

TOORAK UNITING CHURCH ORDER OF SERVICE



**10.00AM WORSHIP SERVICE
GOOD FRIDAY
2 APRIL 2010**

Leader: The Rev'd Anneke Oppewal

THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

OPENING SENTENCES

The echoes of cheering die away
and the partying palm branches
shrivel on the side of the road.
The glimpses of light on the way ahead
flicker into darkness.

All that lies within the shadows and the emptiness
waits to be entered, in its pain,
its oppressions, and its deadliness. (silence)

But one thing is never in doubt:
The Christ goes on in faithfulness.

HYMN: 349 In the cross of Christ

ENGAGING with THE STORY

READ: Luke 22: 14-23

REFLECTION Jesus shares a meal with his friends, leaving them with something that will support and help them even before they are aware they will need it. He is well aware that something is going on behind his back, beneath the surface. It one of the very worst things that can be done to you because it undermines your being.

His friends talk amongst each other, as yet oblivious. They are probably all convinced it won't be them that will betray him, and yet, before the day is out, they will all desert him.

HYMN: 341 My Song is love unknown, vs 1, 2, 4, 5, 6.

PRAYER: Thank you Lord for meals where we can be together and share together with others. Thank you for giving the communion meal to the Church as a reminder of what happened to you. Thank you for the opportunity to remember the breaking, the pouring, and the gift of community you offered your friends in that upper room in Jerusalem all those centuries ago. A gift that still inspires, carries and supports us today.

We pray Lord for people who can hear the whispering behind their backs. Who can feel an ugly monster moving under the surface and are undermined and diminished by it. We pray for people who are betrayed, especially when friends are doing the betraying.

OFFERTORY

CHORAL OFFERING: O Vos Omnes - O my people
Carlos Correa 1680 - 1747

All ye that pass by, behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

God receive our gifts of money and of our selves. Let them be used in the coming of your Kingdom and the healing of the nations. In Jesus Name. Amen.

READ: Luke 22: 39-45

REFLECTION: In hymns and sermons it is often suggested Jesus' suffering was like no other. Although that may be true in a theological sense I believe that it can also be a cop out. Because it diminishes our own suffering but also because it takes Jesus out of our humanity into a realm where he no longer connects with our day to day experience. It says he is so afraid he is sweating blood. Have you ever been as scared as that? When I put it to the 9am last week there were several nods around the Church, from adults as well as children. The deepest agony Jesus enters into is our agony. He is scared. He doesn't want to die. We forget sometimes he was a young man, around 30 years of age. It was too early for him to die.

And then there are his friends. While he is sweating blood and tears they fall asleep. They are not even able to keep their eyes open long enough to be able to pray with him. And fair enough, they were probably exhausted, and couldn't help it. It's what happens in life sometimes. With the best of intentions we let others down or are let down when we need our friends to be close to us. But it hurts when it does and it adds to the pain already suffered.

Jesus prays for a miracle. Again a prayer we may know from our own experience. We may have prayed it when someone we loved was very ill. Or as we are about to lose a loved one. When we can't protect a child. Sometimes it is the only thing left to do, knowing full well we will probably not be able to stop what is coming our way and accepting the pain and suffering might be the only way.

PRAYER: We pray for all who are scared out of their minds. For all who see suffering and death coming and know they won't be able to avoid it. And are scared. For all those friends who can't manage to keep their eyes open. And for those whose friends are not there for them when they need them most. For all people who find themselves praying for an escape from what they see looming but instead have to accept and let go.

HYMN: 123 Be still my soul vs 1 and 2.

READ: Luke 22: 63-71

CHOIR: Ecce quomodo, - See how the just man dies
Jacob Handl 1550 - 1591

Ecce quomodo moritur justus, et nemo percipit corde. Viri justi tolluntur, et nemo considerat. A facie iniquitatis sublatus est justus. Et erit in pace memoria eius. In pace factus est locus eius, et in Sion habitatio eius. Et erit in pace memoria eius.

See how the just man dies, and no one feels for him in his heart. The just are taken away and no one cares. The just man is borne from the presence of evil, and his memory shall be held in peace. His dwelling place is in peace, and his abode is in Sion.

REFLECTION:

The accusation brought against Jesus is an excuse. Injustice is being done. Nobody stands up for him. It is too safe and convenient to stay quiet. And what is the life of one man anyway? The lack of value put on a human life becomes clear. It's better that one dies than many. A decision of convenience.

PRAYER: We pray for sacrificial victims taken to the cross because of convenience. For those for whom nobody will stand up because their lives aren't valued. Children that die far away, but also closer to home - for those who are sacrificed for conveniences sake - at work, in our family life even.

And we thank you for Christ taking that suffering upon him and entering into it so he can be here with us now and be ready to walk beside us where suffering like that is laid on to us.

HYMN: 331 Sing my tongue

READ: Luke 23: 26-43

REFLECTION: The crucifixion.

Are there words for this? Probably not, but it still can be an excuse to look away too quickly. Let us take some time to think about betrayal, sadness, loneliness, suffering and pain as it has taken or is taking shape in our own lives. I invite you to bring the pain of your heart to the cross and that of others you know in this time of silence. Try to avoid going into the general, the “great suffering of the world” but instead allow the suffering of Christ to connect to your own and come close, just for those five minutes and be with Christ in his agony.

CHOIR:Stabat Mater

Giovanni Battista Pergolesi 1710 - 1736

Soloist: Bente Lancaster and Kerrie Bolton

The sorrowing Mother stood by the cross, Looking at her son and weeping.

PRAYER

God help us to stay. To not divert our gaze. Help us to be there with you, help us to be there with each other, help us to allow ourselves to acknowledge the suffering and pain we encounter in our lives. Because only if we stay with you till the last will we be able to rise with you at first light and receive the fulness of the new life you offer.

READ: Luke 23: 50-56a me

RESPOND

HYMN: 339 O sacred head

BLESSING

Let us go out in reverent silence,
as those whose life is so precious to God
that the Christ would die rather than stop loving us.

May these next three days be spent
in the quiet of contemplation.
and may every moment be held safe
in the open arms of Jesus Christ
and our faith, in what is to come,
be lifted up in hope by the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

*After the blessing we leave the Church in silence, you are invited to regroup at
St. John's Anglican Church for our annual Good Friday Witness walk.*