**Be United Communities of Faith**

**Bridgewater United West Side United**

**April 7th, 2023 Good Friday**

**Minister:** *Reverend Neil McEwen* **Music Ministry Director:** *Barbara Pate*

**Student Minister:** *Donna Kelly* **Guest Accompanist:** *Charlotte Brooks*

**Greeter:** *Karen Townsend* **Greeter:** *Cathy Etter*

**Audio Visual Technician:** *Tracy Rafuse* **Sound Engineer:** *Evan Rafuse*

*The print in* ***BOLD*** *is where the congregation participates.*

**Lingering in the Upper Room**

*We begin our journey with one of the disciples of Jesus,*

*left behind in the Upper Room following the meal shared the night before.*

**Hymn:** **# 436 VU – Abide with Me (Verses 1, 3 and 4)**

**Invitation To Worship:**

Jesus left the Upper Room and went into the night.

**We were left behind, wondering what to do.**

His perplexing words caused us to ponder,

**and we were wondering what to do.**

The morning sun broke the darkness of the night,

**and we were wondering what to do.**

As we wander through the hours of this day, we seek the guidance of God to strengthen us as we contemplate all that Jesus said was becoming a reality.

**Guide our footsteps, our hearts and our spirits, O God, as we prepare ourselves to be among the disciples of Jesus who follow him all the way to the cross. Amen.**

**Chorus: # 18 MV – God, Prepare Me to Be a Sanctuary (x 2)**

**Gathering Stones**

*When you arrived, we hope you picked up a stone to hold during the service. From the stories of Jesus’ final hours captured in scripture we find messages and images we hold on to during our journey from the Upper Room to the Cross to the Tomb. Between each reading of scripture there is a shared response followed by a time of silence. Hold your stone during your time of reflection. Near the end of the service, we are invited to come forward and place our stones beneath the cross.*

The Garden of Gethsemane – Matthew 26:36-46

Jesus’ tears for the world and his determination to bring about healing teach us how to live. Passionate Christ, as you faced the days of suffering and sorrow, you were constant and faithful to God’s way.

**We pray that we may be constant and attentive,**

**and have the strength to put you first.**

Jesus before the Sanhedrin – Matthew 26:57-67

Even when Christ was ridiculed and beaten, we are reminded that Christ reveals that God is with us. God’s power revealed in you, Holy Christ, is evident even in the silence. In our wavering uncertainty we are often silent onlookers.

**We pray that we may be faithful to you,**

**and be your voice speaking up for the outcasts and abused.**

Jesus before Pilate – John 18:29-31, 33-37

In our own certainties and prejudices, do we obscure and limit the truth? Steadfast Christ, you were condemned by social and legal structures, but not overcome by them.

**We pray that we may have the courage to stand up for truth,**

**in the face of any distractions and hardships that may divert us.**

Jesus is whipped and crowned with thorns – John 19:1-7

Do we speak up against the injustices that people suffer? Holy Christ, although innocent, you were whipped and cruelly crowned with thorns because of the corruption and fear of others.

**We pray that we may resist the temptation, to judge and condemn others.**

Jesus carries his cross – John 19:16-17

How willing are we to walk the way of Jesus and share the burden? Loving Christ, on your shoulders and in your heart, you carried the weight of our unfaithfulness without flinching.

**We pray that we may always be thankful to you for this journey,**

**to the place of your death; a journey which gave us new life.**

**Hymn:**  **# 149 VU - When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (Verses 1, 2 and 4)**

Simone of Cyrene carries the cross – Luke 23:26

What things are we asked to do as followers of Jesus? Who turns to us asking for help for themselves or others? Compassionate Christ, your promise is that we will have the resources for the tasks that are put before us.

**We pray that we may be open and responsive to the needs around us.**

Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem – Luke 23:27-28

Do we stop and show our concern for the suffering and sorrow of the innocent ones? Watchful Jesus, we thank you for your constant love for us all and your special care for those on the margins.

**May we respond with faithfulness,**

**by reaching out to those who are grieving and in despair.**

Jesus is stripped and nailed to the cross – Luke 23:33-55

Jesus and the good thief – Luke 23:39-43

Do we have the courage to admit our failings? Holy Christ, you invite us to change our ways and live with you in justice and compassion for all.

**We pray that we may respond to your call to live life differently,**

**in the freedom you claimed for us on the cross.**

Jesus speaks to Mary and John – John 19:25-27

Do we show faithfulness and love towards one another as Mary and Jesus did? Jesus, Mary’s son, you were aware of your mother’s lasting love and devotion even as you were dying and showed your care for her to the end.

**We pray that we may always show respect and love to others.**

Jesus dies on the cross – Mark 15:33-34, Luke 23:46

Are we willing to relinquish our impulses so that Christ might live in us? Redeeming Christ, through your life and your death on the cross, we are drawn to you as the source of life.

**We pray that we may ever be conscious of your love for us,**

**and draw closer to you, the Way, the Truth and the Life.**

Extinguishing of the Christ Candle

Special Music: They Crucified My Lord

Jesus is buried – John 19:38-42

How prepared are we to console and attend to people in their sorrow? Living Christ, in their sadness your friends cared for you with the rituals that showed their love for you. Your love for us bursts out of the still tomb where they laid you.

**We pray that we may always live close to you,**

**so that we can face our own dark times,**

**conscious of your love and saving power.**

**Placement of Our Stones**

*During the singing of “Were You There” you are invited to come forward,*

*and place your stone around the extinguished Christ Candle.*

**Hymn:** **# 144 VU - Were You There**

**Walking Away From The Tomb**

**Prayer**:

In a world of immense beauty and horrific suffering,

**we have taken this holy moment to open our hearts,**

**to the journey of Jesus from Table, to Cross, to Tomb.**

We have walked a faithful path as witnesses to rejection, torture and death.

**We stand in the shadow of the cross and the stone sealed tomb,**

**seeking God’s presence to guide our footsteps forward,**

**as we live with our grief and loss.**

God, be with us.

**God, be with us. Amen.**

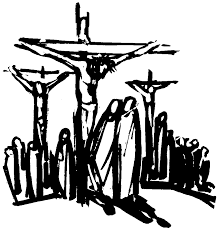
**Hymn**: **# 135 VU - Beneath The Cross of Jesus**

**Silence as we Leave**

*Linger in this moment as long as you wish.*

*Depart in silence and carry the blessings of this experience,*

*into your journey through this day.*



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***The church bulletins are presented to the glory of God,***

***and in loving memory of Muriel and Eric Hubley,***

***George and Susan Burns and Ray and Dorothy Hubley,***

***gift of their children and grandchildren,***

***Clay, Blair, Andy, Donette and families.***