

STATIONS OF THE CROSS



Good Friday

April 3, 2026

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

Richmond, Virginia

This service of movement and reflection guides us through the solemn story of Jesus' crucifixion, also known as the Way of the Cross. The ritual commonly involves a meditative journey through fourteen "stations" representing different moments in the Passion narrative. We will travel this journey with the visual aid of icons designed by renowned, self-taught iconographer Laura James. James, who is of Caribbean descent, is known for her study and reimagining of the rich tradition of Ethiopian iconography. These are framed prints of an original set created in 2012 for St. Jean Baptiste Parish in Sasser, Haiti, and copied for Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York. In 2021, James was commissioned to create a crucifix in the same style for the Chapel of the Apostles at the Sewanee School of Theology.

If you are taking a self-guided tour, please begin with the first station, "Jesus is condemned to death," located near the baptismal font in the center crossing. The flow of stations moves from there through the side transept and toward the Chapel of the Holy Spirit on the right side of the church as you face the altar. The stations continue counterclockwise, winding in front of the pulpit and lectern and back around through the side transept in front of the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Each station is accompanied in this booklet by a scriptural passage, a reflection based on both timeless and contemporary themes, and a concluding prayer. The intent is to use this ancient practice, in conversation with James' compelling icons, as a means of drawing our heart's attention to the sorrows and struggles of our world today. The way of the cross is not only the journey of our Savior; it is our shared journey as we strive to follow Christ through the valley of death and into the promise of new and lasting life.

Opening Devotions

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Leader: Lord, have mercy.

People: *Christ, have mercy.*

Leader: Lord, have mercy.

The Lord's Prayer

The Leader and People and people pray together:

*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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.*

*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. **Amen.***

Leader: We will glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ:

People: *In whom is our salvation, our life and resurrection.*

Let us pray.

Assist us mercifully with your help, O Lord God of our salvation, that we may enter with joy upon the contemplation of those mighty acts, whereby you have given us life and immortality, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The procession goes to the first station.

First Station: Jesus is condemned to death

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:

People: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Reader: As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” He answered him, “You say so.” Then the chief priests accused him of many things. So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. (Mark 15:1-3, 15)

True power is wielded in acts of mercy and compassion.

Let us hold in our hearts the elected officials of our communities, our Commonwealth, and our country. We also remember school administrators, church leaders, business executives, judges and jailors, and all who make decisions that impact the lives of others. We pray for a spirit of wisdom, compassion, and mercy, that they may seek the common good and govern from a place of love rather than fear. And we pray for ourselves, that in the spheres of influence in our lives, we, too, may act with mercy and compassion.

Leader: Let us pray. Almighty God, you declare your glory and show forth your handiwork in the heavens and in the earth: Deliver us in our various occupations from the service of self alone, that we may do the work you give us to do in truth and beauty and for the common good; for the sake of him who came among us as one who serves, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.** (The Book of Common Prayer, page 261)

The procession continues to the second station.

Second Station: Jesus bears his cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:

People: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Reader: 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. (John 19:17)

Carrying the cross is a heavy burden, and some bear more than others.

Let us thank God for those whose visible or invisible labor sustains the lives we live. We pray for farm workers and fishermen, for truck drivers and pilots, for teachers and trades people, for civil workers and service providers. We pray that they may be strengthened by day and comforted by night, and that they may know the gift of our gratitude. And we pray for ourselves, that we may fulfill our own vocations with equal grace and sacrifice.

Leader: Let us pray. Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son came not to be served but to serve: Bless all who, following in his steps, give themselves to the service of others; that with wisdom, patience, and courage, they may minister to the suffering, the friendless, and the needy; for the love of him who laid down his life for us, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen. (Prayer Book, page 260)

The procession continues to the third station.

Third Station: Jesus falls beneath the cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:

People: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Reader: They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” (Matthew 27:27-30)

Sometimes the challenges we face seem overwhelming.

Let us acknowledge the struggles we face in our lives – physical, mental, and spiritual. We pray for those who are plagued with addiction, or those battling depression or mental illness. We pray for people whose marriages are failing, and for teenagers who are battered by anxiety or self-doubt. We pray for people of all ages who have felt neglected, lost, or disconnected in so many ways. We give thanks for a spirit of resilience, for the sustaining love of God, and for the support of family and friends.

Leader: Let us pray. O God, whose light divides the day from the night and turns the shadow of death into the morning: Drive far from us all wrong desires, incline our hearts to keep your law, and guide our feet into the way of peace; that, having done your will with cheerfulness during the day, we may, when night comes, rejoice to give you thanks; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.** (Prayer Book, page 99)

The procession continues to the fourth station.

Fourth Station: Jesus meets his holy mother

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:

People: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Reader: 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.” (John 19:26-27)

Facing grief is a step on the path of healing.

Let us mourn the losses of our lives – the loved ones who have died, the promises broken, the relationships or dreams that have slowly fallen away. We pray for all who are in the midst of grief, for those picking up the pieces of their lives and rearranging them into new patterns and shapes. We pray for those whose grief is old but may return when they least expect it. We pray for ourselves, for healing and hope and for the re-mem-bering of our lives, carrying forth the spirit of those who have gone before.

Leader: Let us pray. Almighty God, Father of all mercies and giver of comfort: Deal graciously, we pray, with all who mourn; that, casting all their care on you, they may know the consolation of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.** (Prayer Book, page 505)

The procession continues to the fifth station.

Fifth Station: Simon helps Jesus bear his cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:

People: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Reader: As they led Jesus away, they came upon a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. (Luke 23:26)

The journey of the cross is an invitation to solidarity.

Let us pray for those who are hungry or homeless, for those who are oppressed, and for those in prison. We pray for all who are vulnerable – for infants and children, for the aged and infirm. We pray especially for those whose lives we touch through our food pantry and fruit ministry, and through the Anna Julia Cooper School, ReWork Richmond, Fairfield Court Elementary School and our other partnerships throughout the city. We pray for ourselves, that we may remember that we are all bound together in our common humanity.

Leader: Let us pray. Almighty and merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget: the homeless and the destitute, the old and the sick, all who have none to care for them. Help us to heal those who are broken in body or spirit, and to turn their sorrow into joy. Grant this, Father, for the love of your Son, who for our sake became poor, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. (Prayer Book, page 826)

The procession continues to the sixth station.

Sixth Station: Jesus meets Veronica

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:

People: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Reader: After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said, "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. (John 19:28-29)

Friendship sustains us and reminds us that we are never alone.

Let us thank God for the gift of friendship: for the lifelong friends who know our deepest joys and sorrows, and for the fellow travelers who are there for only a season of our lives. We give thanks for those who make us laugh or wipe our tears, for those who help us stand when we falter and those who challenge us to become our best selves. Let us pray that we may share the gift of friendship in return and live with open and trusting hearts.

Leader: Let us pray. Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. **Amen.** (Prayer Book, page 833)

The procession continues to the seventh station.

Seventh Station: Jesus falls a second time

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:

People: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Reader: They spat on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. (Matthew 27:30-31)

Society falters when the bonds of humanity are broken.

Let us pray for an end to violence and war. We pray especially for the people of the Middle East, Ukraine, South Sudan, and all people and places in conflict. We pray for victims of gun violence in our own cities in this country, and for all who live in fear. We pray for an end to violence and oppression everywhere, and for the triumph of freedom and peace. Help us learn to love one another, and turn our swords into ploughshares, our spears into pruning hooks.

Leader: Let us pray. Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.** (Prayer Book, page 823)

The procession continues to the eighth station.

Eighth Station: Jesus comforts the women of Jerusalem

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:

People: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Reader: There followed after Jesus a great multitude of the people, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.” (Luke 23:27-28)

Hope is found in community and connection.

Let us thank God for the sources of community that sustain us in difficult days. We pray for our parish family at St. Stephen’s – for our staff and volunteers, for our Vestry and committee leaders. We give thanks for the beauty of our worship, for the warmth of our suppers and fellowship groups, and for our children’s, youth, and adult ministries. We give thanks for caring neighbors, for recovery groups, for spiritual directors and advisers, therapists and counselors, soulmates and friends. We pray for ourselves, that we may not yield to despair but may travel together the road to health and wholeness.

Leader: Let us pray. Almighty God, you sent your Son Jesus Christ to reconcile the world to yourself: We praise and bless you for those whom you have sent in the power of the Spirit to preach the Gospel to all nations. We thank you that in all parts of the earth a community of love has been gathered together by their prayers and labors, and that in every place your servants call upon your Name; for the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. **Amen.** (Prayer Book, page 838)

The procession continues to the ninth station.

Ninth Station: Jesus falls a third time

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:

People: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Reader: The people stood by, watching, but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!” The soldiers also mocked him, saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” (Luke 23:35-37)

Sometimes we cannot save ourselves from tribulation.

Let us thank God for those who help in times of trouble and distress: police and firefighters, ambulance drivers and medics, rescue workers and volunteers. We pray for members of the armed forces and for their families, who sacrifice much for our safety and freedom. And we pray for all victims of natural disaster, especially those affected by famines, earthquakes, severe storms and flooding. We pray for ourselves, that we may have courage in the time of trial and may be willing to call on others for help.

Leader: Let us pray. Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love’s sake. **Amen.** (Prayer Book, page 134)

The procession continues to the tenth station.

Tenth Station: Jesus is stripped and given gall to drink

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:

People: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Reader: When they came to a place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull), they offered him wine to drink, mingled with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And they divided his garments among them by casting lots. This was to fulfill the scripture which says, “They divided my garments among them; they cast lots for my clothing.” (Matthew 27:32-35)

Divided hearts and lives are not sustainable.

Let us pray for an end to the divisions and distractions that plague our lives and our world. We lament the many ways in which we segment ourselves rather than seeking unity and wholeness, within our own hearts and with one another. We pray that some day we all may understand that we are made for one another and we are meant to be one, as God is one.

Leader: Let us pray. O God, you have blessed us and given us dominion over all the earth: Increase our reverence before the mystery of life; and give us new insight into your purposes for the human race, and new wisdom and determination in making provision for its future in accordance with your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.** (Prayer Book, page 828)

The procession continues to the eleventh station.

Eleventh Station: Jesus is nailed to the cross

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:

People: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Reader: When they came to the place that is called The Skull, the crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:33-34)

Fear hardens our hearts and blurs the vision of God’s dream.

Let us pray for all who live in fear, and for those whose hearts are hardened by fear of others. We pray for immigrants and refugees, fleeing from harm or seeking new life. We pray for women and for members of the LGBTQ+ community, who fight for equal treatment under the law. We pray for people of color, who struggle against racial discrimination and injustice, and we pray for religious minorities, who long to pray in peace. We affirm the vision of God’s dream, the beloved community in which all live in peace and love triumphs over fear.

Leader: Let us pray. O God, you made us in your image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. (Prayer Book, page 815)

The procession continues to the twelfth station.

Twelfth Station: Jesus dies

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:

People: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Reader: It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. (Luke 23:44-46)

Death is a harrowing journey, but it is not the end.

Let us thank God for chaplains and morticians, doctors and nurses, hospitals and nursing homes. Let us pray for those who comfort the dying, those who are nearing death themselves, and those who suffer from witnessing the death of another. Let us pray for ourselves that we may be courageous in facing our mortality, in caring for others, and in holding fast to the promise of eternal life.

Leader: Let us pray. O God, whose days are without end, and whose mercies cannot be numbered: Make us, we pray, deeply aware of the shortness and uncertainty of human life; and let your Holy Spirit lead us in holiness and righteousness all our days; that, when we have served you in our generation, we may be gathered to our ancestors, having the testimony of a good conscience, in the communion of the church, in the confidence of faith, in the comfort of a holy hope, in favor with you, our God, and in perfect charity with the world. All this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.** (Prayer Book, page 504)

The procession continues to the thirteenth station.

Thirteenth Station: Jesus is taken from the cross and laid into Mary's arms

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:

People: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Reader: The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath day they rested according to the commandment. (Luke 23:55-56)

Families in many forms bind our hearts in love.

Let us thank God for our families: for our mothers and fathers, our spouses and partners, our siblings and children and other relatives. Let us pray for our friends and our adopted or communal families whose love shapes us into the people we become, and who are there to support and carry us when we need it most. Let us pray for ourselves, that we may find healing and wholeness in those relationships and recognize that we are all bound together in a larger family as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Leader: Let us pray. All praise and thanks to you, most merciful God, for adopting us as your own children, for incorporating us into your holy Church, and for making us worthy to share in the inheritance of the saints in light; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. **Amen.** (Prayer Book, page 311)

The procession continues to the fourteenth station.

Fourteenth Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you:

People: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Reader: When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb. (Matthew 27:57-60)

Love is stronger than death, and life endures beyond the grave.

Let us thank God for all the departed whose lives have affected the world for good: for the saints in our lives, for the saints of the gospel, and for the saints of this church. Let us remember the promise of the gospel: that death is not the end, and that love and life endure. We pray for the strength to face these days unafraid, and to open our hearts to the promise of everlasting life and the pledge of a new creation.

Leader: Let us pray. O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.** (Prayer Book, page 280)

Concluding Prayers

Leader: Savior of the world, by your cross and precious blood you have redeemed us:

People: *Save us, and help us, we humbly beseech you, O Lord.*

Let us pray.

We thank you, heavenly Father, that you have delivered us from the dominion of sin and death and brought us into the kingdom of your Son; and we pray that, as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his love he may raise us to eternal joys; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Leader: We adore you O Christ and we bless you,

People: *Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.*

Leader: Bless us and keep us this night, as we wait with you in darkness and in hope. Remember us when you come into your Kingdom. **Amen.**

The congregation may depart in silence. You are welcome to take this booklet home for continued meditation, or you may return it to the front table to be reused later.

The Good Friday Offering

An offering basket is located near the baptismal font in the church. It is customary in the Episcopal Church for the Good Friday offering to be designated for the work of the church in Jerusalem. Our Good Friday offering will go to the American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem (afedj.org), which promotes and raises funds for humanitarian work of that diocese and its institutions to serve the needs of all people in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Israel. Gifts support their work in 14 schools, two major hospitals, four outpatient clinics, and four institutes for the disabled, in addition to churches in Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, an area of 121,000 square miles.