



'Worship at home' February 25th 2024



This is the second week of **Lent**, the period of preparation for Easter. If you have a **cross**, either as a decoration or piece of jewellery, bring it with you to reflect on during this worship time. You might like to keep a **prayer space**, with a **candle** and **cross**, set up throughout the duration of Lent, for your own prayer and reflection.

Opening

We follow Christ,
who invites us to take up our cross.

We follow Christ,
who bids us come and offer the whole of our lives.

We follow Christ,
who summons us into new life.

Come, let us worship God.

— adapted from *Call to Worship* written by Rosemary Lamie
[First Congregational Church of Greenwich.](#)



In this time of Lent, we follow Jesus in his journey towards Jerusalem and the events of Easter. We spend time in self-examination and reflection as we consider the obedience Jesus showed in his commitment to walking the path before him, in God's ways. We are challenged to commit ourselves in obedience and sacrifice to walking God's ways for us.

Prayer of Confession

Jesus calls us to deny ourselves.

**Yet we trust in our own works
rather than in God's grace.**

Jesus calls each of us to take up our cross.

**Yet rather than allow our selfishness and sin
to be put to death, we cling to what we know.**

Jesus calls us to follow him.

**Yet we fear where faith will lead
and what it might change in our lives.**



In this moment of silence,
we confess the sin that separates us
from one another and from God.

Silence for reflection & self-examination

Words of Assurance

People of God, hear this good news.

God's covenant with us is true.

God is faithful even when we fail.

Through the Holy Spirit,

God gives us the gift of faith and makes us righteous.

Believe in the good news

that you are set free to live as children of God.

Amen. Thanks be to God!

~ written by Daniel Flucke
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Mark 8:31-38

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples

and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels." New International Version

In this Scripture story we hear of Jesus teaching his disciples on the journey to Jerusalem, trying to prepare them for what might be to come. Peter did not want to hear – how often do we close our ears and don't want to think about what might go wrong!

Most of us know that following Jesus is not always easy, and does not promise to protect us from life's pain. Following Jesus may take us into difficult places: we risk pain, rejection, uncertainty, or danger; we may not know where we are going; we might be called to give up that which we hold dear, or to take up something unexpected; **we might be called to take up our cross...**

Following Jesus is about giving the whole of our lives, committing ourselves to God's ways, wherever that might lead us, and about learning to trust in God's grace, rather than our own works. This sometimes means being asked to sacrifice something that we value, or being empowered to take on something we would rather not choose.

Hold your cross in your hands,
as you reflect on your own journey of faith at this time:

**What might be your cross,
that you find heavy or difficult to bear?**

**Are there things you may need
to give up, or to take on,
in order to follow Jesus more closely?**

What do you hear Jesus calling you to do?



Place your cross down beside your candle. As you do so, give your difficulties over to God. Ask God to carry them with you, and to relieve you of any sense of burden or heaviness they hold for you. Give thanks for God's constant presence and steadfast love. Commit yourself again to following God's ways, no matter where that might take you. Know that God's saving grace will be with you.

Pray out loud the following prayer of commitment, taken from the Wesleyan Covenant Service.

Put me to what thou wilt.

I am no longer my own, but thine.

Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

*Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.*

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

thou art mine, and I am thine.

So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth,

let it be ratified in heaven.

Amen

- Wesley Covenant Prayer

Closing

Compassionate Christ, You speak to our deepest longings for love, hope and meaning. You call us into communion with you. Draw close to us, as we take time in this season, to pray, to reflect, and to open our lives to the transforming presence of your Holy Spirit.

As we journey with you to Jerusalem and remember your suffering, we pray you will open our hearts to the suffering of the world. Open our eyes and ears to see the needs of our neighbours and hear the voices of those who are grieving and wounded. Strengthen our resolve to journey with you into justice, and into solidarity with all those who long for liberation. As we journey with you to Easter, may you renew us in following your Way and empower us to be bearers of God's good news of love, compassion and hope to our world. Amen.

- written by

UCA ex-President Dr Deidre Palmer

LENT
WALKING WITH CHRIST