

**Central Queens Pastoral Charge
United Church of Canada**

April 15, 2022

10:30 a.m.

Good Friday

Central Queens Mission Statement

Central Queens United Church is a loving and living community called to support the life stages of all people; celebrating joy and sharing in pain. Through faith and fellowship we are united by God's love to live and serve as Disciples of Christ.

Light of the Christ Candle

Opening Statements

We gather again,
at the foot of the cross.
The gentle sight of a Saviour on a donkey
has given way to fear.
The cries of adoration
have given way to jeers.
The smell of fresh - cut palm branches
has given way to the smell of death.

Anthem

Prayer

**Holy God, on this dark day,
we walk with you
into the darkest places of our world
and our lives.
In the dark shadow of Christ's cross
you lead us to discover that
even in the darkest places
your loving presence embraces us;
even in the most painful places
your transforming presence heals us.**

**On this day
we see the betrayal of friendships and its consequences;
we see how unreliable your followers prove to be in real
crisis;
we remember that your enemies appear to have the upper
hand;
and it appears that all hope of your peaceful,
inclusive kingdom on earth is lost.**

**As we gather at the foot of the cross,
we realize that
these events are not some distant history.
These experiences of hatred, cruelty, and injustice
continue in our world day.
As we reflect upon the realities of Good Friday,
and their impact
on the lives of your beloved children around the
world,**

forgive our duplicity

**and grant us wisdom to be faithful followers of
Jesus who is the Christ.**

We ask in the name of the Crucified One. Amen.

Hymn: "Shadows Gather, Deep and Cold" VU #134

The Betrayals

Friday 3 a.m. – 6 a.m.

The Servant Girl

It was a cold night. I was in the courtyard, warming my hands by the fire. I was aware of a lot of commotion inside the grounds of high priest's residence. In the darkness I saw a man, his hands bound with ropes. He was surrounded by a mob of chief priest and scribes. I was sure I had seen the prisoner before. He looked like the rabbi who was always talking about God and arguing with the religious elite. I wondered why they were holding him prisoner.

I turned back to the fire. I noticed another man I was sure I had seen before.

So I asked him, "Are you not one of the men who travel with that prisoner, Jesus?"

The man said, "I don't know him."

I said, "I was sure you saw him with him."

Again, he said, "I do not know the man."

"Are you sure?" I asked.

He got really angry then and yelled. "I told you I don't know him!"

"And then I heard a cock crow somewhere. It was like a trigger.

The man broke down and wept."

Meditation

Jesus, have we offended you by denying you time and time again? Have we stood on the sidelines or simply slipped away when you needed a voice to speak for the oppressed? Have we offended your God and our God? You lived your life with great love. You lived with a willingness to risk and challenge the powerful people who tried to maintain their positions with no regard for justice or compassion. Your passion was justice and freedom for all. Your ways were peaceful.

Silence

Stones

Betrayals lie like stones of death within us,
weighing down our lives with guilt and pain. *(Stone firmly placed)*

Hymn: “Bitter was the Night”

VU #132 vv.1,2,3

Friday 6 a.m. – 9 a.m.

The Centurion

I stood in the high priest’s courtyard all night. I heard the religious leaders trying to find some fault with their prisoner, Jesus. They could not agree on the charges. Yet, all of them condemned the man as deserving death. They spat on him and had him flogged.

When morning came, they marched him over to Pilate. I can still see Pilate, sitting on the judge’s bench, asking this Jesus, “Are you the King of the Jews?”

This Jesus answered him, "You say that I am."

Then Pilate asked the religious leaders and the mob of people, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?"

The people screamed, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Those cries still ring in my ears.

Then, as if to mock him, the religious leaders draped Jesus with a royal robe of purple. They shoved a crown of thorns on his head, and bowed down to him. Then they spat on him and had him flogged again.

That image still haunts me. It haunts me because of the callousness and injustice. The way of the nations is too often unjust. Yet, it is the norm for most of us. The crime is that we do not even notice. We have lost hope for just and inclusive world.

Meditation

Jesus, do you see this callousness and injustice in us? How often, have we participated in allowing the innocent to suffer? How often have we judged and dismissed people as unworthy, as not deserving our care or compassion? How often have we taken part in judging others without question, without thought, without even a tear? Have we too cried, "Crucify!"?

Silence

Stones

Callousness entombs our compassion.
Turning our hearts of flesh to hearts of stone.

(Stone firmly placed)

Friday 9 a.m. - noon

Simon of Cyrene

I was standing on the road to Calvary, the road to Golgotha, a place of death. The road was lined with people, staring, talking and pointing, as if they had come to watch a parade. Some were mocking this Jesus of Nazareth, as he dragged that heavy cross along the uneven road.

The man looked exhausted from lack of sleep, lack of food, and the beatings I knew he would have suffered. Then he stumbled under the weight of the cross, and slumped to the ground. The soldiers grabbed him and dragged him to his feet. Those soldiers' hands were not really hands to help Jesus. They were hands to drag him closer to his doom.

Before I knew it, I was dragged from the crowd. My task was clear. I was to help this man carry his cross.

I walked behind the condemned man, trying to bear some of the weight of the cross. Head bent, I could see into the faces of the crowd. I wondered, do they really take delight in human misery? Do they try to hide their pain by laughing and jeering at someone else in pain? It is horrible when people close their hearts lest they somehow end up feeling the pain and the burden the afflicted carry.

I wondered if Jesus saw the same thing – if it broke his heart. He said nothing. He just kept struggling along, dragging this burden. But his silence was thick with sorrow.

Meditation

Jesus, the world is filled with people who have fallen and struggle to rise. And there are no hands to help them. Everywhere you look there are people who are afflicted, people whom we look at but do not see. People struggle alone. Are we too overwhelmed by our own pain? Are we helpless to intervene against the power of wealth and government? Jesus, do we think this does not involve us?

Silence

Stones

Humankind still gives power to those who use it to oppress and destroy. We still fail to challenge those who allow good to die. When we isolate ourselves from darkness, we isolate ourselves from life. *(Stone firmly placed)*

Friday noon – 3 p.m.

When it was noon, darkness came over the land.

Silence

*(*Hammering of nails.)*

Silence

Darkness - as if God's back was turned to the world.

Silence

Hymn: "Were You There"

VU #144 vv., 1,2,3,4

Friday 3 p.m. – 6 p.m.

Mary, Mother of Jesus

I covered my ears and screamed when I heard the sound of the nails being hammered into his flesh.

“My child. My beloved child,” I cried.

My body was filled with so much pain I fell to my knees.

“My Jesus,” I wept.

He was so full of peace and love. Why this violence against him? Why, God? Why?

I looked up, but I could not see for the tears that filled my eyes and poured down my face. Somehow I crawled to the foot of the cross and clung to the bottom of it. I heard him cry out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

His words rent my heart asunder. Had God turned back on the world? My body was numb with pain.

Then I heard my son whisper, “God, into your hands I commit my spirit.” He said it with such love and such peace; as one would speak to his beloved. Slowly, I felt a gentle peace begin to embrace me.

As the drops of his blood fell on my back, I felt his blood mingling with my blood, as at his birth.

Anthem

Stone firmly placed covering the Light.

Friday 3 p.m. – 6 p.m.

When evening had come, and since it was the day of preparation, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate agreed. Taking down the body, Joseph wrapped it in linen cloths and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.

Stone is placed in front of the tomb.

Sending Forth

It is time to leave this place.

Let us commend ourselves into the hands of our loving God.

Go in peace, embraced in the love of Christ.

Walk deeply into your own lives, with all their frailties.

Discover that, in spirit and in truth,

we are walking toward the life and joy of Easter.

Good Friday

The church has long pondered the death of Jesus. In 1097, Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote about Jesus' death, emphasizing its sacrificial nature: Jesus died for the sins of the world. This viewpoint included that all of us are sinners and that in order for God to forgive sins, a sacrifice must be offered. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice: the Lamb of God. This understanding of the crucifixion has been

meaningful for many Christians over the centuries. This is not the only understanding of Jesus' death.

Later understandings focus on the life of Jesus, as the revelation of God. Jesus lived and related with peace, love, hospitality, inclusion, challenge, compassion and forgiveness. He revealed that God's way is love, not cruelty. God's way is peace, not violence. He was a threat to the abuse of economic, political and religious power. It was we who determined his death, not God. He died not for our sins, but because of them. Many recognize the manner in which we continue to be complicit in his death.

May we understand and live out God's vision for God's kin-dom that Jesus clearly portrayed.