

# Good Friday Meditation Stations

by Marjorie Wiltse

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**W**ould you like to have a memorable worship experience on Good Friday? Where all are invited to come face-to-face with the reality of Jesus' Passion? Where participants experience some of the sights and tastes and smells and emotions of those days in a personal way? A time when people of various ages can explore and meditate side by side, but each at their own pace? Here's what one church did.

Our 300-member congregation has traditionally observed Holy Week with worship on both Holy Thursday and Good Friday. On Holy Thursday we have shared Communion in the fellowship hall around tables arranged in the shape of the cross, with foot or handwashing and most recently, the inclusion of symbols, food and liturgy from the Jewish Seder. Our tradition on Good Friday has been a quiet Tenebrae service in the sanctuary.

In 2005, other church programming made it necessary for us to move to the

sanctuary on Holy Thursday, which meant that service became much closer in style to a Tenebrae. Not wanting the two evenings to be too similar, we brainstormed ways to make the Good Friday experience unique. How could we give Good Friday its own identity and flavor, so worshippers wouldn't go away feeling as if Thursday and Friday were the same? Enter... Good Friday Meditation Stations.

Ten stations (described below) were set up throughout the church, and people (school-age and up) were invited to come any time between 6:00 and 9:00 p.m. (Another year we would change this to 6:30-8:30) A greeter was at the door to welcome all, give a brief explanation of the format of the evening and hand each person a single sheet containing a short introduction and a list of what and where the stations were. More detailed instructions, along with scriptures and other texts were posted at each station, and people were free to visit some or all of the stations in any order, and for as long as they wished.

## Meditation Stations



Photos: Laurel Kirkwood

**1 Labyrinth Walk**—We rented a labyrinth, which fit nicely into the back half of our

fellowship hall. The front half contained easels with explanatory posters and chairs for people to use when removing their shoes. A

committee member was in the room to introduce people to the experience and answer questions. The fellowship hall looks out onto our memorial garden, and one participant remarked how, as the sun went down, she was moved by seeing her reflection “walking in the garden.” (Suggestion: If school-age children are invited, you might want to consider a block of time just for them to use the labyrinth. They have their own style and pace for walking, which can be a distraction for older folks.)

**2 Water**—Here there was an invitation to read and meditate on the stories of how Jesus used water to wash the disciples' feet, as compared with Pilate's washing his hands of the whole affair. Those who wished could touch or dip their hands in a basin of water as part of their meditation.



**3 Communion**—This station provided a chance to read and consider one or more accounts of the Last Supper, taste the bread and juice, and kneel or sit in prayer.

**4 Prayer Wall**—Participants wrote or drew a prayer and placed it in a “prayer wall” made of loosely-stacked bricks. This was in the sanctuary, and was left up for Easter morning.



**5 Psalm 22**—Here people were invited to meditate on Jesus' words from the cross, especially the quote from Psalm 22. An oil painting of the crucifixion (done by a church member) dominated this station.

**6 Music** (*not pictured*)—People could choose one or more songs to listen to through headphones on boomboxes. Materials were available for people to draw as they listened or try some American Sign Language signs (posted) for the songs. (This station needs to have *several* boomboxes available.)



**7 The Tomb**—The picture book *He Was One of Us* was available, with a simple tomb and “gravecloths” set up as a focus. (The tomb was large enough to sit or kneel in.) Those who wished could rub aromatic ointment into their skin.





**8 Confession**—A large, rough cross was set up so that people could sit near it, touch it if desired, and pray. A dish nearby contained enough nails for all to take one.

**9 Symbols of the Crucifixion**

—A number of items related to the crucifixion (robe, whip, coin pouch, etc.) were arranged at the foot of a cross. People could sit on a bench and meditate on the meaning of each. Those who wished could taste some vinegar, using a sponge swab (available at pharmacies). Before leaving, all were invited to add to a “community” spongeart piece. This was displayed for the whole congregation on Easter morning.



**10 Art**—Art materials (including a few stencils for the hesitant!) were laid out for people to express themselves however they wished.

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A wonderful meditative mood settled over the gathering as participants moved quietly from place to place. Stations were arranged to accommodate more than one person at a time, so there was minimal “waiting in line.” Most of those who came went to all ten stations; some returned a second or third time to stations they found especially meaningful. One young family stayed for nearly two hours because the children didn’t want to leave!

This experience involved considerable setup, but with different people responsible for each station it was easier than it might appear. This division of labor had the extra benefit of allowing each committee member some areas of “mystery” during the evening, since she only saw the stations she worked on ahead of time. Committee members were available in the halls to assist as needed, but

we rotated so that each could also have time to worship.

If this seems daunting to try the first time, you might want to use only a few of these ideas. Are you ambitious? Add your own to what is here. You might also consider incorporating one or more stations into a worship service.



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