



PLANNING GOOD FRIDAY WORSHIP AT A DISTANCE

March 31, 2020

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Essentials to Remember

- Keep it simple.
- Include repeated phrases.
- Send out information ahead of time so that participants can prepare.
- Highlight any elements worshippers should bring to the service that will help them engage.
- As you plan the service, include the five senses and body movement when possible.
- Visuals are important.
- Close ups of face(s) important for those leading/speaking.
- There will be surprises; be prepared and welcome the limits of gathering across distance.
- Bring a sense of calmness in body and voice, recognizing the importance of facial expressions and the mood you convey. You will be seen! Your mood will be felt.

The Good Friday Service

We've prepared 4 actions of worship that we are recommending for a Good Friday service. These could comprise the whole service, but wouldn't have to. We are focusing on ways this service can incorporate interaction, connection, and multiple voices at a distance. We have not made suggestions for actions of worship that translate more easily to video conferencing or live streaming, such as one person speaking a prayer/meditation or playing a recording of hymns. The suggestions from the webinar also described in this handout are:

1. An opening prayer in which all participants light candles in Holy Week wreath;
2. A multi-voice biblical storytelling for Holy Week;
3. Freeform singing together that is possible through Zoom; and
4. A closing prayer for extinguishing the candles and shrouding the wreath.

1. Opening prayer—lighting the candles in our wreaths

Preparing the Holy Week Wreath¹

- Invite households to create a wreath *before* the service. A traditional Advent wreath would work or anything arranged in the shape of a circle. Bare branches, thorny stems (think: crown of thorns), budding branches, palm branches, or whatever is on hand or found in the yard. The important thing is to end up with a circle that includes four candles that surround a fifth candle in the center of the wreath.

¹ The Easter wreath concept was inspired by the creatives who contribute to The Salt Project. Full Permission and Blessing was given for use and adaptation. March 2020.

- Have on hand a “shroud” for covering the wreath after the close of the Good Friday service. A simple rectangular cloth will do - a tea towel would work great, or a bath towel if you make a big wreath! For Easter Sunday morning, add flowers - maybe crocuses or daffodils from the yard, sprigs of green - pussywillows or blooming forsythia, and/or some Easter sweets. Add what most clearly says to your household “Alleluia! Taste and see that God is good!”
- The Holy Week wreath offers mystery and a symbol of the world’s brokenness and the dreadful night before Easter’s promise of dawn and life. The simple practice of making a wreath and lighting candles will connect us at a distance in a time of global pandemic and staying at home. This year the despair of Good Friday and the hope of Easter Sunday may be more vivid, tangible, essential, and life-giving than ever.
- We can all do this. And it’s especially accessible to children. This kind of embodied action of creating the wreath and physically present visual will connect worshippers to one another and reminded us of our connection even when we’re not in worship.

A list for gathering and preparing (to send ahead of time):

- *Use what is at hand and keep it simple*
- Begin with a base—basket/wreath/bowl/plate/whatever you have
- Gather 5 candles—a big one for the center and four smaller to surround it
- Gather rocks, twigs, bulbs, anything from outside (or inside!) to represent the darkness of Good Friday
- A cloth/shroud (something big enough to cover the wreath—a tea towel or bath towel will work)
- **For Easter:** add flowers from your yard, sprigs of green, chocolates, any little surprises that symbolize new life and “Alleluia!” etc.

Leading the Opening Prayer and Candle Lighting

- Invite all to light the center Paschal Candle (the “Passover Candle”) that symbolizes Jesus, the Light of the World. Hold the candle up to the camera and ask all worshippers to hold their candles up to the camera also if possible. Leave plenty of time and silence for all households to finish lighting their candles—let it be visual feast of seeing one another’s lights . Then pray:
 - *Prince of Peace who arrives on a humble donkey, give us your hope, your peace, your joy, and your love for the journey to come.*
- Light the wreath’s other candles, drawing the light from the central Paschal Candle, remembering to leave plenty of time and silence for all to light each candle and hold it up to the camera.
 - Light the first candle saying “A candle of Hope” and praying:
 - *Dear God, make us signs of your hope, instruments of your peace, expressions of your joy, and examples of your love and justice in the world.*
 - Light the second candle saying “A candle of peace” and praying:

- *God of grace, in the midst of violence, give us your peace. In the midst of despair, give us your hope.*
- Light the third candle saying “A candle of Joy” and praying:
 - *Dear God, be with us as we wait and watch and rest in the tomb with Jesus tonight. Mend our broken hearts. Help us hope against hope. Stay with us. Have mercy.*
- Light the fourth candle saying “A candle of Love” and praying:
 - *Thank you God, for your steadfast faith in us, for forgiving and loving and remaking the world. Let us take part in your healing of creation. Let us be living signs of hope, peace, joy, and love. Amen.*

2. Good Friday Biblical Storytelling²

Instructions

- Assign each piece of the story to one household or individual ahead of time—it will be easiest if every person involved in a particular Scripture uses the same microphone and camera. Divide the readings into parts to fit the number of readers in the household or ask one person to speak the whole passage.
 - Spreading out the readings among many people is a simple way to spread out ownership of the service.
 - It also allows the congregation to hear many voices and see many faces, which many are longing for while we are physically apart.
- Ask each household/individual to practice their reading multiple times out loud or consider memorizing it.
 - The idea isn't to be perfect, but to tell this important story as well as we can.
 - Memorizing the Scripture can be a significant spiritual practice and internalizing the story will change the way the it is told and heard. Memorizing is something children can participate in, whether or not they can read. It will also help them to look at the camera more than the script.
 - Ask readers to have fun with this! Try practicing with different voices. Act it out. Not because they will act it out in the service but because it will help them imagine their way into the story.
 - Ask readers to imagine themselves into the scene as they practice. Think about what you are seeing, feeling, touching, hearing.

² Readings compiled by Janeen Bertsche-Johnson, AMBS Director of Campus Ministries, and Renee Reimer (MDiv 2019), Associate Pastor for Faith Formation at Bethel College Mennonite Church. All Scripture taken from NRSV with [Behold] added where Greek *idou* was left untranslated.

- This script is lengthy and intended to take the place of a meditation/sermon, comprising the bulk of the service. If you cannot include the whole of the script due to length of service, consider skipping the first five passages and starting with Luke 22:14-34.
- If using **Zoom**: Make sure each household knows who comes before them. Remind households to unmute themselves before speaking and mute themselves again when they finish.
- If using **Zoom**: Suggest worshippers use “Speaker View” for this part of the service so that they can see a larger picture of each household as they present.
- If using **live stream**: Ask each household to record their passage and send in the recording to be put together before the service.

Matthew 21:1-5

¹ When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, just say this, ‘The Lord needs them.’ And he will send them immediately.” ⁴ This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, ⁵ “Tell the daughter of Zion, [Behold], your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

John 12:12-19 (*could be divided for four readers as below; this is just a suggestion; divide each passage as makes sense for the households reading them*)

Reader 1: ¹² The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting,

Readers 2 and 3: “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!”

Reader 1: ¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written:

Reader 4: ¹⁵ “Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. [Behold], your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!”

Reader 1: ¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him.

Reader 2: ¹⁷ So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify.

Reader 3: ¹⁸ It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him.

Reader 4: ¹⁹ The Pharisees then said to one another,

Readers 2 and 3: “You see, you can do nothing. [Behold], the world has gone after him!”

Mark 13:1-5

¹ As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “[Behold], Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!” ² Then Jesus asked him, “Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.” ³ When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ “Tell us, when will

this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?”⁵ Then Jesus began to say to them, “Beware that no one leads you astray. . . .

Mark 13:21-23

²¹ And if anyone says to you at that time, ‘[Behold]! Here is the Messiah!’ or ‘[Behold]! There he is!’—do not believe it. ²² False messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. ²³ But be alert; [behold,] I have already told you everything.

Luke 22:7-13

⁷ Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸ So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it.” ⁹ They asked him, “Where do you want us to make preparations for it?” ¹⁰ “[Behold],” he said to them, “when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house he enters ¹¹ and say to the owner of the house, ‘The teacher asks you, “Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?”’” ¹² He will show you a large room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there.” ¹³ So they went and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

Luke 22:14-34

¹⁴ When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ He said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” ¹⁷ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves; ¹⁸ for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” ¹⁹ Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁰ And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. ²¹ But [behold], the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. ²² For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!” ²³ Then they began to ask one another which one of them it could be who would do this. . . . ³¹ “Simon, Simon, [behold]! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, ³² but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” ³³ And he said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!” ³⁴ Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me.”

Matthew 26:36-46

³⁶ Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” ³⁷ He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. ³⁸ Then he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.” ³⁹ And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.”

⁴⁰ Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? ⁴¹ Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ⁴² Again he went away for the second time and

prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.”⁴³ Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.⁴⁴ So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words.⁴⁵ Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? [Behold], the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.⁴⁶ Get up, let us be going. [Behold], my betrayer is at hand.”

Matthew 26:47-56

⁴⁷ While he was still speaking, [behold] Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people.⁴⁸ Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.”⁴⁹ At once he came up to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him.⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you are here to do.” Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him.⁵¹ [Behold], one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear.⁵² Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.⁵³ Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?⁵⁴ But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?”⁵⁵ At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me.⁵⁶ But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Matthew 26:57-66

⁵⁷ Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, in whose house the scribes and the elders had gathered.⁵⁸ But Peter was following him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest; and going inside, he sat with the guards in order to see how this would end.⁵⁹ Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death,⁶⁰ but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward⁶¹ and said, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.’”⁶² The high priest stood up and said, “Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?”⁶³ But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, “I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.”⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? [Behold,] you have now heard his blasphemy.⁶⁶ What is your verdict?” They answered, “He deserves death.”

Luke 23:13-25

¹³ Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people,¹⁴ and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and [behold,] I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him.¹⁵ Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. [Behold], he has done nothing to deserve death.¹⁶ I will therefore have him flogged and release him.” . . .¹⁸ Then they all shouted out together, “Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!”¹⁹ (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.)²⁰ Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again;²¹ but they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!”²² A third time he said to them, “Why, what evil has he

done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him.”²³ But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed.²⁴ So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted.²⁵ He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.

Luke 23:26-30

²⁶ 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.²⁷ A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him.²⁸ But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.²⁹ For [behold,] 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.’³⁰ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us’; and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’

John 19:25-27

²⁵ Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, “Woman, [behold] your son.”²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, “[Behold] your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

Matthew 27:45-51

⁴⁵ From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.⁴⁶ And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”⁴⁷ When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “[Behold,] he is calling for Elijah.”⁴⁸ At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink.⁴⁹ But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.”⁵⁰ Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.⁵¹ [And behold,] at that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split.

Luke 23:50-55

⁵⁰ [And behold,] there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council,⁵¹ had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God.⁵² This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.⁵³ Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid.⁵⁴ It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning.⁵⁵ The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid.

3. Freeform singing—“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

- Everyone unmutes their mic (or Zoom host unmutes all).
- Ask everyone to pick their own rhythm and tune. Or say the words. Or shout them. Or whisper them.
- Sing/speak/shout together with mics unmuted. It will clash and that’s the point.



- It may feel ridiculous. If people giggle, that’s okay. Remember we’re all experimenting, and we all need grace right now. Encourage people to close their eyes if they want to.
- Repeat the same words, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” over and over, and when you reach a point of conclusion, have a leader will say AMEN and give hand signal to finish (so people both hear and see the end).

4. Closing Prayer—extinguishing lights and shrouding the wreath

- Leader asks all to join in quietly, reverently, slowly extinguishing the candles of hope, peace, joy, love, and lastly the Paschal Candle. Leave enough time and silence for all households to complete extinguishing candles. Even though it may feel awkward on video, don’t rush! Then pray aloud:
 - *Dear God, we pray for places and people in the shadows of conflict, violence, illness, and despair. We pray for your peace and hope.*
- Leader uses cloth to shroud the wreath and asks congregation to do the same. Again, leave enough time and silence for all to finish. Then pray:
 - *God, be with us as we go, wait, watch and rest in the tomb with Jesus. Mend our broken hearts. Help us hope against hope. Stay with us. Have mercy. Amen.*