

Good Friday Tenebrae service
April 3, 2026

Offer everyone a stone as they enter

Centring, welcome and land acknowledgement

Call to worship

One: In the beginning, darkness covered the face of the deep.
Then God said,

All: "let there be light."

One: And there was light. And every day since, the light has come and gone.

All: The sun has risen and set.

Oe: The moon has waxed and waned.

All: The light is still with us.

One: In the beginning was the word, which brought all things into being.
What has come into being through him is life,

All: the light of all people.

One: The light shined in the darkness,

All: and the darkness did not overtake it.

One: When God made the light, when the light of all people came into the world,
God did not send away the dark.

All: The darkness remains.

One: God created the night for dreams and clarity,

All: an exhaling of the light.

One: Let us enter this holy darkness to bear witness
to the light of the world who was extinguished by violence.

All: Let us worship our Incarnate God.

First reading: Arrest - Luke 22:47-53

Reflection: Rev John Helps, Cedar United Church

Extinguishing the first candle

Hymn: VU 133 "Go to Dark Gethsemane"

(Words: James Montgomery 1820, alt.

Music: Richard Redhead 1853

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- 1. Go to dark Gethsemane, you that feel the tempter's power;
your Redeemer's conflict see; watch with him one bitter hour;
turn not from his grief away: learn from him to watch and pray.**
- 2. See him at the judgement hall, beaten, bound, reviled, arraigned;
see him meekly bearing all; love to all his soul sustained.
Shun not suffering, shame, or loss: learn from Christ to bear the cross.**

3. **Calvary's mournful mountain view; there the Lord of glory see,
made a sacrifice for you, dying on the accursed tree.
"It is finished," hear his cry: trust in Christ and learn to die.**

Second Reading: Sentencing - Luke 23:13-25

Reflection: Rev Meriel Simpson, St. Andrew's United Church

Extinguishing the second candle

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession

One: Holy God, we can easily see ourselves

in any number of the people surrounding Jesus in his final days.

We are Judas, betraying what we hold most dear for status, wealth, and security.

We are the soldiers, using our power to maintain the status quo which serves us.

We are the disciples, brandishing our weapons to fight violence with violence, and we are the high priest's servant, victims of a world hell-bent on winning.

All: Prince of peace, forgive us.

One: We are Herod, finding our entertainment at the expense of other people's dignity.

We are Pilate, excusing ourselves from the blame that is rightfully ours.

We are the crowd, foaming at the mouth and demanding blood,
and we are Barabbas, our lives spared while others are crucified.

All: Prince of peace, forgive us.

One: Forgive us, we pray, for the parts we have played.

Set us free from the sin that chokes the world,

threatening to extinguish all that is good and beautiful.

Break the cycles of violence, step into the machinery of a world

fueled by division and disrupt us.

All: Forgive us, prince of peace. Kyrie eleison. Have mercy on us. Amen

Hymn: VU 948 "O God Hear My Prayer"

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O God, hear my prayer, O God, hear my prayer: when I call answer me.

O God, hear my prayer, O God, hear my prayer: come and listen to me.

Assurance of pardon

Anthem: "When Pain or Sorrow" (Hold On)

(Words & Music: Adam M. L. Tice, alt.

Music: Adam M. Tice; arr. Sally Ann Morris

Harmony for this version written by Kenny Willem

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Third Reading: Crucifixion - Luke 23:33-38

Reflecting on the Cross (active) Rev Katherine Brittain, Brechin United Church

You will notice that there are several stations set up in the entrance. As we sing this next hymn, feel free to go to one of these stations and reflect on the reading, in a tangible way.

You can taste the bitterness by dipping a piece of bread in vinegar, and tasting the sour wine; light a candle and pray for those facing violence, fear or illness; write something that is weighing heavy on your heart on a slip of paper, and place it in the bowl of water – watch it melt away.

Or simply sit, and sing this beautiful Good Friday hymn.

Hymn: VU 132 "Bitter Was the Night"

(Words & Music: Sydney Carter 1964

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- 1. Bitter was the night, thought the cock would crow for ever.
Bitter was the night before the break of day.**
- 2. Saw you passing by, told them all I didn't know you.
Bitter was the night before the break of day.**
- 3. Told them all a lie, and I told it three times over.
Bitter was the night before the break of day.**
- 4. What did Judas do? Sold him for a bag of silver.
Bitter was the night before the break of day.**
- 5. What did Judas do? Hanged himself upon an alder.
Bitter was the night before the break of day.**
- 6. Bitter was the night, thought there'd never be a morning.
Bitter was the night before the break of day.**
- 7. Bitter was the night, thought the cock would crow for ever.
Bitter was the night before the break of day.**

Extinguishing Third Candle

Fourth Reading: Death - Luke 23:44-46

Reflection: Rev Foster Freed, Trinity United Church

Extinguishing fourth candle

Hymn: VU 144 "Were You There?"

(Words: African-American spiritual

Music: African-American spiritual, arr. Melva Wilson Costen 1987

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- 1. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?**
- 2. Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?**
- 3. Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?**
- 4. Were you there when they pierced him in the side?
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?**
- 5. Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?**

Extinguishing Christ Candle and departing in silence

As you leave, feel free to bring the stone you received as you entered, and place it at the base of the cross on the communion table.