

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

The Rev. Laura Kavanagh

*As we come to worship in Jesus' name we acknowledge with gratitude and respect the Lkwungen people – the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ – on whose traditional and unceded territory we gather. We commit ourselves to just and respectful relationships within our congregation and our neighborhood.*

➤ *Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary (repeat)*

Good Friday Liturgy and Lenten Cross/Candles

The Rev. Mitch Coggin

The Lenten cross and candles serve as a visual reminder of our Lenten journey toward the darkness of Good Friday. On the first Sunday of Lent, all the candles were lit but each week we have extinguished them one at a time. Today we take that final step toward a deeper understanding of the darkness that Jesus' endured as we extinguish the Christ candle. Would you respond to the Call to Worship as we willingly enter this time of darkness?

During Lent, we remember that even in the darkest moments of suffering and pain God is with us.

**Jesus Christ was ridiculed and crucified for all people.**

While innocent, Jesus died a grueling death on the cross to show us the way to God's love and grace.

**The hour of defeat, suffering and humiliation was the moment of victory, honour and glory.**

Jesus Christ died for us. Let us respond to God's grace by living lives worthy of Christ's immeasurable gift.

**We will take up our cross and serve Jesus the Christ.**

**(Extinguish all candles)**

Let us pray... **Gracious God, the gift of Christ's death on the cross is beyond our understanding. In gratitude for Christ's sacrifice, we pray for the courage to follow him and to have our lives changed by him in whose name we pray. Amen**

PWS&D Sharing **Helping her Family Lead a Healthy Life**

The Rev. Laura Kavanagh

In Guatemala, 43-year-old Adelina López Vásquez lives with her husband Rafael and their family in Comitancillo, in the highlands of Guatemala.

Adelina is a health and nutrition promotor in her community and a member of "San Juaneritas," a group of women working together on agricultural projects.

The mother of 11 recalls how her life was very different before taking on the role. "I didn't put much importance in maintaining a healthy and nutritious diet for my family," she reflects.

Through training workshops hosted by AMMID—PWS&D's partner in Guatemala—Adelina has gained new knowledge and skills.

She's learned the importance of maintaining a clean workspace to avoid germs and the benefits of preparing foods with fresh ingredients grown in her community instead of buying prepared foods.

"I learned new recipes that my family enjoys eating. I prepare meals for my family accompanied with fresh ingredients that are sources of vitamins," Adelina happily shares.

Thank you for faithfully responding to Christ's call to serve those in need. Through support of PWS&D, women are claiming their right to a healthy life.

➤ *Nothing can trouble*

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† Prayer for Understanding

**Ms. Heather Anderson**

**Source of wisdom and understanding, in the midst of our distractions, let us experience stillness. In the midst of competing voices, let us hear your Word. In the many choices we face, let us choose to follow you. In the name of Jesus, our teacher and saviour, we pray. Amen**

Scripture

**Isaiah 53: 3-6**

**Ms. Heather Anderson**

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. Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

**Philippians 2: 5-8**

**Ms. Heather Anderson**

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.

➤ *Go to dark Gethsemane*

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**John 19: 1-6**

**Ms. Whitney Hanna**

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face.

Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him."

So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him."

### *Were you there [verse 1]*

#### **John 19: 7-16a**

**Mr. Jerry Verwey**

The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.

Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?"

Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."

From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor."

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha.

Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!"

They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor."

Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

### *Were you there [verse 2]*

#### **John 19: 16b-22**

**Ms. Whitney Hanna**

So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them.

Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek.

Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'"

Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

### *Were you there [verse 3]*

#### **John 19: 23-27**

**Mr. Jerry Verwey**

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 fulfill what the scripture says, "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots."

And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son."

Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

### *Were you there [verse 4]*

#### **John 19: 28-30**

**Ms. Whitney Hanna**

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty."

A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

### *Were you there [verse 5]*

#### **Reflection    *An Inconvenient Cross***

**The Rev. Cathy Victor**

Three churches met together to worship on Good Friday.

It was a small town, perhaps better described as a village.

The United Church was at one end of the road, the Anglican Church about the middle.

And the Presbyterian Church was at the other end of the village.

We began in the United Church reading scriptures, and singing a hymn, then a very large wooden cross was picked up and carried out to the road. We walked slowly, singing, and helping one another carry it. It was heavy. Not for the faint of heart.

Sometimes we had to stop and catch our breath.

We got to the Anglican Church and with some effort got the cross inside, and then we realized we didn't know where to put it. So, we rested it against an altar rail. It had leaned against the communion table at the United Church. We read more scripture, sang some more and helped one another carry the cross out to the road and slowly made our way to the Presbyterian Church.

The entrance was tight.

And again, where do we put it?

It was a small sanctuary - rather cramped, so with some groans and heavy lifting, we leaned it against the piano.

The cross is never convenient.

It's hard to know what to do with it, not just in a sanctuary, but in our lives.

It can be heavy, and we cannot bear it alone. How do you explain the horror of the cross, the cruelty inflicted upon Jesus and others who did not please the ones in power?

For the first 500 years or so after Jesus' death, Christians weren't sure what to do with the cross either. It was illegal to be a Christian. As I've mentioned before, there were no paintings or depictions of the cross until well after the Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity due to him having seen a cross in the sky, and promptly winning a major battle. It was then that Christianity would be associated with Imperial Victory.

Even then it seemed embarrassing to identify the Saviour of the World with an instrument of torture. The tendency was to use symbols and depictions of the Good Shepherd, the Ark and its safety, God's providing in the Loaves and Fishes, or even peacocks which symbolized resurrection since they lose all their feathers each year and grow new bright ones. As well, the eye shape on their tail feathers symbolizes the all-seeing eye of God.

God's beauty and power seen with angels and halos can be hard to swallow when you are in a time of suffering and sorrow. Such beauty and wonder has its place, but it's hard to swallow when we are bearing a cross, and facing times of suffering.

God's people have known great suffering over the centuries. We like to feel comfortable knowing that we are safe as followers of Jesus, but it has not always been so. The early church of course comes to mind. The New Testament is all about a suffering church. But the church suffers in many places still.

The bible is illegal or severely restricted in about 50 countries today. In some places you can be killed for owning one. There are at least 25 countries where it is blatantly illegal to be a Christian. You will be killed, or at least have no rights. So, if you worship at all, you must do so in secret. North Korea comes to mind first. If you do not worship the nation's leader, you are considered an enemy of the state, and risk being sent to a labour camp, starved, tortured, or worked to

death. In some countries churches have simply been demolished, with Christians being forced to convert to Islam for example or be publicly executed.

The Pew Research Centre has been tracking the increase in religious restrictions throughout the world. Things like not being allowed to openly wear religious insignia are mentioned. And in case you think Canada isn't included, just consider how not so long ago our country banned any First Nations expressions of faith or how in Quebec you can't show signs of your faith at all.

As the Ukraine war has progressed, I've learned about some of the things that my great grandparents could not do there. It was illegal to worship in the Ukrainian language until 1991. That was when Ukraine came out from under the rule of the Soviet Union. Until then any bibles or prayer books were in Old Russian. I had wondered why my grandmother's bible and prayer books weren't in Ukrainian. So it is only in recent years that any translation of the scriptures has been made into Ukrainian.

I have a collection of Pysanky - Ukrainian Easter Eggs. They were illegal too under the Soviet regime. Some I made, some were gifts, but each symbol on each egg signifies a prayer. Technically you don't paint them, you write them as prayers for the person you are giving them to. Illegal. It made it feel too close to home.

Suffering is all too real in our world, in our own country and in our own lives. As the music group REM sang - Everybody Hurts. They sang:

*If you're on your own in this life, the days and the nights are long.  
When you think you've had too much, of this life, to hang on.  
Well, everybody hurts, sometimes everybody cries.  
And everybody hurts sometimes... so hold on, hold on.  
Everybody hurts. You are not alone.*

The cross is never convenient.

Evil and suffering and death hover over our world everywhere.

But we are not alone. Never alone.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran Pastor and theologian. Some of his best-known works include The Cost of Discipleship and Letters and Papers from Prison. He worked undercover to smuggle Jews out of Germany into Switzerland and worked as an anti-Nazi dissident. He directed an illegal seminary until it was discovered and was closed by the gestapo.

In 1936, because of his anti-Nazi views, Bonhoeffer was no longer permitted to teach at the University of Berlin. Two years later, he was forbidden to live in Berlin. In 1940, the German authorities forbade him to speak in public, and he had to report regularly to the police. And so, he was eventually put in prison by the Nazis, then was sent to a concentration camp.

His writing, Letters and Papers from Prison was all smuggled out of prison by guards who chose to help him. He died in Flossenburg concentration camp, but while he awaited his execution a slip of paper was smuggled out which said: 'only a suffering God can help.'

Our God is determined, compassionate and came to us in Jesus who suffered and risked it all, for you, for me. Jesus calls us to a life that risks and steps out of its comfort zone. The church is not a hiding place. There is a cost to discipleship as Bonhoeffer said. It is not simple. Some insist that if we just accept what Jesus did on the cross, that our problems will all be solved.

No.

Theologian Doug Hall once wrote; we are being transformed. He wrote that we, as God's people, God's church, will suffer at times. Those marks of suffering are a mark of authenticity. It is also true that God weeps with us and that God moves among us – Jesus is with us in any suffering.

There is a book by the Japanese and Catholic author Shusako Endo called Silence. Endo tells the story of two Portuguese Jesuit priests Father Rodriguez and Father Garupe, who head to Japan to find their missing friend, a priest and mentor. There had been a mass conversion to Christianity in Japan and the story is based on historical facts, while the story itself is fiction. It takes place in the 17th century. There had been a backlash in Japan to the conversions and people were being forced to recant or 'Apostatize'.

Upon arriving, the two priests find people who very carefully keep their Christian faith a secret. If anyone is found out, they are tortured and killed. The book was made into a movie by Martin Scorsese in 2016, and it is not for the faint of heart. While it is gripping, it is painful.

In order to apostatize a Christian is required to step on what was called a *Fumi-eh*. Which means stepping on pictures. (Pronounced Foo- me- EH) A bronze picture of Jesus is put on the ground and the person is told to step on in order to recant. And if they don't, they will be tortured, perhaps hung on a cross, hung upside down in a pit to bleed out slowly. They were brutally creative.

Rodriguez keeps asking God - Why are you silent? Help me! He feels abandoned and alone. Father Rodriguez is found out, captured and held in prison. A group of Christians are being tortured nearby, within earshot. He struggles to know what to do. He is told to recant his faith by stepping on the *Fumi-eh*, and then all those being tortured will be given their freedom and lives back. He is told it's just a formality. Put your toe on it. And then they will all be set free

He struggles over whether it is self-centered and unmerciful to refuse to recant when doing so will end another's suffering. He prays saying "Lord, I suffered from your silence."

At the climactic moment, Rodrigues hears the moans of those who have recanted but are being kept hanging upside down, bleeding, over the pit until he, the priest, tramples the image of Christ. As Rodrigues looks upon a *fumi-e*, Christ breaks his silence: "You may trample. You may trample. I more than anyone know of the pain in your foot. You may trample. It was to be trampled on by men that I was born into this world. It was to share men's pain that I carried my cross." And Rodrigues puts his foot on the *fumi-e*.

No matter how deeply any of us suffer we know that Jesus has entered and continues to enter the depths of that suffering with us. We are never alone.



➤ *Beneath the cross of Jesus*

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† Offering and Prayer of Dedication

The Rev. Laura Kavanagh

Loving God, your gifts to us are beyond measure. You have given us life more abundant than we can imagine – we owe you more than we can repay. Today as we stand at the foot of the cross we present what we can as a joyous offering of thanks. Accept these gifts from our hearts, we pray in the name of Jesus, the Christ. Amen

† Prayer

The Rev. Laura Kavanagh

Lord Jesus, we gather at the foot of the cross, longing to understand. Open us to the cross' mystery and saving power.

We see in your cross the agony of humankind and the cruel injustice of human systems. We are tempted to despair at humanity's inhumanity.

We know that the way the world works, we still perpetrate cruelty, sometimes deliberately, more often by simply not knowing what we do.

We are tempted to cynicism, without hope for ourselves or the world. Yet we call this day good, for the cross, that lays bare the sin of the world, also reveals your love. Though unbelievable, we would believe.

In your cross, all the powers of sin and death are defeated. In your cross is our hope, our joy, our reason for being. So, we call this day good. At the foot of the cross we are "lost in wonder, love, and praise." Amen

➤ *Bless the Lord (Taizé chant)*

Please leave *in silence* to meet again for Easter Worship at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church – 10:30 am – Sunday 17 April 2022

**Music:** *The Balm in Gilead Band* (Steve Sturgess, Corinne Painter, Ryan Tandy, Brad Hawkes)

**Audio/Visual Support** (live streaming): Lu Jingyi