

*Good Friday, April 17, Noon
First Congregational UCC ~ Sarasota*



1031 S. Euclid Ave. Sarasota, FL 34237 ~ (941) 953-7044
www.uccsarasota.com

“Grief is not something we fix. It’s something we tend. Like a garden, like a fire, like a wound.” — Francis Weller

PRELUDE

O Sacred Head Now Wounded
Glenn Priest, organ & Nadine Trudel, cello

by Michael Burkhardt

INVITATION

Pastor Wes

*OPENING HYMN

Were You There?

**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?**

**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?**

**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?**

*OPENING PRAYER:

God of questions that do not have instant responses and resolution. How did we get *here* at the foot of the cross? How could Your love incarnate, in the flesh, breath and bone of Jesus, end up on a cross ~ a symbol of humiliation and violence? What is it in our human condition that we want to blame or shame others? How could Your inclusive love threaten us so much that we would rather destroy Your love than be transformed by Your eternal affection? Even as we ask these questions, we recognize that Good Friday didn’t just happen, it is happening. We worship at the altars of fame, fortune, and influencers on social media. We cheer when someone on “our” side berates or belittles someone on the other side. We don’t love our enemies. We search for a quick fix that can be put in our Amazon cart or Googled with a billion results in the blink of an eye. Help us, O God, for we *cannot* save ourselves. The cycles of violence around us and within us continue. We are not the “we” You called us to be. Help us, O God, for we *cannot* save ourselves. Meet us here, at the cross, which we confess is the *last* place we’d think of meeting *You*. This day doesn’t make sense! But maybe, *that is the point*. Perhaps when we cease thinking our way through today, we may receive the ache and pain for what this day is. In the sacred silence, empty of reasons and logic, enter our hearts, we pray. *Silence*.

*RESPONSE

O Sacred Head Now Wounded (vs. 1 & 3)

#226

O sacred Head, now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down, Now scornfully surrounded with thorns, your only crown, How pale you are with anguish, with sore abuse and scorn! How does your visage languish, which once was bright as morn!

What language shall I borrow to thank you, dearest friend; For this your dying sorrow, your pity without end? May I be yours forever; and though my days be few, O Savior, let me never outlive my love for you!

LITANY of GOD'S FRIDAY

One: Here we are, O God. Here You are, O God, at this most troubling, terrible, trembling place ~ a cross!

Many: Suffering, struggling, sighing, dying God, let the heartbreak of this day meet us in the ache we carry.

One: God, we live in a death-denying culture. We push down the pain we experience. We say we are "fine" through clenched teeth and false smiles to others. Yet, we cannot plaster over the ache and grief. We name family and friends who have died.

Please name the loved ones you grieve.

One: Each beloved person here has scars from the sharp shards of life. In the corners of our soul, there are bruises: mentally, emotionally, spiritually, relationally, and culturally, that too often, we don't name in church. Today, at the cross, we name our frustrations and fears.

Please name the aches you carry today.

One: Each beloved person here holds things others have said to us that feel like a thousand paper cuts. We struggle to forgive both ourselves and others.

Please pray for those who hurt and wounded you.

One: We feel dizzy and disoriented from the news each day. We confess the ways neighbors, friends, social media posts, and political pundits add to the noise. We treat Your holy creation as a means to an end and quick profit, regardless of the beauty that is depleted. Bills are proposed that discriminate against our trans siblings. Racism painfully persists. We name that one month of honoring Black history, celebrating women, PRIDE or creation can become a box we check rather than a holy disruption of transformation.

Many: We are overwhelmed, angry, fearful, impatient, intolerant, and fail to recognize that our point of view is a view from a point.

One: We lay at the cross, a symbol of domination, the violence of a world that still clings to eye-for-eye justice, where military budgets grow while children's stomachs grumble. Where aid is cut off from over 2 million children dying. We pray for people here in the United States, who die because they lack health insurance.

Many: At the foot of the cross, we place systems that maintain the status quo, which keep us comfortable. We confess our cynicism and criticism internally and externally.

One: At the foot of the cross, we place our tidy theologies, O God, that can never contain You.

Many: Beyond our "shoulds" and "have-tos", God show us Your gospel of liberating love that doesn't avoid suffering or death, but embraces all that is.

One: For the wars in Ukraine, Palestine, Israel, Armenia, Haiti, Sudan, for the polarization and pain that sits in each of us. In the still, small silence of this moment, let your shy soul speak what needs to be named at the foot of the cross.

A Moment of Silence.

ANTHEM

Alabaster Jar
Nadine Trudel, cello

by Craig Courtney

ENGAGING SCRIPTURE

Matthew 27:27-31

As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then, they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head, they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Then two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. 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." In the same way, the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to, for he said, 'I am God's Son.'" The rebels, who were crucified with him, also taunted him in the same way.

A Moment of Silent Reflection

SCRIPTURE CONTINUES

Matthew 27:38-54

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock, Jesus cried with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "This man is calling for Elijah." 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. But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection, they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now, when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was God's Son!" Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

A Moment of Silent Reflection

SERMON

Holy Vulnerability

ANTHEM

God So Loved the World

by John Stainer

PASTORAL PRAYER

PROCESSION OUT TO THE CROSS

CLOSING HYMN

Beneath the Cross of Jesus

**Beneath the Cross of Jesus, I faint would take my stand,
The shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land,
A home within the wilderness, a rest upon the way,
From the burning of the noontide heat, and the burden of the day.**

**Upon that cross of Jesus, mine eye at times can see
The very dying form of one who suffered there for me;
And from my smitten heart, with tears, two wonders I confess,
The wonders of his glorious love and my unworthiness.**

**I take, O cross thy shadow for my abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine than sunshine on his face;
Content to let the world go by, to know no gain or loss,
My sinful self, my only shame, my glory all the cross.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Please leave in silence as led by the Spirit!

Easter Services with choir, brass, & percussion held at 9a.m. in the Sanctuary & 11 a.m. in the Sanctuary & online.

Greeters: Jeannie and Gib Mitchell
Liturgist: James Mayer & River Rogers