

Maundy Thursday

Roddy Hamilton

Prepare

NOTE: All of these suggestions are mere starting points; adapt, delete, and add according to your local needs.

- Recruit volunteers needed for worship: A small group of six storytellers lead the service exchanging a candle between them as the story progresses. The candle is extinguished in the final moment of the epilogue. As Storyteller Three presides over Holy Communion, arrange for this person to be ordained if this is necessary for your tradition. If desired, all of the storyteller parts could be taken by one person.
- Bring items for setting the worship space: bread, chalice of wine, large bowl of water, hand towels.

Music Suggestions

The Servant Song
Richard Gillard

The Hand of Heaven
John Bell, Graham Maule

Stay with Me
Taizé

A chart that shows the licence holder(s) for each song in each of the 9 *Seasons of the Spirit* Music Volumes *can be found at* www.seasonsonline.ca. Click on Library; Seasons Music Information. Please contact a licence holder for permission to duplicate.

Gather

Gathering – Storyteller One

The sentences in bold could be spoken by the congregation, or by the small group of storytellers scattered throughout the worship area who place the bread and wine and bowl of water in the appropriate places during the words of Storyteller One.

Sacred silence:
filled.

Holy moment:
overflowing.

Haunting seconds:
brimming.

Tonight, too much happens
in the holy story
to comprehend.

Too much fear and deceit,
too many questions and confusion,
too few words and too little space.

Heaven is teetering.

The basin is waiting.
The action is joined.
The holy one of God moves.
The darkness encroaches.
The light crumples.
Bread breaks,
and wine spills.

Sacred silence:
filled.
Holy moment:
overflowing.
Haunting seconds:
brimming.

A questioning promise,
a broken covenant,
a wondering band of followers,
and a worried Messiah.
Won't you wait here a while?
Won't you wait here a while?
Long enough,
long enough,
to grasp even a glimpse,
and hold even a fraction,
of a broken heaven.

Silence

Foot-washing – Storyteller Two

Pour water into a bowl large enough to wash people's feet.

As I have done to you

Jesus didn't explain what he was doing. He just stood up from the table, got a towel and a basin, and he started to wash the disciples' feet. He washed everyone's feet: Peter's, Andrew's, even Judas' feet. Jesus never left anyone out.

Peter felt uncomfortable, telling Jesus, "You will never wash my feet." When Jesus told him that this was part of being a disciple, Peter changed his mind, saying, "Then wash my hands and my head and every part of me!" But Jesus told that this foot washing was not about taking a bath. "Even you will deny me," he told Peter. And still, he washed his feet.

Then Jesus started to talk: "This is what it means to be your teacher," he told them. "You must follow my example and wash one another's feet, too. This is the new commandment that I am giving: you should love one another as I have loved you."

Jesus said, "I will only be with you a little while longer. Where I am going, you cannot come. So, remember the commandment I am giving you. Love one another."

A prayer

Servant God,
kneeling,
bending,
serving us.
Take our dusty journeys,
and wrap your hands around them.
Every path we have trodden in life:
every word that has taken us to hurtful locations,

every thought that has moved us towards the shadows,
every act that had led us into rough places,
wash away the pain,
as we confess,
and you forgive.

During a moment of silence pour some water.

Take the wounds of our travelling,
and hold them in your healing hands:
every journey of remembrance that holds too many
memories,
every burden we carry that weighs us with anger we
cannot let go,
every place we have visited that holds too much pain.
Wash away the lingering,
as we let go,
and let you heal.

During a moment of silence pour some water.

Take the discomfort of our values,
and wash and wipe and cleanse as you serve us:
every lesson about love we have not learned,
every heavenly value we have not grasped,
every truth of your Realm we have ignored.
Wash away the hesitation,
as we accept your love,
and offer our love, too.

During a moment of silence pour some water.

Jesus says:
Come you who are weary,
you who are heavy laden.
Come and let my hands refresh your living.
Let me be your servant,
and witness heaven on earth.

Invite the congregation, if it is within your tradition, to come forward for foot-washing (and hand washing).

Sharing the meal – Storyteller Three

Footsteps could be heard running through the streets towards Caiaphas' lodging, but few heard them as bitter herbs, radish and celery were tasted.

Soldiers' sandals sounded as they marched the alleyways out of the city as they always did, in tens, but this time with a purpose that was different. No one's attention was drawn to them as roast lamb with slices of garlic was cut making the Passover feast.

At one table, a betrayer was accused. A holy man and his followers faced each other denying and blaming the other. Only two of them knew who had done it and one of them was soon to leave under the noise of the shouting.

He would walk the cobbled street under the moonlight, passing menorahs in each window, slithering through wafts of roast lamb and turmeric and coriander towards a secret meeting place among the trees and shadows. But not yet.

Round the table in an upper room voices fell silent and Jesus took the unleavened bread, and with a face drawn and tired, ripped it. "This is my body," he said. The followers looked at each other, foreheads furrowed. "Take it and eat it, all of you."

Twigs snapped under the trees. The high priest's door shut. Footsteps went scurrying.

And as they ate a piece each, chewing over silent questions, Jesus took the cup of wine that every Passover meal requires and stared into it said, “This is my blood, the sign of the new covenant. Drink from it all of you.” And as whispers were heard around the city and religious leaders moved by stealth to the meeting place they did drink – all of them.

If they had listened maybe they would have heard what was happening in heaven and in the streets. But their ears were filled with the back and forth of questions and silence. The world was turning against them, and only one person in that room could hear it.

Here is that bread, broken. Here is that wine, poured out.

Continue with words of institution as per your own tradition and follow with a simple Communion or continue.

Stripping the sanctuary – Storytellers Four and Five

This prayer is suitable to use during the stripping of the sanctuary if you have that tradition. During this prayer, for two voices, all the paraments should be removed, banners taken down, and, if safe to do so, lights extinguished. Alternatively, a candle could be extinguished with each verse.

Voice One:

God in anguish,
we hold you,
and walk with you,
through,
on,
into the night. *(Pause.)*

Voice Two:

God,
hold us,
as we walk too,
through,
on,
into this world’s shadows. *(Pause.)*

Voice One:

God of passion,
we kneel with you,
praying,
into the night,
while the world conspires against you,
and tries to put an end to love. *(Pause.)*

Voice Two:

God,
kneel with us,
as we pray too,
into this night,
as forces gather behind our words,
and betray love’s future. *(Pause.)*

Voice One:

God of the day and night,
who lives through it,
we follow,
holding your cup,
trusting your will,
though the shadows seem so long. *(Pause.)*

Voice Two:

God,

who lives through us,
follow on,
help us hold your cup,
and keep trusting, Jesus,
through the deep night. *(Pause.)*
Amen.

Bless

There is no blessing activity for tonight, simply an invitation to continue the journey into tomorrow. There is a tradition that no benediction is pronounced throughout Holy Week as the whole eight days from Palm Sunday to Easter Day is one long service. Concluding this epilogue, simply walk from the worship space in silence and, if possible, keep the silence going as people leave and go straight home. If you usually serve refreshments after services, consider not doing that tonight.

Betrayal – Storyteller Six

Love has moved out.
The room is silent.
The table is left:
broken bread still sitting there,
wine half finished,
herbs and lamb scattered across the table.