ripped into your scalp. I could never bear the pain as you did without a cry of pain, let alone forgive my tormentors and continue to love them. Help me, Lord, to learn your perfect love so that I may be one with you in all that I do.*

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Seventh Station: "Jesus Carries His Cross"

John 19:17 - *Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).*

Reflect: Jesus receives his cross, living out the words he spoke to those who desire to be his disciples, and then begins the walk to his death. Put yourself into the story. Jesus has endured the brutal beating and now the heavy beam of timber is placed upon his bloody shoulders. He is pushed and prodded along to the place where he will be crucified. Imagine how that would feel to be shuffling more than walking down a path to death. Consider how Jesus, in making the journey with the cross on his shoulders, thought of us and offered for us to God the death he was about to undergo.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, I accept all the tribulations I will have to endure for the rest of my life. I ask you to grant me strength to endure and carry my cross through life with patience and resignation. I repent of my sins and ask that you help me keep from separating myself from you ever again.*

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Eighth Station: "Simon Carries the Cross"

Luke 23:26 - *As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.*

Reflect: A person from the crowd is ordered by the guards to take the cross of Jesus and carry it. This is not the guards trying to be kind to Jesus, they must keep things moving along. Jesus is becoming weaker and slowing down as He shuffles along. The pace must pick up and they want Jesus to make it to the crucifixion alive. So they order Simon of Cyrene into cross-carrying duty. He is forced into being an accomplice in the crucifixion of Jesus. The cross is removed from Jesus's shoulders and placed upon those of Simon. The death march continues and the two plod onward. Consider how the Roman soldiers, after seeing Jesus weaken with each step and fearing that he would die before he was crucified, recruited Simon of Cyrene to help carry the cross behind our Lord. Imagine yourself as Simon, what would you say to Jesus?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, I accept the cross I have to bear. You died out of love for me. Grant me strength to live for You; and if I die, let me die for love of You. Help me with Your grace, that I may be aware of Your will for me always.*

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Ninth Station: "Jesus Speaks to the Women"

Luke 23:27-31 - *A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!'*

Then " 'They will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" ' "

For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Reflect: Consider how those women wept with compassion at seeing Jesus in such a pitiful state, streaming with blood, weakened and scorned by onlookers as he walked along. Consider Jesus words, "Do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, I weep for the sorrows I have caused in my life and for the offenses I have committed against God. You have loved me so much; and it is that love that causes me to have such great sorrow for my sins. Forgive me, Lord, and strengthen my resolve that I may never offend you again.*

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Tenth Station: "Jesus Is Crucified"

John 19:19-24 - *And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.

Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

Reflect: Consider how Jesus felt being thrown down upon the cross, ripping open the wounds of the scourgers whips. Consider how he extended his hands, allowing those terrible nails to be driven blow by blow into his outstretched hands. Consider those awful nails being driven into those feet, those feet that walked so far and tirelessly, bringing the good news of salvation to a hurting and hungry world. Jesus offered to God the sacrifice of his life for our salvation. His captors fastened him with nails to the cross, raised the cross, and left him to die in anguish and great suffering.

(No prayer, at this time, just silent individual meditation.)

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Eleventh Station: "Criminals Speak to Jesus"

Luke 23:39-43 - *One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"*

But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Reflect: Think about the pain and anguish that Jesus must have felt being hung between two criminals and being ridiculed by the very people he loved so much and to whom he had so many times extended compassion and healing. Consider the courage he had to forget his pain and minister to the criminal who asked for forgiveness, promising the man that he would be in paradise that day. How could you see yourself caring for others during a time of your own suffering?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, so many times I have been so selfish in my pain that I forgot how others too feel pain. Sometimes I have forgotten to help out when I could have, and I violated your final commandment that we love one another.*

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Twelfth Station:

"Jesus Speaks to Mary and John"

John 19:25b-27 - Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Reflect: Consider the pain in a mother's heart as she beheld her son nailed to a cross amid a crowd of jeering spectators. Consider her pain in seeing those cruel wounds from the scourges whip, the crown of thorns imbedded into the brow, the terrible nails holding the hands and feet that she had bathed as a baby. There must have been great guilt felt by the beloved apostle, who once ran away in fear, standing at the foot of the cross and looking up at his dying friend and Lord. Get a sense of the enormity of Jesus' love as he forgives His beloved disciple by granting him the privilege of caring for his mother. Pause and think about forgiveness given in the midst of great pain and anguish.

Prayer: My Lord Jesus, in your final moments you showed love and care for those closest to you. They too showed their devotion to you. Help me to share with others care, love and devotion in my own life. Forgive me when I turn away from you, and grant me strength to return to you humbly.

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Thirteenth Station:

"Jesus Dies on the Cross"

John 19:28-34 - Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.

Reflect: Consider how Jesus — after three hours of agonizing pain on the cross — consumed at length with his anguish, abandoned himself to the weight of his body, bowed his head in submission and died.

Prayer: My dying, Lord Jesus, I embrace devoutly as I behold the cross you died on for me. My sins have merited for me a miserable death; but by your death, I have hope. Let me die embracing your feet and burning with a love for you.

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Fourteenth Station:

"Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb"

John 19:38-42 - Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds.

Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Reflect: Consider how the disciples of Jesus carried the body of Jesus to bury it. As they closed the tomb and withdrew, they carried a burden of pain deep within their hearts.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, your passion and death is the sacrifice that unites earth and heaven and reconciles all people to you. May we who have faithfully reflected on these mysteries follow in your steps and so come to share your glory in heaven where you life and reign for ever and ever.

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Fifteenth Station:

“The Resurrection of the Christ”

John 20:19-22 - *On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”*

After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

Reflect: *The disciples had been running in fear up to this point in the story. They were hiding from the Jewish leaders when Jesus appeared to them. He showed them the horror that had been done to his body proving His power over death. The resurrection and the promise of eternal life confirm that evil, sickness, even death will not have the final word. They confirm that “the worst thing is never the last thing.” Christ’s promise “because I live you will live also,” fundamentally changes how we face our future. Think about how this changes our viewpoint how much risk we are willing to take in our lives, how we approach growing old, how we deal with the death of people we love, and how we look at our own death.*

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, you rose again on the third day. I ask you by your Resurrection to make me rise gloriously with you at my last day. Let me be always united with you in heaven to praise you, love you, and glorify you forever. Breathe on me now and let me receive the Holy Spirit.*

AMEN

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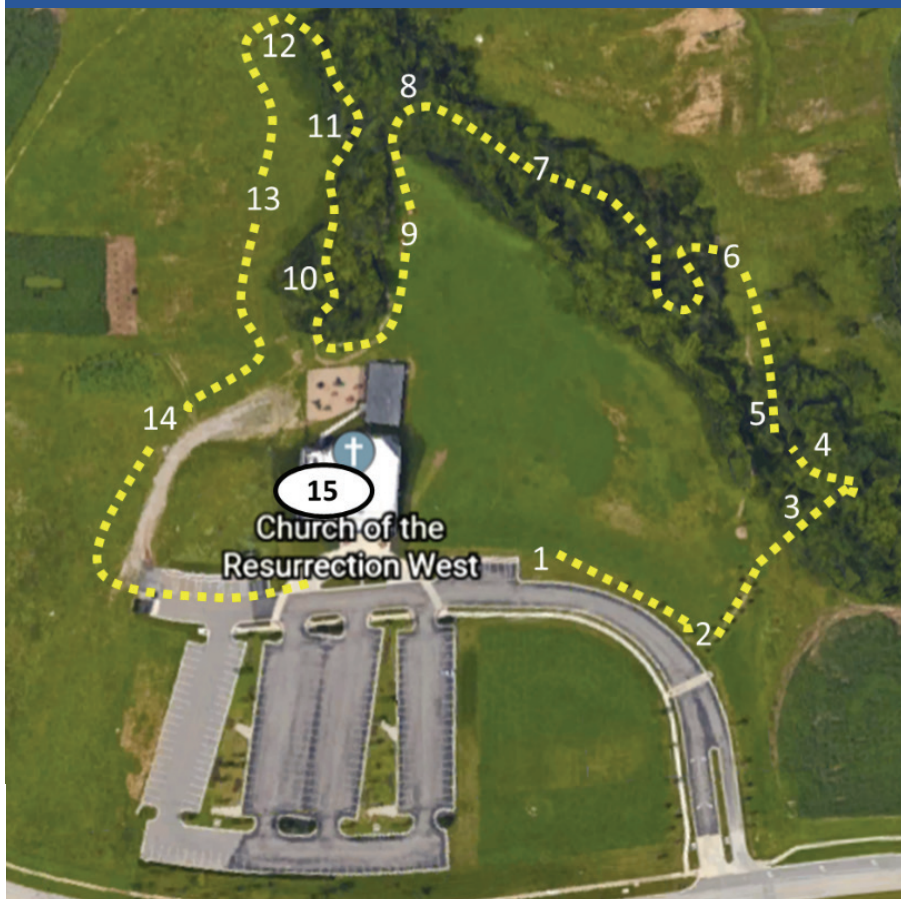
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