

Luke 24:27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

³² They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" ³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

ACT: Now read all or part of it a number of times, this time slowly, meditating and reflecting upon the words and the meaning behind them.

When you are ready say aloud or to yourself the prayer below and quietly leave the worship space.

*Most gracious God,
in whom alone dwells all fullness of light and wisdom:
By your Holy Spirit, illuminate our minds,
in true understanding of your Word.
Give us grace that we may receive it
with reverence and humility.
May it lead us to put our trust in you alone;
and so to serve and honour you,
that we may glorify your holy name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.* John Calvin (1509-1564)



Vision4Life
Transforming the church

PRAYER STATIONS

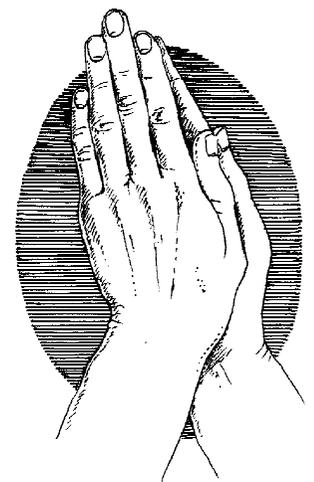
Luke's telling of the Passion Story

As part of the Vision4life initiative within the URC for this church year we are concentrating on prayer. So this Easter we are going to share, and offer to the community around us, a series of prayer stations reflecting on Luke's telling of the Passion story from Palm Sunday to Easter Day.

A prayer station is a space created to aid reflection. Around the church there are numbered spaces for you to visit in turn. For each there will be a visual image, a reading from the Bible (NRSV), and an action to undertake. (Apart from Stations 3 & 12 – for these you just need to find a quiet space to sit)

The prayer stations will each focus on a different part of Luke's Passion story, different styles and ways of praying, and include different symbolic actions as you reflect and journey through the story.

Prayer is a very individual thing. We each understand it and do it differently, so some of these stations will be more or less tuned to your personality and prayer life. Please try each of them, but do not worry if you spend more time at some and less at others.



If any of them make you feel uncomfortable please don't worry. For instance: if you'd rather not write something down just reflect on the word and when you are ready move on.

Please keep any conversation to a minimum.

Prayer is how we draw closer to God, how we share our concerns, our hopes, how we take our focus away from ourselves and put it on God.

In worship we structure our prayer into the following kinds:

- *Adoration* – acknowledging who God is
- *Confession* – acknowledging who we are
- *Assurance of Pardon* – acknowledging our relationship with God
- *Thanksgiving* – giving thanks for that relationship
- *Intercession* – acknowledging our dependence and relationship with God, each other, and all of Creation.

As individuals we may have found different ways of praying that work for us. Whether that is:

- reflecting on the Bible
- holding different people or situations before God
- repeating a phrase or action
- making time to be silent or to experience the wonder of nature
- or perhaps listening to music or singing.

It may be something that happens when we have a conversation, read a book, or hear the news; a set part of our routine or something that happens when it happens. Prayer can be understood in such broad terms that it can be as natural as breathing or as ordered as making an appointment.

So as you journey through Luke's Passion story may God bless that journey as you read, reflect, act and pray!

Rev'd David Coaker
Leyland URC & Penwortham URC

Luke 24:5 The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.⁶ Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee,⁷ that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again."⁸ Then they remembered his words,⁹ and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles.¹¹ But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem,¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them,¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.¹⁷ And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad.¹⁸ Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?"¹⁹ He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him."²⁵ Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"

Luke 23:49 But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

⁵⁰ Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, ⁵¹ had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. ⁵² This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³ Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid.

At a distance the women stand watching Jesus' death. His final words "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." The centurion praises God, a man risks his reputation, and possibly life, to offer a proper burial, and the law is obeyed.

A life burns out, is extinguished, and oils are prepared to honour his memory.

ACT: Strike a match, place it in the bowl and watch it burn.

When you are ready place a finger in one of the bowls of scented oil, make a sign of the cross on the back of your other hand, and say aloud or to yourself:

"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

Station 12 *The Resurrection and the Walk to Emmaus*

Find a seat, make yourself comfortable, and read through the Bible passage once.

Read the Bible passage:

Luke 24:1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in, they did not find the body.

Station 1 *Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem*

You are at the beginning of this journey. As Jesus entered Jerusalem the crowd cheered and laid down their cloaks on the road. What do you need to lay down?

Read the Bible passage:

Luke 19:29 When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.' " ³² So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. ³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" ³⁴ They said, "The Lord needs it."

³⁵ Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. ³⁷ As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, ³⁸ saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" ³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." ⁴⁰ He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

What is holding you back? What is preventing you from being at peace with yourself, others or God? What do you need to lay before God so you can move on in the journey of your life?

ACT: Take a piece of card and write or draw something that represents what you need to lay before God. Place it face down on the road. (*They will not be read.*)

Station 2 *Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem*

As Luke writes Jerusalem has suffered destruction at the hands of the Romans. The Temple is no more. Our world is not peaceful, war, terrorism, hatred and fear still cast shadows on our lives and on the life of the world.

Read the Bible passage:

Luke 19:41 As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it,⁴² saying, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.⁴³ Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side.⁴⁴ They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God."

What makes for peace? Think about peacemakers, situations in your life, our community, nation and world that are crying out to be built up in peace.

ACT: Take a stone, hold it, and when you're ready place it in the middle of the table and a pile will build as prayers for peace are added.

Station 3 *Jesus Cleanses the Temple*

Find a seat, get comfortable, and look around the room.

Read the Bible passage:

"Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."

"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

The crowd demand blood and a man is nailed to a cross calling them to weep for themselves, for the forgiveness of his executioners, and welcoming the repentant into paradise.

Faced with such brutality Jesus thinks of everyone apart from himself.

A simple nail, a piece of metal crafted to hold things together, to help build things, is used to assist an execution. Something used to build, to create; is used to destroy, to kill. The same thing but used for very different purposes. Used by people just like us, a choice made to destroy rather than build.

ACT: Pick up a nail from the pile and take it with you.

Station 11 *The Death and Burial of Jesus*

The final scene in the life of Jesus. To human eyes there are no more possibilities. Jesus breathes his last, is wrapped in cloth, and placed in a tomb.

Read the Bible passage:

Luke 23:44 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon,⁴⁵ while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two.⁴⁶ Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last.

⁴⁷ When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent."⁴⁸ And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts.

Luke 23:23 But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. ²⁴ So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. ²⁵ He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.

²⁸ But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

³³ When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴ Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots to divide his clothing. ³⁵ And 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!” ³⁸ There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.” ³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” ⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” ⁴³ He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

An innocent man sentenced to death and nailed to a cross. The crowd shout “Crucify, crucify him!” the criminal next to him says “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” And what words does Jesus have for these people who demand his death, nail him to a cross, divide his clothes, scoff at and mock him:

“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.”

Luke 19:45 Then he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling things there; ⁴⁶ and he said, “It is written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer’; but you have made it a den of robbers.”

‘My house shall be a house of prayer’

ACT: Reflect on these words as you look around the worship space.

Station 4 *The Plot to Kill Jesus*

Are we the same people in private as we are in public? Would people we know be surprised if they met us in a different situation from which they normally find us?

Read the Bible passage:

Luke 22:1 Now the festival of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was near. ² The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to put Jesus to death, for they were afraid of the people. ³ Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve; ⁴ he went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers of the temple police about how he might betray him to them. ⁵ They were greatly pleased and agreed to give him money. ⁶ So he consented and began to look for an opportunity to betray him to them when no crowd was present.

The establishment wanted Jesus out of the way but they were afraid of public opinion. So they acted in secret and paid someone to do their dirty work. Our culture is money mad. We all are surrounded by pressures to earn more, borrow more, buy more, and have more – all so we can conform to the crowd. Surely there is more to life than that?

ACT: Take a coin that is surrounded by other coins and move it to the edge of the layer.

Station 5 *Preparation of Passover and Lord's Supper*

The basic ingredients of a meal, bread and wine, are transformed and given renewed meaning.

Read the Bible passage:

Luke 22:8 So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it."¹⁰ "Listen," he said to them, "when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house he enters¹¹ and say to the owner of the house, 'The teacher asks you, "Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"' "¹² He will show you a large room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there."

¹⁴ When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."¹⁷ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; ¹⁸ for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."¹⁹ Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."²⁰ And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

ACT: Reflect on these words and then break off a piece of bread and eat it.

What word or words stood out to you? Do they seem out of place in this tense situation?

ACT: Write the word or words that stood out to you on the sheet – group them together and use different colours. For instance if your word is 'Messiah', and someone else has already written it, write it again nearby in a different colour.

Station 10 *Jesus Sentenced to Death and Crucified*

Pilate finds Jesus innocent, but the crowds that the establishment feared at the beginning are now working for them. The crowd want Jesus dead, they shout "Crucify, crucify him!" when earlier in the journey they shouted "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" From blessings to curses. From laying down their cloaks on the road to hammering nails through flesh.

Read the Bible passage:

Luke 23:13 Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people,¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him.

¹⁸ Then they all shouted out together, "Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!"¹⁹ (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.)²⁰ Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again;²¹ but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!"²² A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him."

Station 9 *Jesus before the Council, Pilate and Herod*

“You say that I am.” “You say so.” Jesus is charged with blasphemy, rebellion and treason but he speaks little or not at all. Everyone else is speaking but Jesus remains silent. What word or words really stand out to you in the passage below?

Read the Bible passage:

Luke 22:66 When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, gathered together, and they brought him to their council. ⁶⁷ They said, “If you are the Messiah, tell us.” He replied, “If I tell you, you will not believe; ⁶⁸ and if I question you, you will not answer. ⁶⁹ But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” ⁷⁰ All of them asked, “Are you, then, the Son of God?” He said to them, “You say that I am.”

Luke 23:1 Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. ² They began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king.” ³ Then Pilate asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” He answered, “You say so.” ⁴ Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no basis for an accusation against this man.” ⁵ But they were insistent and said, “He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place.” ⁶ When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. ⁷ And when he learned that he was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. ⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. ⁹ He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer.

Station 6 *Dispute about Greatness & Predicting Denial*

We all have pride in something about us. Each of us has something that we are good at. It may be something only we know about or is recognised by others, but there is always something.

Read the Bible passage:

Luke 22:24 A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. ²⁵ But he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶ But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. ²⁷ For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

³¹ “Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, ³² but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” ³³ And he said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!” ³⁴ Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me.”

As always it is our attitude towards something that matters. That something we are good at is a gift from God, a gift that we should accept humbly with thanksgiving and share with others. There are also things we are not so good at, but other people are. We should also be thankful for that and share our gifts together.

ACT: Choose one of the books and look up something you know, or something you don’t. Were you surprised? Think about your gifts and those of your family and friends. Give thanks for them.

Station 7 *Jesus Prays on the Mount of Olives*

In Luke's telling of the Institution of the Lord's Supper Jesus tells us: "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." A cup he prays to be taken away from him, praying so hard that his sweat is like drops of blood.

Read the Bible passage:

Luke 22:39 Jesus came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ When he reached the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not come into the time of trial." ⁴¹ Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, ⁴² "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done."

[[⁴³ Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. ⁴⁴ In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.]] ⁴⁵ When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial."

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

ACT: Say the Lord's Prayer to yourself and then take a drink from the cup.

Station 8 *Betrayal, Arrest, and Denial*

In the dead of night Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss and Peter follows but denies knowing Jesus. Betrayal, denial, insults and injury in the dead of night.

Read the Bible passage:

Luke 22:47 While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; ⁴⁸ but Jesus said to him, "Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?" ⁵² Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? ⁵³ When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!"

⁵⁴ Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance. ⁵⁵ When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. ⁵⁶ Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, "This man also was with him." ⁵⁷ But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." ⁵⁸ A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" ⁵⁹ Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, "Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean." ⁶⁰ But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!" At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. ⁶¹ The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." ⁶² And he went out and wept.

'But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!'

In the darkness Jesus is taken from the fellowship of his companions into the hands of those who want him dead. In the darkness betrayed and denied by two of his closest friends.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. John 1:5

ACT: Take one of the cards and say the prayer to yourself. When you are ready light a tea light from the central candle.