



**March 29, 2024
12:00 PM and 7:30 PM**

**EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH
United Church of Christ**

Liturgy by Rev. T. Denise Anderson | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org
Artwork: "The Descent" by T. Denise Anderson

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Elders of Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ

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EVANGELICAL REFORMED
United Church of Christ
– An Open and Affirming Congregation –



GOOD FRIDAY
Stations of Peter

*All who are able may stand

PRELUDE

GATHERING

The Rev. Dr. Marvin L. Morgan

Our worship service today is a different take on the Stations of the Cross. Together, we will journey through Jesus' final moments through the eyes of his disciple, Peter. In Peter, we see a little of all of us—he is devout and resolute, zealous and rash, and even fearful and flawed. If any of us can locate ourselves in the crucifixion story, it is likely we can see ourselves in Peter.

This is a service of confession, lament, and repentance. Through Peter's experience, we will consider our own. We will look closely at the events of Good Friday to help us honestly assess who we are. As Jesus tells Peter the truth about himself, we will consider the truth about ourselves.

James Baldwin once said, "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." Let us journey together through this difficult day, trusting in God's power and willingness to bind our wandering hearts to God's own self.

INVOCATION

Holy God, as we journey through this familiar story, help us to understand it anew. Show us, O God, where we find ourselves in the narrative, and move us toward a more just and compassionate future. Amen.

OPENING HYMN

Come, O Fount of Every Blessing

#459, v. 1

– STATION 1 –
Peter resists then receives the foot washing

JOHN 13:1-20

The Rev. Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads

Pastor: We have heard the words of scripture. Let us now use our holy imaginations to read between the words and consider how Peter might have felt in these moments. Hear now a dramatic reading inspired by John 13:1-20.

Reader: This feels . . . strange. What does Jesus mean by all this?
(Peter) What does he mean by saying that not all of us are clean? He washed our feet, which was . . . strange. But I trust my teacher. I've given up everything to follow him. Is that not love? His words seem . . . strange. What does he know? What is he not saying?

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (Naming who we are called to serve)

*Consider Jesus' commandment to "wash one another's feet." Whose feet are you being called to wash? **On one slip of dissolvable paper, or any paper if you are worshipping virtually, write the names of people and/or communities you feel God is calling you to serve.** We will return to these written prayers at a later station.*

– STATION 2 –
Jesus foretells Peter's denials

JOHN 13:31-38

The Rev. Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (Naming who we love profoundly)

*Consider Jesus' Jesus' charge: "Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another." **On your second sheet of dissolvable paper, or any paper if you are worshipping virtually, write the names of people you profoundly love.** We will return to these written prayers at a later station.*

– STATION 3 –
Peter draws his sword

JOHN 18:1-11

The Rev. Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads

Pastor: Violence in all its forms is a public health issue. March for Our Lives, a movement started by youth impacted by a shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, notes that gun violence is the leading cause of death for children in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that 41% of women and 26% of men have experienced some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetimes. According to the American Public Health Association, violence “disproportionately impacts people of color and other oppressed groups such as the [...] LGBTQIA population and those living below the poverty line. Communities living without adequate resources and those facing unfair treatment are more susceptible to all health issues. Exposure to violence is the greatest predictor of future violence.”

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE (Prayer of confession)

Pastor: Please join me in our unison prayer of confession:

All: Holy One, we are convicted of our addiction to violence. We lament the proliferation and use of firearms. We bemoan the staggering statistics of intimate partner violence. Yet, we confess our own complicity in the pain of our neighbors. Whether we have picked up a gun, uttered harmful words about each other, or simply refused to acknowledge another’s pain, we have betrayed the peace you left with us. We have built war economies that make conflict profitable. We have created societies that justify the violence of food and housing insecurity, racism, discrimination, and marginalization. God of grace, have mercy upon us, and save us from weak resignation to these evils. Amen.

ANTHEM (7:30 PM)
Ah, Holy Jesus

Senior Choir
– D. McCullough

– STATION 4 –
Jesus is arrested and Peter denies Christ

JOHN 18:12-18

The Rev. Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads

Pastor: I invite you to turn your attention to the image printed on the front of your bulletins which shows a portion of an artwork created by Rev. T. Denise Anderson, inspired by Peter denying Christ. Of this piece, the artist writes:

“Here, I try to capture Peter’s initial paralysis when he’s first asked if he’s one of Jesus’ disciples. When Jesus was arrested, Peter had only begun to see the full extent of the empire’s cruelty. ‘Would they do to me what they’ve done to him?’ he must have asked himself. Maybe he could be so zealous for Jesus in the past because it was all an abstraction. Now, things have gotten frighteningly real.”

—Rev. T. Denise Anderson

Friends, when we think of violence, we think of calculated, deliberate, or impassioned action. In this station, we are confronted with the violence of inaction. Peter has now seen the lengths that power would go to silence Jesus. When asked if he was one of Jesus’ disciples, Peter freezes. He must suspect that, if his association to Jesus were made known, he might be met with the same violence. Please join me in prayer:

All: Merciful God, we confess that, too often, we’ve been inactive bystanders in the face of someone else’s victimization. Forgive us for choosing self-preservation over justice. Amen.

HYMN

Come, O Fount of Every Blessing

#459, v. 2

– STATION 5 –
Peter denies Christ again and again

JOHN 18:19-27

The Rev. Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads

Reader: Jesus was right. My Lord, what have I done?
(Peter)

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

Pastor: I invite you to now gaze upon the complete artwork titled *The Descent* by Rev. T. Denise Anderson, which is placed at the center of the chancel. This is a piece created entirely out of fabric. Anderson shares these words about the artwork as a whole:

“From [the top], Peter descends into more fear—the kind that does not help us to be our best selves. I depict him going from stunned to defensive and then to belligerent, navigating the full spectrum of the fight, flight, or freeze responses to perceived threat. By the time the cock crows as Jesus predicted (see if you can make out the bird’s faint silhouette in the lower right-hand corner), Peter probably no longer recognizes himself. He must feel deflated and ashamed. At the end of his descent, he is different, so I depict him differently from his three prior denials. He has much less fire in his countenance and can’t even open his eyes to face what he’s done.

The flames recall the fire where Peter warmed himself, but they also represent purification and illumination. Peter is forced to see himself as he truly is—as Jesus had already shown him. Who will he choose to be after this? When we are confronted with who we truly are, who will we choose to be after that confrontation? As we look at Peter’s journey, it’s my prayer that we will consider and meditate on our own.”

—Rev. T. Denise Anderson

Come forward as you are able to place your slips of dissolving paper from the first two stations into the basin of water.

If you are worshipping with us online. Tear apart or ball up the pieces of paper and discard them in the trash.

In this act, we symbolically participate in Peter's denial. We recognize the times we have turned away from those we love and from those whom God has called us to serve. We feel the pain of facing the worst part of ourselves.

– STATION 6 –
Jesus is Crucified

JOHN 19:1-30

The Rev. Kirstin Shrom-Rhoads

Reader: When you know the world is grieving
(Peter) and you are partly responsible,
what words of solace can you offer?
When you could have done something—
anything—
and you did nothing,
what then can you do?

The earth is shaken, and so am I.
But do I deserve to grieve?
Have I brought this on myself?
Have I brought this on him?
On us?

I have not earned these tears.
I do not deserve this catharsis.
But what else can I do?

HYMN

Come, O Fount of Every Blessing

#459, v. 3

Pastor: “Prone to wander, Lord, we feel it, prone to leave the God we love.”
Friends, we are more like Peter than we may like to admit. Our Lord
has died and we were not there. And so, tonight we grieve with Peter.
Our wandering hearts are heavy.

But as you leave this place, remember: your wandering heart is
always tethered to the love of God. God's abundant grace existed for
Peter and it exists for you. God's love will never run out. So go now
in peace, trusting that streams of mercy shall find us all. Amen.

Depart in silence.