

Resources for Passion / Palm Sunday

References to additional resources in the Presbyterian Book of Common Worship (BCW) are provided at the right-hand margin. Prayers and other texts marked DPG are by David Gambrell.

——— Gathering ———

Consider leading the Call to Worship from the back of the worship space (that is, near the main entrance) with those who will participate in the procession (children and other worship leaders). A child may lead the Call to Worship and Opening Prayer.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Give thanks to the Lord, who is good;
God's steadfast love endures forever!

Psalm 118:1, 19-20
see also BCW 252

Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.
**This is the gate of the Lord;
let the faithful come and worship God.**

OPENING PRAYER

BCW 253

PROCLAMATION OF THE ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM

Luke 19:29-40

You might proclaim the story of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem in four stages, as indicated below, making your way through the worship space toward the chancel. The parts may be assigned to different readers (including children), or to one leader. You may end each reading by saying responsively, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest." The verses of the processional hymn or psalm that follows can be woven into the reading.

(1) When [Jesus] had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, 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. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'"

(2) So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They said, "The Lord needs it." Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it.

(3) As [Jesus] rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. 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 they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!"

(4) Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

PROCESSIONAL HYMN OR PSALM

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God Most High, gracious and glorious,
blessed is the one who comes in your name.
Lead us now on the road to the cross.
May we follow with faithfulness and joy,
shouting hosanna in the highest heaven;
through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

DPG
see also BCW 254

or

Blessed are you, Holy God, for in Jesus Christ
you came to rule in our lives, not as a king,
but as a humble servant, riding on a donkey.
Enter into our hearts this day with your glory,
that we may greet you with shouts of praise;
through Christ, our Sovereign and Savior. **Amen.**

DPG

CALL TO CONFESSION

Standing at the baptismal font, the minister speaks these words as a gracious invitation for all to reflect on their lives, to repent of their sins, and to receive God's abundant mercy and love.

The Lord GOD helps us; therefore we have not been disgraced.
We know that we shall not be put to shame; our redeemer is near!
If it is the Lord GOD who helps us, who will declare us guilty?

Isaiah 50:7-9a

With confidence in God's redeeming love, let us confess our sin.

CONFESSION OF SIN

A time of silence for personal confession may be provided before, during, or after the prayer of confession.

**God of mercy,
you sent Jesus Christ to seek and save the lost.
We confess that we have strayed from you
and turned aside from your way.
We are misled by pride,
for we see ourselves pure when we are stained,
and great when we are small.
We have failed in love,
neglected justice,
and ignored your truth.**

BCW 236

**Have mercy, O God, and forgive our sin.
Return us to paths of righteousness
through Jesus Christ, our Savior.**

DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

*Still standing at the baptismal font, the minister speaks these words with confidence and joy.
At this sign *, pour water generously, slowly, visibly, and audibly into the font.*

Let the same mind be in you
that was in Christ Jesus,
who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,

Phil. 2:5-11

* but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.
Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Friends, hear and believe the good news of the gospel:
In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

The sharing of signs of peace and reconciliation in Christ may follow.

— — — **The Word** — — —

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy One, our strength in suffering
and our hope for salvation,
lift up your Word of life
and pour out your Spirit of grace
so that we may follow faithfully
on the way to the cross;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*DPG
see also BCW 254*

FIRST READING

Isaiah 50:4-9a

PSALM

Psalms 31:9-16

SECOND READING

Philippians 2:5-11

GOSPEL READING

Luke 22:14—23:56
or Luke 23:1-49

A four-part choral reading of the gospel lesson is provided below in the appendix. The Companion to the Book of Common Worship also has an outline for readings in a lessons and hymns format (pages 125-126).

SILENT REFLECTION AND/OR SERMON

It is appropriate to let the reading of scripture stand alone as the proclamation of the word in this service. A time of silent reflection allows for contemplation of the scriptures.

HYMN

CREED OR AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

The creed or affirmation of faith is an optional part of this service.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

BCW 266-267

— The Eucharist —

OFFERING

If the Lord's Supper is not celebrated:

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S TABLE BCW 256

GREAT THANKSGIVING BCW 256-259

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING BCW 264

LORD'S PRAYER

LORD'S PRAYER

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION BCW 262

— Sending —

HYMN, PSALM, OR SPIRITUAL

BLESSING AND CHARGE

BCW 263

Appendix: A Choral Reading of Luke 22:14—23:56 for Four Voices

VOICE ONE: A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them,

VOICE TWO: "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

VOICE ONE: Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said,

VOICE TWO: "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

VOICE ONE: Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying,

VOICE TWO: "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

VOICE ONE: And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying,

VOICE TWO: "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!"

VOICE ONE: Then they began to ask one another, which one of them it could be who would do this.

A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But he said to them,

VOICE TWO: "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. 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.

"You are those who have stood by me in my trials; and I

confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

"Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

VOICE ONE: And he said to him,

VOICE THREE: "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!"

VOICE ONE: Jesus said,

VOICE TWO: "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me."

VOICE ONE: He said to them,

VOICE TWO: "When I sent you out without a purse, bag, or sandals, did you lack anything?"

VOICE ONE: They said,

VOICE THREE: "No, not a thing."

VOICE ONE: He said to them,

VOICE TWO: "But now, the one who has a purse must take it, and likewise a bag. And the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one. For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was counted among the lawless'; and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled."

VOICE ONE: They said,

VOICE THREE: "Lord, look, here are two swords."

VOICE ONE: He replied,

VOICE TWO: "It is enough."

VOICE ONE: He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place, he said to them,

VOICE TWO: "Pray that you may not come into the time of trial."

VOICE ONE: Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed,

VOICE TWO: "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done."

VOICE ONE: Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground. When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them,

VOICE TWO: "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial."

VOICE ONE: 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; but Jesus said to him,

VOICE TWO: "Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?"

VOICE ONE: When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked,

VOICE THREE: "Lord, should we strike with the sword?"

VOICE ONE: Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said,

VOICE TWO: "No more of this!"

VOICE ONE: And he touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him,

VOICE TWO: "Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? 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!"

VOICE ONE: Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance. When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said,

VOICE FOUR: "This man also was with him."

VOICE ONE: But he denied it, saying,

VOICE THREE: "Woman, I do not know him."

VOICE ONE: A little later someone else, on seeing him, said,

VOICE FOUR: "You also are one of them."

VOICE ONE: But Peter said,

VOICE THREE: "Man, I am not!"

VOICE ONE: Then about an hour later still another kept insisting,

VOICE FOUR: "Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean."

VOICE ONE: But Peter said,

VOICE THREE: "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!"

VOICE ONE: At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. 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." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; they also blindfolded him and kept asking him,

VOICE FOUR: "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?"

VOICE ONE: They kept heaping many other insults on him.
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. They said,

VOICE THREE: "If you are the Messiah, tell us."

VOICE ONE: He replied,

VOICE TWO: "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I question you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God."

VOICE ONE: All of them asked,

VOICE THREE: "Are you, then, the Son of God?"

VOICE ONE: He said to them,

VOICE TWO: "You say that I am."

VOICE ONE: Then they said,

VOICE THREE: "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!"

VOICE ONE: Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. They began to accuse him, saying,

VOICE THREE: "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."

VOICE ONE: Then Pilate asked him,

VOICE FOUR: "Are you the king of the Jews?"

VOICE ONE: He answered,

VOICE TWO: "You say so."

VOICE ONE: Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds,

VOICE FOUR: "I find no basis for an accusation against this man."

VOICE ONE: But they were insistent and said,

VOICE THREE: "He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place."

VOICE ONE: When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. 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. 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. He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate. That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.

Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, and said to them,

VOICE FOUR: "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. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. I will therefore have him flogged and release him."

VOICE ONE: Then they all shouted out together,

VOICE THREE: "Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!"

VOICE ONE: (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; but they kept shouting,

VOICE THREE: "Crucify, crucify him!"

VOICE ONE: A third time he said to them,

VOICE FOUR: "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."

VOICE ONE: But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. 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.

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said,

VOICE TWO: "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

VOICE ONE: Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. 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. Then Jesus said,

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

VOICE ONE: And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying,

VOICE FOUR: "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!"

VOICE ONE: The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying,

VOICE THREE: "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!"

VOICE ONE: There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying,

VOICE FOUR: "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

VOICE ONE: But the other rebuked him, saying,

VOICE THREE: "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong."

VOICE ONE: Then he said,

VOICE THREE: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

VOICE ONE: He replied,

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

VOICE ONE: 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,

VOICE TWO: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

VOICE ONE: Having said this, he breathed his last.

A brief silence is appropriate here.

When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said,

VOICE FOUR: "Certainly this man was innocent."

VOICE ONE: And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a

distance, watching these things.

Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, 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. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 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. It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. 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 they rested according to the commandment.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

After a time of silent reflection, one of these prayers (from the Book of Common Worship, p. 254) may be said.

Everlasting God,
in your tender love for the human race
you sent your Son to take our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross.
In your mercy enable us to share in his obedience to your will
and in the glorious victory of his resurrection;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

or

God of all,
you gave your only-begotten Son to take the form of a servant,
and to be obedient even to death on a cross.
Give us the same mind that was in Christ Jesus,
that, sharing in his humility,
we may come to be with him in his glory,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen.**