

# Holy Week and Easter at St. Stephen's Church

The story of Jesus' final days is a drama like no other. From his triumphant entry into Jerusalem to his last supper and subsequent arrest, trial, and crucifixion, it is a story full of tenderness and cruelty, hope and despair, life and death, and life beyond death. It is an old story that is made manifest every time we bring our full selves—our hearts and bodies and souls—into the drama. It is our story as well as his, because it is a timeless narrative that repeats itself in every age. The liturgies of this week draw us into the story with movement, ritual, music, and more. This brochure outlines all of our Holy Week offerings. We hope you will join us for each step of this sacred journey. Services take place in the main church except where noted.

- Services with a plus sign + will be livestreamed.
- An asterisk \* indicates that child care is available.
- No Wonderful Wednesdays supper during Holy Week
- Parish office and May Fair House close at noon on Good Friday

## THE SUNDAY OF THE PASSION: PALM SUNDAY, MARCH 29

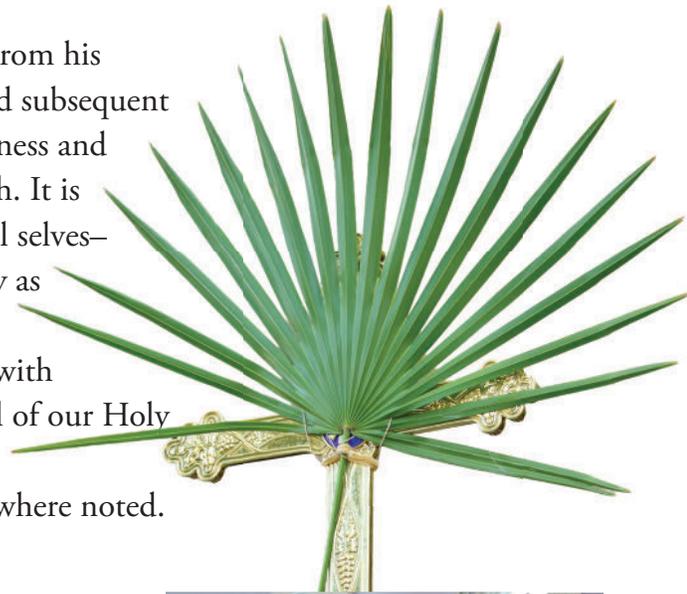
7:30 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite One (note earlier-than-usual time)+  
9:00 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two in Palmer Hall and in the main church;  
all will gather outdoors at the Three Chopt entrance to begin the service together+\*

### *No Sunday morning formation on Palm Sunday*

11:15 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two; meet outside Three Chopt entrance +\*  
5:30 p.m., Celtic Evensong and Communion+\*  
6:30 p.m., Sunday Community Supper in Large Fellowship Hall  
8:00 p.m., Sung Compline+

## MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY

8:10 a.m., Morning Prayer and Communion+



On Palm Sunday, those attending the Palmer Hall service or the 9 a.m. service in the main church will gather outdoors at the Three Chopt entrance to the church. After the Liturgy of the Palms, all process to their respective services led by a donkey.

The 11:15 a.m. service also begins outdoors for the Liturgy of the Palms before moving indoors for the Passion and Holy Eucharist (but no donkey).

## *Maundy Thursday: The Institution of the Lord's Supper*

Maundy Thursday recalls Jesus gathered with the disciples in an upper room, washed their feet, and shared a meal with them the night before his trial and crucifixion. We mark the Institution of the Lord's Supper, and Jesus' new commandment (*mandatum*—the origin of “Maundy” Thursday) to “love one another.”

### MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 2

5:30 p.m., Agape Meal in the fellowship hall\*

7:30 p.m., Holy Eucharist and Stripping and Washing of the Altar+

9 p.m.-8 a.m., All-Night Vigil in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit+



Agape Meal (above); stripping of the altar and prayer vigil (bottom) | Kim Schmidt

**Agape Meal.** On the day before he was arrested, Jesus gathered with his friends for a meal, the washing of feet, and the proclamation of a new commandment to love one another. Remembering that night, we will gather to break bread, to pray, and to be washed clean during an Agape Meal. *Agape* (ah-GAHP-ay) is the Greek word for the highest form of love; this service is sometimes known as a love-feast. This custom originated in the early church and will be a time of holy fellowship for us as it was for the first Christians. All are welcome, and footwashing is not mandatory—so even if you're not sure about that ritual, join us as we gather at the table to draw close to one another and to Jesus. This offering is for everyone and it is also suitable for families with children. The menu will include kid-friendly options.

**The stripping, washing, and anointing of the altar:** When the sanctuary (the area around the altar) is stripped bare, and the altar stands completely unadorned, we recall the desolation and abandonment Jesus knew at the time of his arrest, trial, and crucifixion. The altar is then washed, as a body would be washed for burial in the Jewish tradition, and the five crosses in the top of the altar, which symbolize the five wounds of Christ from his crucifixion (hands, feet, and side), are anointed with oil, as a body would be anointed according to Jewish custom.

**Vigil in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit:** An all-night vigil is kept in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit with the reserved sacrament and the vigil candle. The chapel is adorned with greenery and flowers to recall the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus prayed in the hours before he was betrayed, tried and crucified. Participants take turns staying awake with Jesus, praying for one hour. A sign-up sheet is available at Information Central (the large table outside the parish office). The sign-up sheet is designed simply to ensure that at least two people are in the chapel each hour. If the time period you wish to come is already filled, feel free to come anyway.



**QUESTIONS:** If you have questions, please call the parish office at 804.288.2867.

## *Good Friday: The Crucifixion of Our Lord*

Today is the day of sorrows. With our altars and our hearts stripped bare, we confront the story of Jesus' death on a cross. That cross was, and is, a place of desolation, where all hope seems lost. We know that this is not the end of the story, but we must not rush ahead to Easter without first standing at this intersection of life and death, hope and despair. During this solemn service, as we remember Jesus bearing his cross to Calvary for his crucifixion, a large wooden cross is carried into the church, and those who wish to will have the opportunity to reverence the cross. The Liturgy for Good Friday will include revised solemn collects that address the unfortunate legacy of antisemitism stemming from the Passion narrative in John's gospel and its embodiment in this liturgy.

### GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 3

8:10 a.m., Morning Prayer and Communion from the reserved sacrament+

Noon, The Liturgy for Good Friday+

1:30 p.m., Stations of the Cross

1:30-2 p.m., guided

2-4 p.m., self-guided

5 p.m., Musical offering+

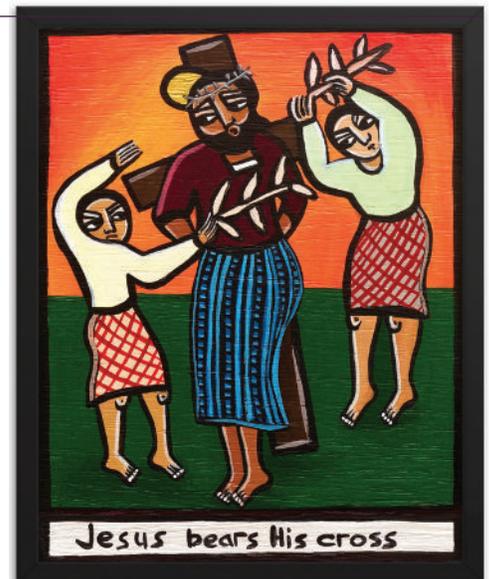
Sonnets based on the Stations of the Cross written by Malcolm Guite, British Anglican priest and poet, interspersed with organ improvisations by Robert McCormick

On Good Friday, you will see icons placed in the church representing **14 stations of the cross**. These are the work of Laura James, a renowned artist whose sacred imagery draws on the rich tradition of Ethiopian iconography.

The compelling images combine with Scripture readings, contemporary reflections, and timeless prayers to connect the story of Jesus' death with the hurts and hopes of our world today.

This practice—also called the Way of the Cross—is a local adaptation of a custom observed by pilgrims to Jerusalem: the offering of prayer at a series of places traditionally associated with our Lord's passion and death.

A guided tour of the stations will take place at about 1:30 p.m. following the Liturgy for Good Friday. From 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., the church will be open for self-guided walking meditation; booklets with the prayers and readings will be available in the church.



As a special musical offering at 5 p.m. on Good Friday, April 3, Robert McCormick, St. Stephen's director of music, will play improvised organ meditations on the 14 traditional Stations of the Cross. Before each improvisation, parishioners will read sonnets based on each station by British Anglican priest and poet Malcolm Guite. One of Robert's specialties is improvising at the organ, and we hope that this devotional event will be spiritually enriching for parishioners and friends of St. Stephen's.

Photo of St. Stephen's organ by Bill van Pelt

# Easter Services



**Easter Eve, beginning at dusk on Saturday, April 4**

*The Great Vigil of Easter*

7:30 p.m., The Great Vigil & First Eucharist of Easter service begins outside the Three Chopt entrance + Sanctuary, the Compline Choir

**Easter Day, Sunday, April 5** *The Resurrection of Our Lord*

*No formation hour on Easter Day*

7:30 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite One with Hymns+

9 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two (two services: one in Palmer Hall, one in the church+\*), followed by reception

*St. Stephen's Choir with brass, timpani, organ*

*After the 9 a.m. services, there will be an Easter Egg Hunt for children. We will wait to begin the hunt until both 9 a.m. services have concluded.*

11:15 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, followed by reception+\*

*St. Stephen's Choir with brass, timpani, organ*

5:30 p.m., Celtic Evensong and Communion +\*

6:30 p.m., Sunday Community Supper

8 p.m., Compline +

*Sanctuary, the Compline Choir*



**Livestreaming:** Services market with a + will be available on our website.

**Parking:** On Easter Day, additional parking will be available at St. Catherine's School on Grove Avenue across from the church; please do not park in spaces marked "Resident."

**Child care:** Child care for children age 4 and under will be available in our nursery during the 9 a.m., 11:15 a.m., and 5:30 p.m. services.

Easter Vigil and Easter Day 2025 photos by Kim Schmidt