



**Saint Matthew's**

EPISCOPAL CHURCH



**Night Prayer & The Way of the Cross with Communion**

**Good Friday**

**April 7, 2023**

**7:00 pm**

## **Welcome to St. Matthew's! We are glad you came to worship with us.**

If you are visiting, please fill out the Visitor's Card found in the pew so that we can get to know you. You can place it in the offering plate or hand it to one of our worship leaders. Everything you need to participate in worship is in this worship bulletin. The People are invited to read the words in **bold**.

**Wherever you are on your spiritual journey, there is a place for you at St. Matt's.**

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### **About "Night Prayer"**

*The offering of prayer late in the evening, by laity, religious orders, or clergy, often called Compline, has sometimes been described as the 'goodnight prayer of the Church'. It rounds off the day and prepares us for a quiet night. As the psalmist wrote:*

*I lie down in peace and take my rest  
for it is in God alone that I dwell unafraid.*

*Night Prayer derives its content from the wisdom of the centuries in Scripture and above all in the Psalms, but also from the contemporary Christian experience of God. It celebrates the awareness that each of us who tries to pray is part of the human whole. So we are taken over the threshold from daytime, not in a mood of self-centered spirituality, but as representatives of humanity, acknowledging our creaturehood before God. Prayer like this is especially fitting on this night when we remember Jesus' death on the cross, when we probe the depths of the darkness without him.*

### **About "The Way of the Cross"**

*No road in the Holy Land has been more travelled than the Way of the Cross in Jerusalem. For centuries Christian pilgrims have made this walk. In 381 and 384 C.E. a Spanish pilgrim named Egeria made a Good Friday pilgrimage from the Mount of Olives (where the Garden of Gethsemane is located) to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. This church, built over the site of Christ's crucifixion and burial, was already the Christian focal point in Jerusalem during Holy Week as it is today.*

*Today The Via Dolorosa (path of the cross) is a processional route in the Old City of Jerusalem. It represents the path that Jesus would have taken, forced by the Roman soldiers, on the way to his crucifixion. There are fourteen stations marked within the Old City; nine of the stations come from the Gospels, five come from medieval European imagination: Jesus' three falls, his meeting his mother, and Veronica wiping his face.*

*This evening we will walk these Stations of the Cross as we hear Scripture, reflect on its meaning in our world today, and prayer. Join us in singing, meditation, and prayer as we follow the Cross.*

*On this night, the liturgy begins with a time of silent prayer. If you are able, please stand or kneel for this time of prayer. When the appointed time comes, the Officiant begins the service with the following sentences. The People read the words in bold.*

*Officiant* The angels of God guard us through the night,

*People* **And quiet the powers of darkness.**

*Officiant* The Spirit of God be our guide

*People* **to lead us to peace and glory.**

*Officiant* It is but lost labor that we haste to rise up early, and so late take rest, and eat the bread of anxiety. For those beloved of God are given gifts even while they sleep. My sisters and brothers, our help is in the name of the eternal God,

*People* **who is making the heavens and the earth.**

*Officiant and People*

**Dear God, thank you for all that is good,**

**for our creation and for our humanity,**

**for the stewardship you have given us of this planet earth,**

**for the gifts of life and of one another,**

**for your love which is unbounded and eternal.**

**O God, most holy and beloved,**

**my Companion, my Guide upon the way, my bright evening star.**

**We repent the wrongs we have done:**

*Officiant* We have wounded your love.

*People* **O God, heal us.**

*Officiant* We stumble in the darkness.

*People* **Light of the world transfigure us.**

*Officiant* We forget that we are your home.

*People* **Spirit of God, dwell in us.**

*Officiant and People*

**Eternal Spirit, loving God,  
in whom we live and move and have our being,  
all that we are, have been, and will be is known to you,  
to the very secrets of our hearts  
and all that rises to trouble us.  
Living flame burn in us,  
cleansing wind, blow through us,  
fountain of water, well up within us,  
that we may love and praise in deed and in truth.**

## Invocation

## A Reflection for Good Friday

Jesus stands in the most human of places. He has already experienced what it means to be human, he shares life with us on this earth. Now he is beaten and tortured. He is wrongfully accused and will be punished with death. His commitment to entering our lives completely begins its final steps. He has said “yes” to God and placed his life in God’s hands. We follow him in this final surrender, and think carefully about each step, as he is broken and given for us.

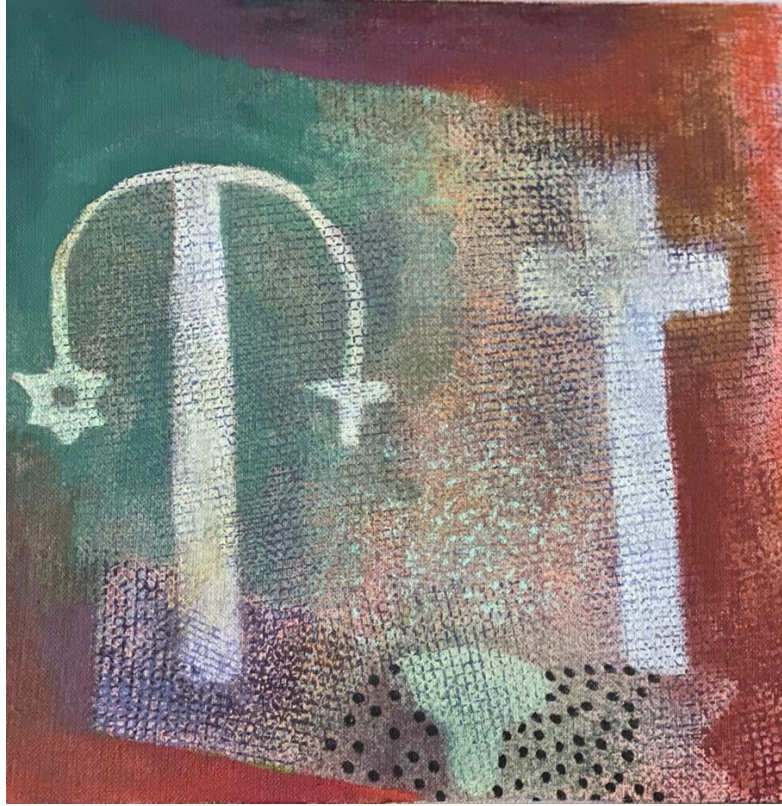
## Trisagion – S 99

*sung by all three times*

Ho - ly God, Ho - ly and Might - y,  
Ho - ly Im - mor - tal One, Have mer - cy up - on us.

*While singing, the congregation is invited to stand and follow the Cross and worship leaders as together we walk in procession to the first station. At each station, please gather around the images as we hear Scripture, reflect, and pray. The People respond with the words in **bold**.*

## **The First Station: Jesus Is Judged**



*Leader*      We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*People*      **Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.*

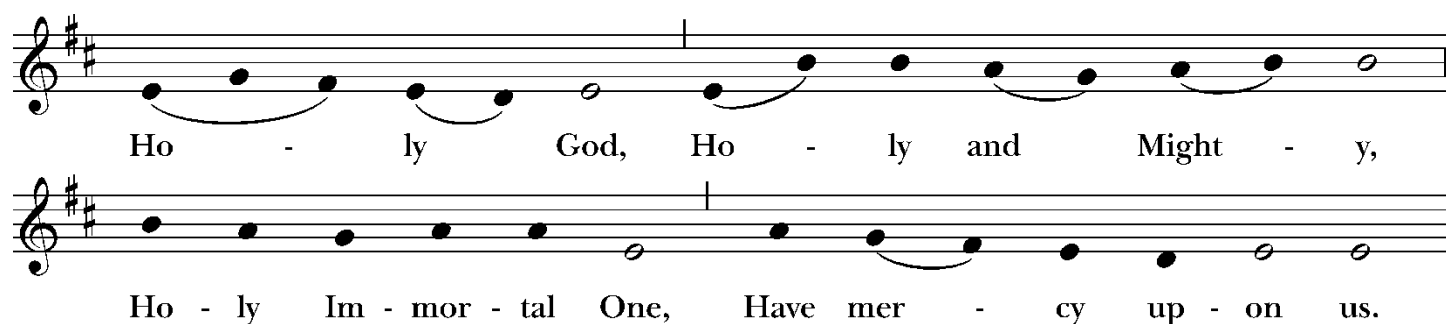
*Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters, called Praetorium in Greek), and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. —Mark 15:15-17*

Jesus was arrested the evening before although his arresters were not able to convict him according to their laws. Today people of color continue to be disproportionately incarcerated, policed, and sentenced to death at significantly higher rates than their white counterparts. Racial disparities in the criminal-justice system threaten communities of color—disenfranchising thousands by denying equal access to employment, housing, public benefits, and education. While people of color make up about 30% of the United States’ population, they account for 60% of those imprisoned. One in three black men can expect to go to prison in their lifetime. A social worker in Brooklyn told *The New York Times* the tragedy is not only that it is likely youth in his neighborhood face incarceration at an alarming rate, but also that youth in his community cannot envision a life that does not include incarceration.

Let us pray: Lord, you suffered at human hands the pain of false arrest, torture, and unjust punishment, and you commanded us to comfort those in prison. Build a fire in your people, Lord, that we may never learn patience with prejudice or make peace with oppression, but that we may burn with zeal for justice, proportion, and equal protections under law for all people. In the Name of him who died condemned. **Amen.**

## Trisagion – S 99

*sung by all three times*



Ho - ly God, Ho - ly and Might - y,  
Ho - ly Im - mor - tal One, Have mer - cy up - on us.

*We follow the Cross, singing, to the next station.*

## The Second Station: Jesus Receives His Cross



*Leader* We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*People* **Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. —John 19:16b-17*

Jesus is given a burden to carry, enduring the suffering of all of us. At the beginning of 2023 the federal government announced a cut in the food stamp program. These cuts put an enormous strain on family food budgets as grocery prices increased 10 percent last year. Experts warn of a “hunger cliff” in which the number of Americans going hungry is likely to increase dramatically in the near future. Food prices have affected the poverty rate, which increased in 2022. Last year, 53 million Americans utilized food banks or other food programs. Every county in America, including Fairfield County, has residents experiencing food insecurity.

Let us pray: God our sustainer, we ask you to pour your powerful Spirit into all who are empty this day: Fill the hearts of persons who are troubled. Fill the

minds of men and women who are confused. Fill the stomachs of your children who are hungry. Fill the souls of people who are feeling lost. Fill the lives of all who need you, but do not know you. May your Spirit fill us all to overflowing, dear Lord, and may we be inspired to share our abundance with others, so that there will be no more empty hearts and minds, stomachs, and souls. We pray all this in the name of Jesus Christ, who fills lives with your endless grace. **Amen.**

*Please take a wooden "holding cross" to carry with you as we journey.*

## Trisagion – S 99

*sung by all three times*

Ho - ly God, Ho - ly and Might - y,  
Ho - ly Im - mor - tal One, Have mer - cy up - on us.

*We follow the Cross, singing, to the next station.*



## The Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time



*Leader* We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*People* **Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*Surely he has borne our infirmities  
and carried our diseases;  
yet we accounted him stricken,  
struck down by God, and afflicted. —Isaiah 53:4*

Jesus stumbles and falls for the first time, weakened by the wounds he received when he was scourged by the prison guards, by the pain of his crown of thorns, the mockery of the crowds around him, and the heavy weight of the cross that he carries. He intimately shares our humanity as he experiences brokenness and suffering. Sadly, sometimes illness, pain and brokenness are part of what it means for us to be human. Our health care workers try valiantly to meet our needs when we are sick, but our health care system itself is broken in many ways and filled with inequities. The U.S. cost of healthcare per person is higher than

all other comparable countries leading to the tragic reality that 66.5% of personal bankruptcies are caused by medical debts even for those with health insurance coverage. The cost of buying medicines here is 2.5 times higher than in other wealthy countries. Healthcare and insurance inequities for people living in low-income communities can lead to much poorer access to health services which in turn lead to poorer health outcomes such as significantly higher maternity death rates and lower life expectancies. People with disabilities also often struggle to find and then afford the healthcare, education, and everyday living accommodations that they require for their fullest well-being.

Let us pray: God of compassion who suffered on your way to the cross, we pray for all of those who face illness, injury, pain, or disability. Open our hearts and our eyes to their suffering. Be with all healthcare workers who work so diligently to restore wellness and relieve pain. Give them strength, wisdom, patience, and abiding compassion for others. Keep us ever mindful of the inequities and inadequacies of our healthcare system and guide us to support those who work to make it more equitable and affordable for all. Inspire us to follow your commandment to “Love our neighbor” so that all our neighbors may receive the medical care and healing that they deserve. In Christ’s name we pray. **Amen.**

## Trisagion – S 99

*sung by all three times*

Ho - ly God, Ho - ly and Might - y,  
Ho - ly Im - mor - tal One, Have mer - cy up - on us.

*We follow the Cross, singing, to the next station.*

## The Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother



*Leader* We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*People* **Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*“This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.” —Luke 2:34b-35*

There were women in the crowd who followed Jesus as he carried the cross. Mary stood at the foot of the cross and observed the sufferings of her son. For a mother to witness such an act and see her child die at the hands of others is unimaginable. Mothers continue to cry over the violent deaths of their children. In July 2022, firearms became the number one cause of death for children in the United States, surpassing motor vehicle deaths and those caused by other injuries. Among children who die by gunfire, Black and Hispanic children are more likely to be killed by others, and white children are more likely to kill themselves. *Moms Demand Action* is a grassroots movement that fights for public

safety measures that can protect people from gun violence. They work to pass stronger gun laws and to close the loopholes that jeopardize the safety of families.

Let us pray: O God of mercy and grace, you bring hope in the midst of senseless tragedy and light in the midst of deepest darkness: we confess our need for the Risen Christ as we face into the realities of gun violence in America. We are mindful of the deaths of innocent shoppers in grocery stores and malls, students and teachers in schools, people who gather in sanctuaries to worship, and children in the streets of our cities. Release your Holy Spirit, O God, to put our full faith and trust in you. Let your peace which passes all understanding direct us to be peacemakers in time of anguish and sorrow. **Amen.**

### Trisagion – S 99

*sung by all three times*

Ho - ly God, Ho - ly and Might - y,  
Ho - ly Im - mor - tal One, Have mer - cy up - on us.

*We follow the Cross, singing, to the next station.*

## The Fifth Station: Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry the Cross



*Leader* We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*People* **Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. —Luke 23:26*

Simon of Cyrene was an African visitor to Jerusalem and was seized to help Jesus in his weakness. We imagine Simon was a man of color. Catherine Meeks writes in *The Night is Long but Light Comes in the Morning*, “Clearly it is not any fun to experience a broken heart, but it is empowering to stay open to the process of engaging in suffering with others. If there is going to be any genuine, sustainable change toward racial healing, we must dismantle the constructs that restrict all who live in this land. When we allow our hearts to break for one another, a new dynamic of vulnerability can emerge that makes it possible to see in a new way. There are many points along the way when one can catch a

glimpse of the new light of the morning, finally managing to outlive the darkness of the night. That light will be sustained by the continued willingness to walk in the shoes of another, especially those that are considered ‘other’ among us.”

Let us pray: O God, who created all peoples in your image, we thank you for the wonderful diversity of races and cultures in this world. Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship, and show us your presence in those who differ most from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### Trisagion – S 99

*sung by all three times*

Ho - ly God, Ho - ly and Might - y,  
Ho - ly Im - mor - tal One, Have mer - cy up - on us.

*We follow the Cross, singing, to the next station.*

## The Sixth Station: A Woman (Veronica) Wipes Jesus' Face



*Leader* We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*People* **Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*He had no form or majesty that  
we should look at him,  
nothing in his appearance that  
we should desire him.  
He was despised and rejected  
by others;  
a man of suffering and  
acquainted with infirmity;  
and as one from whom others  
hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held  
him of no account. —Isaiah 53:2-3*

A woman compassionately reaches out to Jesus in his pain and exhaustion. Ginette Azcona and Antra Bhatt share that poverty is not gender-neutral: “As with most threats to well-being, poverty has an accentuated impact on women. Tackling this requires integrated action on several fronts to address the systemic inequalities women face across the world today.... At the root of women’s poverty is the unequal distribution of power in society, the unequal value and distribution of unpaid and paid work, and the failure to address other prevailing forms of inequality that compound with gender to leave women and girls from marginalized communities furthest behind. Acknowledging and addressing these systemic challenges is vital in the fight against female poverty. Doing so from an intersectional perspective is essential for ensuring women in all their diversity are reached.”

Let us pray: Almighty and most merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget: the homeless and the destitute, the old and the sick, women who live in poverty, and all who have none to care for them. Help us to open our eyes to see them, help us to heal those who are broken in body or spirit, and help us to turn their sorrow into joy. All this we ask for your mercy’s sake. **Amen.**

## Trisagion – S 99

*sung by all three times*

Ho - ly God, Ho - ly and Might - y,  
Ho - ly Im - mor - tal One, Have mer - cy up - on us.

*We follow the Cross, singing, to the next station.*



## The Seventh Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time



*Leader* We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*People* **Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. —1 Peter 2:24*

A recovering alcoholic has a slip. An anxious young person suffers a depressive episode. A desperate man stares blankly at his computer screen, frozen, wondering whether to call the suicide hotline. In Jesus' journey to Calvary, he knew what it was to struggle, to reach the limit of endurance, and to fall, not once but several times. For those who live with mental health issues, it can be a comfort to know we are not alone – that there are others who share and understand the struggle – and that one of those who understands is Jesus, who has healed us by his wounds. As we pray, let us be especially mindful of those who face mental health issues without access to good healthcare and who have

the tensions and strains of daily life amplified by poverty, prejudice, violence, marginalization, and structural discrimination.

Let us pray: Strengthen me, Holy One, on my journey through illness; steady my steps on this difficult path. Bring me through signposts of remedies and therapies, secure in Your guidance as I face these changes. You are my strength and my courage, guiding my helpers as I move toward healing. Guard the encouragement of simple improvements, every day praising Your loving concern. Make me Your partner, Divine Physician, restoring me for Your name's sake. **Amen.**

## Trisagion – S 99

*sung by all three times*

Ho - ly God, Ho - ly and Might - y,  
Ho - ly Im - mor - tal One, Have mer - cy up - on us.

*We follow the Cross, singing, to the next station.*

## The Eighth Station: Jesus Talks to the Weeping Women



*Leader* We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*People* **Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*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?” —Luke 23:27-31*

The women walking near Jesus have now realized that there will be no last-minute pardon for Jesus as had occasionally occurred for other condemned prisoners of Rome by this point. The women weep loudly, having lost all hope for Jesus, and he responds with these words which feel very harsh as he warns them that there will be times to come that will be so terrible that they will wish their children had never been born—surely one of the most painful thoughts that a mother can have.

However, it is a thought that some mothers may have faced when confronting the almost unimaginable cruelties of war, famine, lasting oppression, or natural disasters that endangered their children and themselves. Many women have responded courageously by deciding to seek refuge in other countries. They have navigated the often-dangerous complexities of being allowed into the new country and have left all they have known behind. Here in Wilton, three families who fled cruel wars have been assisted by the Wilton Interfaith Action Committee. The ones currently in Wilton include a widowed mother who left Syria on foot with her five young children and walked for two weeks to escape into Jordan. Then, after 18 months as a refugee in Jordan, moved to Wilton. Another mother brought her son to Wilton from Ukraine this past year hoping to return to her husband there after the war ends. These families have been welcomed and come to feel at home here. There are many other refugee stories—old and new, known and unknown, that surround us.

Let us pray: God of all nations, who unites all through Christ Jesus, we come today asking that you would help us to remember and honor all of those who have fled their homes in the hope of safety elsewhere. For the mothers who have thought it better to leave with only what can be worn on their backs; for the fathers who are unable to rest for fear of violence directed at them or their loved ones; and for the children who don't understand why they need to run in the first place: Lord, we come asking for their protection, provision, and passage. Remind us that there is no "us" or "them," because when one part of the body suffers, all members are affected. It is in Jesus' name that we pray. **Amen.**

## Trisagion – S 99

*sung by all three times*

Ho - ly God, Ho - ly and Might - y,  
Ho - ly Im - mor - tal One, Have mer - cy up - on us.

*We follow the Cross, singing, to the next station.*

## The Ninth Station: Jesus Falls a Third Time



*Leader* We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*People* **Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet is without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. —*  
*—Hebrews 4:15-16*

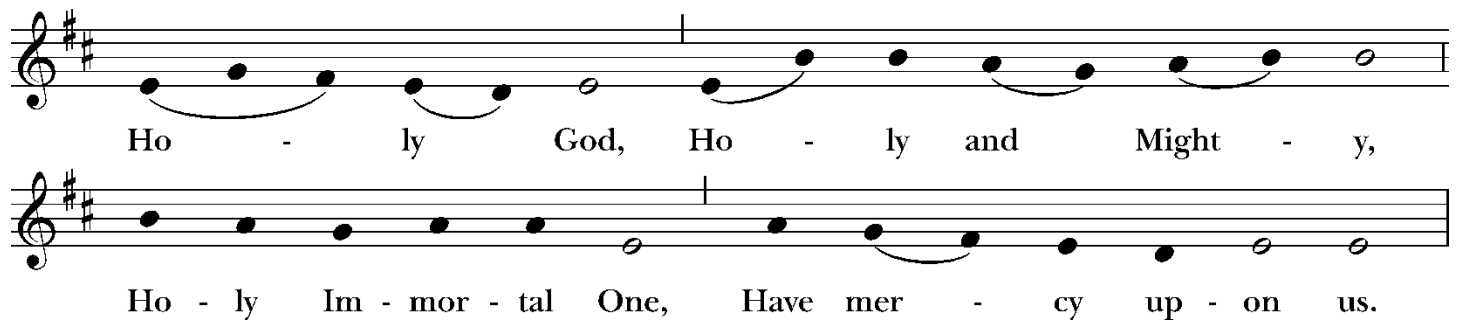
As Jesus falls for the third time, the weight of the cross overpowers him. He has born the discrimination of others as well as himself most of his life, even though he has shown compassion toward all people, especially the marginalized and those who bear the weight of discrimination that makes them outcasts in their own communities. In our world today there continues to be discrimination shown toward people regarding their race, religion, social class, ethnicity, gender, and age. Discrimination can result in abuse, murder, lack of access to jobs, promotions, difficulty starting a business, access to housing, and so much more. Yet there is hope in those who reach out to break these barriers and burdens, such as new initiatives for Native American students to learn their

culture to keep it alive and non-profit organizations that assist Black veteran women start their own trucking company for long distance hauling with semi-trucks.

Let us pray: Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart (and especially the hearts of the people of this land), that barriers that divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our division being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### Trisagion – S 99

*sung by all three times*



Ho - ly God, Ho - ly and Might - y,  
Ho - ly Im - mor - tal One, Have mer - cy up - on us.

*We follow the Cross, singing, to the next station.*

## The Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments



*Leader* We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*People* **Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it."*

*This was to fulfil what the scripture says, "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots." —John 19:23-24*

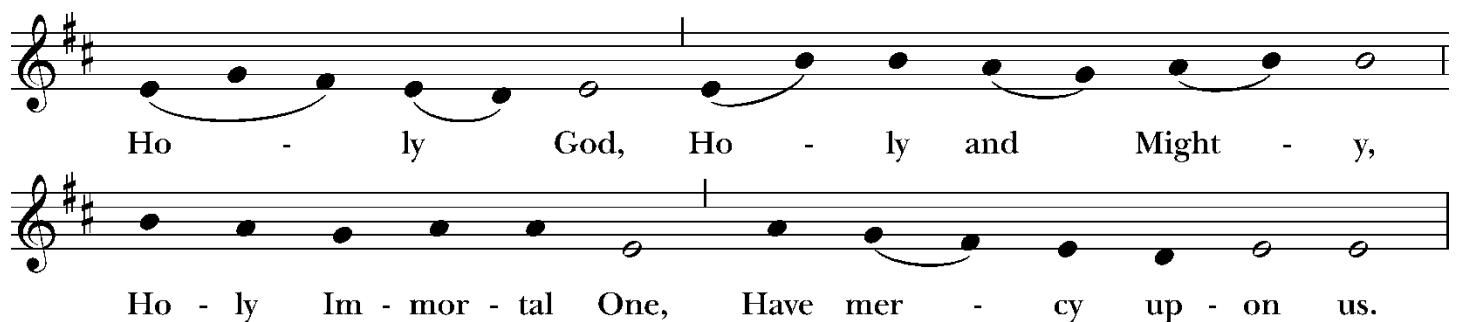
Jesus was stripped of his garments, a violation of his dignity. As a Jew, Jesus was taught never to be seen naked. His humiliation and his degradation were complete; everyone watching him, completely exposed to the ridicule of the crowd. How many black and brown brothers and sisters have been stripped of their dignity? Hanged in public squares for all to see. Treated as objects, not as humans. How many women have been denigrated by men trying to have power over them? How many practices of worship have been condemned and ridiculed by people with little understanding of who God is? How many laws have been

passed to marginalize the dignity of other races and ethnic groups including women having control over their own bodies? How many of our LGBTQ brothers and sisters have been stripped of their dignity by family members, police, and the general population?

Let us pray: For those whose dignity was lost to violence, rape, oppression. For those we inadvertently hurt through thoughtlessness and lack of patience and misunderstanding. For the young children whose dignity is often overlooked and not acknowledged. For the Indigenous Peoples who have been stripped of their lands, their culture, and their livelihood without reparations. Help us to acknowledge what we as a white privileged race have done and to help us right the wrong to our brothers and sisters. Help us to learn from each other the ways of healing so we may as a community embrace each other with your love. **Amen.**

## Trisagion – S 99

*sung by all three times*



Ho - ly God, Ho - ly and Might - y,  
Ho - ly Im - mor - tal One, Have mer - cy up - on us.

*We follow the Cross, singing, to the next station.*



## The Eleventh Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross



*Leader* We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*People* **Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." —Matthew 27:39-40*

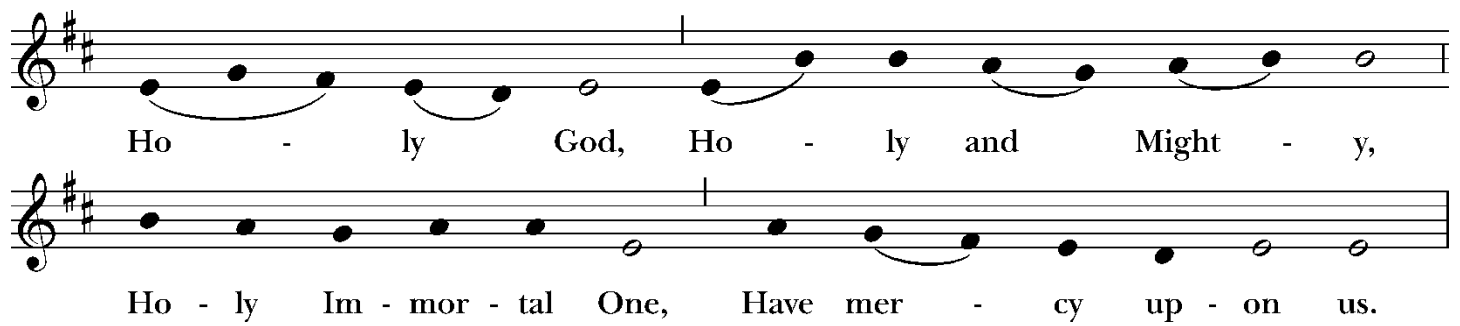
The trial and crucifixion of Jesus is a powerful symbol for Christians. To see Christ's body abused physically reminds us of how militaries and state-sanctioned forces can be mobilized against people. The cruelty built into systems of power continues to exert its power over the weak. In our time we have seen soldiers, police, and vigilantes do horrific things to victims; the spectacle created in each of these cases is meant to horrify and create subservience. The Romans used this knowledge to conquer people and territory; similarly we have seen the same strategy attempted in regions of the world, most

recently in Ukraine. Knowing the abuse Jesus went through should make us ever vigilant of abusive powers and individuals that seek to destroy humanity.

Let us pray: As the swords of war shatter the land and destroy the lives of God's children in our world, let us heed the call of our Lord and Savior Jesus to seek peace and to further the vision of Isaiah with our prayers, that peace may begin in our own hearts and our love for the suffering ones affected by war and violence be released to reach out to God, imploring God's mercy for the troubled places on this planet Earth, our island home. **Amen.**

## Trisagion – S 99

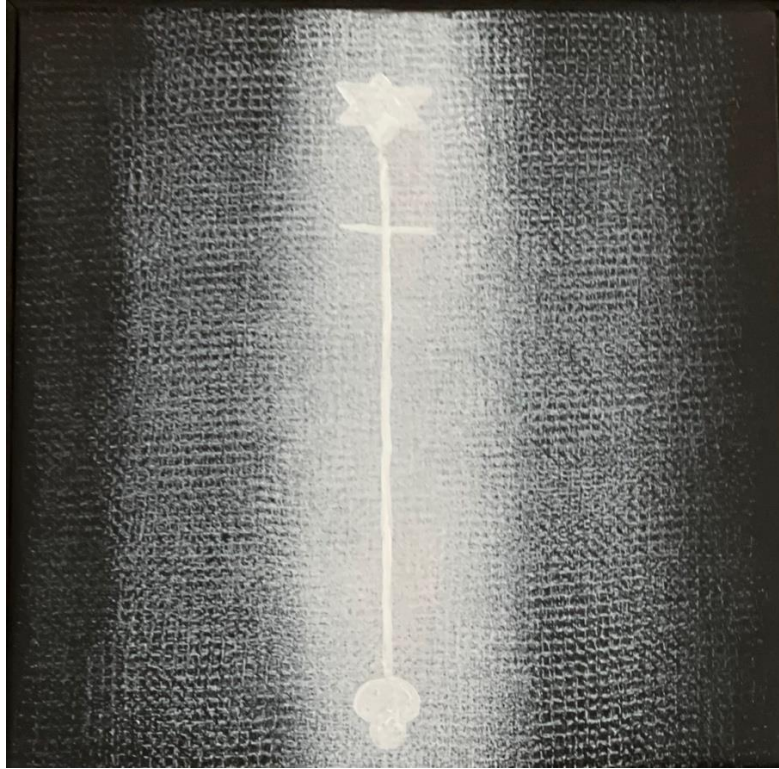
*sung by all* **three times**



Ho - ly God, Ho - ly and Might - y,  
Ho - ly Im - mor - tal One, Have mer - cy up - on us.

*We follow the Cross, singing, to the next station.*

## The Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross



*Leader* We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*People* **Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!" —Mark 15:37-39*

Jesus's death shows us the depth of God's love for all humanity. His death changed everything for all Christians; by dying on the cross he took the punishment for all our sins. Through Jesus our relationship with God is restored, and this is at the heart of the Christian faith. Christ died a violent death; he suffered as many of our marginalized brothers and sisters suffer. Jesus died because of hate, fear, and a thirst for power. How many black and brown men and women have died a senseless death because of greed and having no voice? People have been enslaved, tortured, beheaded for a conviction that does not value the dignity of human life. We watch on the news images of senseless dying and confrontations with no good end. We watch a war in Ukraine started by a

man seeking power and territory for his own gain. Many Russians and Ukrainians are dying wondering at what cost. Europe is at risk of being in a perpetual siege by Putin. The cycle of human suffering does not seem to have an end.

Let us pray: For all who have suffered a senseless death through the hands of people seeking power. For the marginalized who have been tortured, jailed, and discriminated against. For political prisoners facing a death sentence not knowing what they had done. For the homeless who die a senseless death because of starvation, cold weather, and the lack of compassion by people who just walk by. For a system which favors punishment and death rather than rehabilitation. For those who died for a crime, only later found out to have been wrongly accused. We pray for those who have lost their faith, who have never heard the word of salvation. For hearts hardened by indifference. **Amen.**

## Trisagion – S 99

*sung by all three times*

Ho - ly God, Ho - ly and Might - y,  
Ho - ly Im - mor - tal One, Have mer - cy up - on us.

*We follow the Cross, singing, to the next station.*

## The Thirteenth Station: Jesus' Body is Taken Down from the Cross



*Leader* We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*People* **Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen clothes, according to the custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. —John 19:38-42*

With a body already whipped and exhausted from carrying a heavy cross, his side has been pierced with a sword. Jesus' tortured body is taken down from the cross and prepared for burial, given to the care of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. It is a needless death, put on display for all to see without any compassion for a human life. Suffering continues to lead to unnecessary deaths today, often due to institutions and laws that perpetuate a lack of compassion

to others such as those who suffer from homelessness, addiction, or lack of adequate health care. During COVID, many people died alone or could not afford a proper burial. Individuals and nonprofits often step up, like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus to lend aid, such as *Person to Person* and funeral home directors that provide free burials for families that do not have the resources to honor their loved one with dignity.

Let us pray: Lord, you know every broken heart and every pain – those spoken and unspoken. There are many tears right now, Lord please draw near to all who are grieved. Remind us of your closeness and your presence; remind us that you are with us always, through tragedy and triumph. **Amen.**

### Trisagion – S 99

*sung by all three times*

Ho - ly God, Ho - ly and Might - y,  
Ho - ly Im - mor - tal One, Have mer - cy up - on us.

*We follow the Cross, singing, to the next station.*

## The Fourteenth Station: Jesus' Body is Placed in the Tomb



*Leader* We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

*People* **Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.**

*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. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there sitting opposite the tomb.*

—Matthew 27:59-61

Joseph takes loving care of Jesus, offering his own tomb to house Jesus' body. We are asked to care lovingly for God's creation, but how often we fail. Polluted rivers, smoke-filled air, landfills saturated with toxic-waste and plastic-filled oceans testify to our indifference and neglect. We place our dirtiest industries in the poorest communities, subjecting the children there to illness and injury. But the earth is not so big that we can fully insulate ourselves from the damage our lifestyle inflicts on it, as the emerging menace of climate change shows. Let us

change our ways and show the same care for the earth and each other that Joseph showed for Jesus.

Let us pray: God of All Life, we give thanks for Earth, our common home, and ask forgiveness for all the unreasonable demands we have made on it. Our Earth, its many peoples, its oceans, wildlife, and ecosystems are struggling to survive. Help us to change our ways and guide us to live a life which is not centered on ourselves, but on all you have created. We ask this in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

*Please take a stone to carry with you as we leave Jesus in the tomb.*

## Trisagion – S 99

*sung by all three times*

Ho - ly God, Ho - ly and Might - y,  
Ho - ly Im - mor - tal One, Have mer - cy up - on us.

*During the final singing of the Trisagion, we follow the Cross and return to our seats.*



# Hymn

# WERE YOU THERE



1 Were you there when they cru - ci - fied my Lord? \_\_\_\_\_  
2 Were you there when they nailed him to the tree? \_\_\_\_\_  
3 Were you there when they pierced him in the side? \_\_\_\_\_  
4 Were you there when the sun re - fused to shine? \_\_\_\_\_  
5 Were you there when they laid him in the tomb? \_\_\_\_\_



1 Were you there when they cru - ci - fied my Lord?  
2 Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?  
3 Were you there when they pierced him in the side?  
4 Were you there when the sun re - fused to shine?  
5 Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?



Oh! \_\_\_\_\_ Some-times it caus - es me to trem-ble, trem-ble, trem-ble.



1 Were you there when they cru - ci - fied my Lord?  
2 Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?  
3 Were you there when they pierced him in the side?  
4 Were you there when the sun re - fused to shine?  
5 Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

## A Confession of Sin

*Officiant* Happy are those whose sins are forgiven,  
whose wrongs pardoned.

I will confess my sins to the Lord,  
I will not conceal my wrongdoings.

*Silence* God forgives and heals us.

**We need your healing, merciful God:  
give us true repentance,  
Some sins are plain to us;  
some escape us,  
some we cannot face.  
Forgive us;  
set us free to hear your word to us;  
set us free to serve you.**

*Officiant* God forgives you.

Forgive others;  
forgive yourself.

*Silence*

*Officiant* Through Christ, God has put away your sin:  
approach your God in peace.

*Officiant and People*

**Eternal Spirit,**

**Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,**

**Source of all that is and that shall be,**

**Father and Mother of us all,**

**Loving God, in whom is heaven:**

**The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!**

**The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!**

**Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!**

**Your commonwealth of peace and freedom  
sustain our hope and come on earth.**

**With the bread we need for today, feed us.**

**In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.**

**In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.**

**From trials too great to endure, spare us.**

**From the grip of all that is evil, free us.**

**For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,  
now and for ever. Amen.**

## **The Communion**

*The clergy and minister of communion will bring the reserved sacrament to the altar. All are invited to come forward to receive the sacrament and then return to your seat.*

*Officiant* I will lie down in peace and take my rest,

*People* **for it is in God alone that I dwell unafraid.**

*Officiant* Let us bless the Earth-maker, the Pain-bearer, the Life-giver,

*People* **let us praise and exalt God above all for ever.**

*Officiant* May God's name be praised beyond the furthest star,

*People* **glorified and exalted above all for ever.**

*Officiant*

Saviour, hanging on the cross declaring God's love of us, you are forgiveness. Beside you hangs a thief, beneath you waits Mary the forgiven, and all around watch those many people to whom you give new life and hope. To us you give new life and hope. Forgiven sinners become your body and your Church; may the reconciliation we share bring your gospel to all the world. **Amen.**

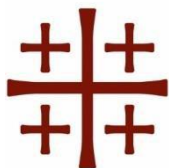
*Officiant*

Lord, it is night. The night is for stillness. Let us be still in the presence of God. It is night after a long day. What has been done has been done; what has not been done has not been done; let it be. The night is dark. Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives rest in you. The night is quiet. Let the quietness of your peace enfold us, all dear to us, and all who have no peace. The night heralds the dawn. Let us look expectantly to a new day, new joys, new possibilities. In your name we pray. **Amen.**

*The people leave in silence.*

## **Tonight's Offering**

Since 1922, Episcopalians have supported the ministries of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East through the *Good Friday Offering*. Through the work of the Diocese of Jerusalem, Christians maintain a peacemaking and stabilizing presence in the region, serving their neighbors regardless of faith background. In support of this ministry, St Matthew's Good Friday offering is designated to the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem. We thank you for your generosity.



## **About this Service**

This liturgy is based on *The New Zealand Prayer Book* and The Way of the Cross stations and scripture are from *A Walk in Jerusalem: Stations of the Cross* by John Peterson (Morehouse, 1998). Station reflections are written by: Susan Abrams, Eleanor Arnold, Pam Ely, Becky Hudspeth, Sharon Pearson, Paul Reis, and the Rev. Linda Spiers.

*Were You There (When They Crucified My Lord)* is an African-American spiritual that was first printed in 1899. It was likely composed by enslaved African Americans in the 19th century. The song was first published in William Eleazar Barton's 1899 *Old Plantation Hymns* but was described in writings prior to this publication. In 1940, it was included in the Episcopal Church hymnal, making it the first spiritual to be included in any major American hymnal.

## **Prayers at each station are attributed to:**

1. Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia
2. The Face of Hunger
3. Becky Hudspeth
4. Bishops United Against Gun Violence
5. *The Book of Common Prayer*, 840
6. Adapted from *The Book of Common Prayer*, 826
7. Alden Solovy
8. Migration Sunday Liturgy, Baltimore-Washington Conference
9. *The Book of Common Prayer*, 823
10. Pam Ely
11. Adapted, Episcopal Peace Fellowship
12. Pam Ely
13. Crosswalk
14. Citizens for Public Justice

## **About St. Matthew's "Stations of the Cross" Paintings**

Painter Robert Natkin (1930-2010) was known for his lyrical abstract forms, applied in vivid, post-impressionist-inspired colors, building compositions whose delicate-looking textures in luscious pastels reflect his interest in fabrics. He used both a paintbrush and palette knife to apply his bright acrylic paints to his canvas, sometimes also using cloths or netting as stencils.

Chicago gallery owner Tom McCormick refers to Natkin's art as "veils of diaphanous color." Natkin was commissioned to do the paintings by Coventry Cathedral in England for a show in which 15 artists would interpret the New Testament story of the Stations of the Cross to be exhibited in churches and cathedrals throughout England in the year 2000. Natkin, who was Jewish, incorporated his trademark atmospheric veils to the project. Left a mere shell by bombing in World War II, he felt a real affinity and bond with the cathedral because he had grown up in a very poor family.

Living in Redding a few years later, Natkin came to Wilton to give a presentation alongside his paintings. With generous contributions from many members of St. Matthew's in memory of loved ones (see below), these paintings became part of our Sanctuary in 2003. Natkin's Stations of the Cross now hang on the back wall with plaques describing each image and we contemplate them in our Way of the Cross on this Good Friday.

Combining his sense of landscape, narrative, and abstraction into his interpretation, each of these 16 paintings measure 12 by 12 inches and include a cross that is changed in shape to depict the retelling of Christ's journey to crucifixion. Each painting also features a Jewish star.

Natkin added two new stations to the traditional 14 scenes. The painting before the traditional beginning is titled "Apotheosis of Judaism" and emblazons the Hebrew word, "Shema" against a large Star of David because it is the first word of the most important Judaic prayer according to Natkin. The star also includes a tiny cross. The star recalls the patches worn by Jews during the Holocaust; the cross symbolizes the conception of Christ and Christianity to come. Natkin's other new station lies at the end and is titled "The Resurrection." It features an oversized cross, with a tiny star attached ever so slightly to another cross.

What is important artistically about these works is that Natkin's images of the cross and star take on a rhythm and personality that move us from station to station or canvas to canvas. When the cross (Jesus) falls to the ground and only a skinny cross-like form remains in the work "Jesus is stripped of his garments," we envision Jesus almost naked. Each also features a skull, representing death. The mood becomes much more foreboding as Natkin turns the palette of his background to brooding dark hues. A shroud-like black form in the distance suggests utter despair. But in the works that follow a light-filled white aura returns, as does hope of redemption for humankind.

Adapted from "Natkin Avoids the Decorative in 'Stations of the Cross'" by Barbara B. Buchholz (*Chicago Tribune*, January 30, 1998) and descriptions given by Natkin himself at St. Matthew's in 2003.

**Given in loving memory with thanksgiving for the lives of:**

Richard Briggs Shepard, 1919-2002

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. John Hamilton Shepard, USAAC (1929-1944)

by Siddie Shepard Bloomer

Viola E. Colley, 1907-2002

by Mary Ann and Richard M. Colley

Edna M. Hudspeth, 1904-2001

Harold M. Hudspeth, 1898-1977

by Rebecca A. and Stephen M. Hudspeth

The Rev. Dr. Farrell W. Kempson, LCDR, CHC, USNR, 1922-2001

Emily Katharine Ogle Kempson, 1922-2003

by Catherine and Ken Kempson

Berit A. Wilcox, 1924-2002

by Lance C. Wilcox

**Worship Leaders**

*Celebrant*

The Rev. Dr. Linda Spiers

*Readers*

Eleanor Arnold, Pam Ely, Becky Hudspeth,  
Sharon Pearson, Paul Reis

*Music Director*

Andrew Leslie Cooper

*Altar Guild*

Char Griffin, Joy Ruterma, Lorena Morales Aparicio



