

*Walking the Way of the Cross
in Midtown Atlanta*



Good Friday, March 29, 2024
1:30 pm

A prayer experience created by



**ALL
SAINTS'**
EPISCOPAL CHURCH



LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE
REDEEMER



SAINT MARK
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

“We are really allowed to forget our guilt, even though we do not understand how it is possible for us to forget and how it is that our guilt does not eternally remain before us. The incomprehensibility of this ability to forget is ultimately identical with God's forgiving love.”

— Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*

“And we are enabled [by God] to [forget]. If it were otherwise, we should be in a terrible plight. We should never be able to bear the sight of our whole being in time.”

— Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/2*

Journeys are a significant feature in a life of faith. The practice of tracing Jesus' own journey to the cross came to be known over time as *The Via Dolorosa* (the sorrowful way). Pilgrims to Jerusalem would trace our Lord's steps in his final earthly days to pray and reflect on the mystery of God's love. Making that experience available, even to those who could not travel to the holy city through the years, communities have reproduced such stations for devotional and spiritual practice. These symbolic journeys Christians make, especially in Lent and Holy Week, cannot help but awaken our awareness of the crosses of our day. A comprehensive list of such would be impossible. Walking this way of sorrows in Midtown today, we feel wonder and heartbreak over the suffering hidden in plain sight. In remembering past and present suffering, may we be strengthened to hope in God's definitive triumph over sin and death through the cross of Jesus Christ. Standing under its judgment only by the divine gift of grace, let us pray for the transformation of every evil endured by the many crucified peoples of our world and work for our Savior's reign of justice and peace.

Opening Reflection

“God’s silence on the cross, as a silence that brings suffering to God himself, can be interpreted, very paradoxically, as solidarity with Jesus and the crucified [peoples] of history.”

— Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator*

Opening Prayer

Prayer Leader: Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

All: Amen.

Response

All: Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.

Jesus is Condemned to Death

Station One

All Saints', Gathering in the church

All Saints' Episcopal church has served the Midtown Atlanta neighborhood since 1903. We discern God's call to be a church "In the city, for the city" as we seek to know, love, and serve our neighbors in all that we do. The stations of the cross, displayed throughout the sanctuary, have been commissioned by local artists over the past several years. All those who wish to pray with the painted stations from this indoor space are welcome to remain in the church as the other members of our community pray and walk the stations throughout Midtown.

Response

All: Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.

Telling the Truth | Taking up the Crosses of our Time

Pilate again said to the crowd, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barrabas, or Jesus of Nazareth?" And they said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!" So Pilate released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

- Matthew 27:21-23, 26

Prayer Leader: Holy God, as we walk the stations with Christ may we follow with fresh eyes and hear with fresh ears as we seek to live the Gospel today, coming to know, love and serve our neighbors. As we walk, we trust that we can continue to be the hands and feet of Christ in our midst.

Prayer Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: because, by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Jesus Receives the Cross

Station Two Lawn Cross of All Saints'

The All Saints' lawn cross serves as a public witness to the story of Lent and Easter. Beginning on Ash Wednesday, the stark simplicity of the cross serves as a reminder of God's love and grace. Then, on Easter Day, the cross is filled with flowers from around the city. Our congregation and neighbors are welcome to bring flowers from the places that bring them joy. Families have been stopping by to add flowers, take photographs, and celebrate new life for decades.

Response

All: Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.

Telling the Truth | Taking up the Crosses of our Time

"I remind you that starving a child is violence. Suppressing a culture is violence. Neglecting school children is violence. Punishing a mother and her child is violence. Discrimination against a working man is violence. Ghetto housing is violence. Ignoring medical needs is violence. Contempt for poverty is violence. Even the lack of willpower to help humanity is a sick and sinister form of violence... the problems of racism, poverty and war can all be summarized with one word: violence."

— Coretta Scott King, Solidarity Day Address, delivered June 19, 1968

Prayer Leader: God of redemption, you willingly suffered wounds inflicted by human violence. Your outstretched arms upon the cross embrace individuals, families, and communities decimated by the violence of poverty, isolation, and oppression. Forgive us for what we have done and left undone. Strengthen our resolve to dismantle all sick and sinister systems that persist among us.

Prayer Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: because, by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Jesus Falls for the First Time

Station Three

Lutheran Community Food Ministry

The Lutheran Community Food Ministry (LCFM) serves our Midtown neighbors experiencing food insecurity and/or confronting unstable housing options by providing a hot meal in a safe and friendly environment to anyone in need. Established in 1982, the LCFM has served over two million meals with the help of volunteers from 60 Metro Atlanta churches, businesses, organizations, and schools.

Response

All: **Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.**

Telling the Truth | Taking up the Crosses of our Time

"In Matthew 25:35-37, Jesus calls the disciples, and us, to feed and care for those who have been marginalized because by doing so we are encountering Christ. For over 40 years, the Lutheran Community Food ministry has been living out this calling and seeing the Christ in all of our guests."

— The Rev. Dr. Jonathan Trapp, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer

Prayer Leader: God of justice, you welcome all who hunger for the bread of life and call us to share the fruit of our labor so that none will lack what they need. Liberate us from narratives of scarcity that block our participation in your abundant miracles, waiting to flow through our lives, and multiply our gratitude, so that we might show forth your generous love.

Prayer Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: **because, by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

Jesus Meets His Mother

Station Four

Lutheran Towers Housing Ministry

Lutheran Towers is the only faith-based senior community of its kind in Midtown Atlanta, Georgia. Founded more than four decades ago as a ministry of Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, this community provides moderate income seniors with affordable, safe, and secure housing in a caring and professional environment.

Response

All: Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.

Telling the Truth | Taking up the Crosses of our Time

"In Luke 10:25-37, Jesus responds to the question of 'Who is my neighbor?' with the story of the Good Samaritan. We hear of how, after being robbed and beaten, a man is neglected by those whom he might have thought would come to his aid. Instead, it is the unlikely Samaritan who cares for him, provides him a place to recuperate, and brings him back to health. This serves as a reminder to us that we are to care and provide for all of our neighbors."

— The Rev. Dr. Jonathan Trapp, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer

Prayer Leader: God of refuge, you welcome all who seek shelter under your wings. Your tenderness seeks to restore those touched by the trauma of danger, abuse, and abandonment. Reveal our true belonging to one another. Pour the healing balm of your compassion upon our alienation, cruelty, and estrangement, so that mutual trust, respect, and care may guide us to work for the safety and flourishing of one and all.

Prayer Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: because, by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Simon of Cyrene Helps to Carry the Cross

Station Five

Saint Mark – Lawn Cross

Saint Mark strives to express love for all people in all that we do. We recognize the multiplicity of love—that love can be gentle, passionate, forceful, bold, and much more, and we aim to express that love through unambiguous statements and tangible action. As one of the founding five Midtown congregations that came together with the Midtown Alliance to combine outreach efforts in 1986 to create the Midtown Assistance Center, a federally recognized, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, St. Mark continues in this vital mission of helping to sustain the working poor through a temporary financial crisis by providing emergency assistance with rent, utilities, food, work shoes, tools, and public transportation to prevent homelessness and hunger in our city.

Response

All: Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.

Telling the Truth | Taking up the Crosses of our Time

“Following the way of the cross means allowing God to tutor our desires. Following the way of the cross means allowing God to reshape and redirect the self-oriented desires of our hearts to other-oriented forms of love. Because what God cares most - if not exclusively about - is how we love one another. Is our love for another rooted in the desire to see them happy and beloved, or is it an expression simply of our desire to meet our own wants and needs? Is our love for another capable of caring at least as much for the joy of the other as it is our own? Are we living only in the realm of eros, or have we begun to submit ourselves to Christ's tutelage and begun to learn to love with agape love, loving more like God does? We need a theology and understanding of human sexuality that is grounded in agape and how we love, but first we have to stop all of our ancient and brutal infighting over whom we love.”

— Rev. Andy Peabody, Saint Mark United Methodist Church

Prayer Leader: God of love, you created us for communion and revealed your glory and grace in the diversity of creation. Transform our misunderstandings of your goodness, reflected in the divine image we each bear. Redeem harms inflicted by limiting theologies and ideologies—especially the wounds of all who are or have been marginalized, excluded, and vilified on account of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Enfold us into communities of affirming love that aspires to heal the violence of abuse and oppression targeted toward these precious members of your beloved family.

Prayer Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: because, by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Station Six

AllCare Family Medicine and Urgent Care

Focused on providing a comfortable and caring office environment for both primary care visits and urgent care needs, AllCare Family Medicine and Urgent Care of Atlanta offers a comprehensive approach to medical care with walk-in and same day appointment availability. Whether you're in need of your annual check-up, STD testing, women's health care, obesity treatment, or cardiovascular health services — AllCare's doctors provide quality care.

Response

All: Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.

Telling the Truth | Taking up the Crosses of our Time

"For me, an area of moral clarity is this: when you're in front of someone who's suffering and you have the tools at your disposal to alleviate that suffering, or even eradicate it, that is the time when you act."

- Dr. Paul Farmer, Public Health Leader

Prayer Leader: God of comfort, your presence draws near to all who have suffered. Your Spirit groans over inequities in access to resources to assuage human suffering. You lament the toll these years have taken on all who labor on society's front lines – in medicine, law enforcement, education, public health, and other essential service sectors. You grieve the politicization that has complicated our health crisis and amplified personal health and safety risks to first responders. Disrupt our complacency and disturb our comfort so that we might grow restless to reimagine well-being in ways that honor how our common life depends upon one another.

Prayer Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: because, by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Jesus Falls the Second Time

Station Seven

Saint Mark Cornerstone, 1902-03

Saint Mark United Methodist Church, formerly the Merritt Street Mission, was built in 1902-03 from granite mined from the Stone Mountain Quarry. At the time, the Quarry was owned by Samuel Venable, noted leader in the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in Georgia and party to the creation of the Confederate Monument at Stone Mountain. Today, Saint Mark stands as a historic monument in Atlanta whose glorious stone edifice is lauded by many, but the history of its granite is known only by a few.

Response

All: Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.

Telling the Truth | Taking up the Crosses of our Time

“Unjust systems appear normal to those in power, and any change will produce feelings of loss. True reconciliation, through the cross of Jesus, will affect the lives of the privileged. The colonizer has to completely leave the confines of power and privilege and join with those who are colonized.”

“Reconciliation for the powerful and privileged means trusting those who have lived under oppression, and even following their lead in becoming one new humanity ... reconciliation is radical because it is biblical.”

“As long as there is one single child on the cross of pain, and indignity, of suffering, and futurelessness, I will stand up and I will fight for that child - a crucified child is my child. That is what solidarity means: every child on a cross is my child.”

– Curtiss deYoung, *Radical Reconciliation: Beyond Political Pietism and Christian Quietism*

Prayer Leader: God of justice, in your wisdom you create all people in your sacred image, without exception. We have failed to honor the dignity, beauty, and worth of every human being. Cleanse us from attitudes, behaviors, and speech that destroy and dehumanize. Strengthen our resolve to make amends for past injustices and to right the wrongs of history. Fill us with courage so that we can work to heal wounds, build bridges, forgive and be forgiven, embracing the peace, justice, and equality that you would have us know.

Prayer Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: because, by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

The Women of Jerusalem Mourn for Jesus

Station Eight

Prayer Wall, Church of the Redeemer

Annually, the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer places a prayer wall along the sidewalk on Peachtree Street. This is an offering and an opportunity for all who walk by to share their burdens so that strangers might help carry their load to God in prayer. This prayer wall is a powerful reminder that we all carry troubles in our hearts and in our lives and that there is unity and profound grace in the ability to shoulder the burdens of another.

Response

All: **Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.**

Telling the Truth | Taking up the Crosses of our Time

"Jesus prays for humanity in John 17: 20-23, that we may put away human hierarchies and understand that our identity is wrapped up in our being one with one another. As God has loved us may we love one another. And until no one's back is against the wall of division and hate, all of our backs are against the wall."

— The Rev. Ronald S. Bonner, Sr., Lutheran Church of the Redeemer

Prayer Leader: God of forgiveness, we cannot comprehend the mystery of your reconciling love, drawing near to us even in our sin. We are humbled by your Spirit, turning us toward the unspeakable wounds of our world, the pain of which touches us all. May we find ourselves strengthened to love fiercely and fully, transformed by your dreams for a new creation.

Prayer Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: **because, by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.**

Jesus Dies on the Cross

Station Nine

Fox Theatre Side Entrance

The Fox Theatre, a central hub for the arts in the city, holds one of the only architectural reminders of Atlanta's Jim Crow past in its Ponce de Leon entrance. Formerly the "colored entrance" to the theater which wound Black patrons up an exterior staircase to a third-floor balcony, so as to be out of sight for the white patrons who would enter under the Peachtree awning into the central foyer of the theater. Though this entrance has not been in use since the early 1960s, it remains a powerful reminder of the city's segregated past.

Response

All: Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.

Telling the Truth | Taking up the Crosses of our Time

"Ruling class groups keep themselves separate so that the masses cannot know who they are and how they really live. Most importantly, separation allows them to live the fantasy that there is no connection between their opulent lifestyles and the misery these lifestyles produce. They live in states of denial and deflect attention away from the imperialist violence enacted in their name globally to protect their class interests... Prosperity enhances life. As a nation we should uphold the belief that everyone has the right to a life of well-being, which includes access to prosperity... Wealth built and maintained by the exploitation and oppression of others undermines a democratic vision of prosperity."

— Bell Hooks, *Where We Stand: Class Matters*

Prayer Leader: God of power, you unmask political, societal, and economic systems that consolidate earthly resources in the hands of the few and keep others bound in servitude. Dismantle our resistance to your judgment on our human systems of domination and oppression that are fueled by fear. Grant us a glimpse of your reign of just peace where lust and lack yield to your sacred abundance, unleashed for the nurture of your whole creation. We seek forgiveness for humanity's sins. We seek forgiveness for our sins. When we cannot find it in our hearts to forgive ourselves or others, he shows us that we can ask God to do it for us: Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

Prayer Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: because, by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

Station Ten

North Avenue Marta Station

Throughout the city of Atlanta, the MARTA transportation service serves as a place of respite and protection from the elements for many of our neighbors who are experiencing homelessness. Without access to its protected stations, many would be left exposed to the elements far more often.

Response

All: Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.

Telling the Truth | Taking up the Crosses of our Time

Be merciful to me, O God; be merciful to me,
for in you my soul takes refuge;
in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,
until the destroying storms pass by.

Psalm 57:1, New Revised Standard Version

Prayer Leader: God of comfort, you keep watch over the least among us. Your outstretched arms on the cross illuminate our failures to embrace the ones you will not abandon, especially all who stand vulnerable on the margins of our city. Your gentle love met betrayal and brutality with forgiveness. Steady our sacred striving that your reign of justice and peace might redeem the world you gave your life to save.

Prayer Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: because, by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Jesus is Placed in the Tomb

Station Eleven Midtown Assistance Center

The Midtown Assistance Center has been serving residences of the city of Atlanta for over 30 years. MAC provides rental and utility support, job training, and food pantry assistance. MAC aided over 1,000 Atlanta households with food pantry support and distributed over \$700,000 in direct assistance in 2022 alone, just to skim the surface of their services.

Response

All: Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.

Telling the Truth | Taking up the Crosses of our Time

The Midtown Assistance Center is one of those institutions whose very mission is something of a paradox for me. Every year I pray, "I hope you'll be out of business next year ... because there will no longer be a need for the services you provide." And yet, year after year, decade upon decade, for generations we have seen the need for places like Midtown Assistance Center expand. Is it OK for Christians and our churches to rest easy, finding comfort in the oft-misunderstood words of Jesus, "the poor you will have always"? NO! A resounding "NO." The systems our society has created perpetuate injustice and economic disparities that produce suffering. As believers we are called to enter into the pain and suffering of our neighbors. We thank God for community partners like the Midtown Assistance Center, and we stand in solidarity with them. Together, let us endeavor to be those of whom Christ said: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me."

– Rev. Andy Peabody, Saint Mark United Methodist Church

Prayer Leader: God of provision, you plant seeds of possibility within us. They crack open as we confront our despair. Give us grace to turn pain into wisdom, grief into mercy, and anger into forgiveness. Awaken us to the soul-healing work that beckons us to act on behalf of those who have their backs against the wall. Stir us to be the people who place inequity in the tomb, so that we can put to death poverty, hunger, and fear.

Prayer Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: because, by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

Awaiting Resurrection

Station Twelve

The Courtyard of All Saints' Episcopal Church

All Saints' core ministries include: Refugee Ministries, providing companionship and assistance to new Americans, Covenant Community, reducing addiction and homelessness through holistic residential treatment and care, and Threads, clothing children with dignity by providing clean, well-fitting clothes and footwear.

Response

All: Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, have mercy upon us.

Telling the Truth | Taking up the Crosses of our Time

"But if the world is watching, we might as well tell the truth. And the truth is, the church doesn't offer a cure. It doesn't offer a quick fix. The church offers death and resurrection. The church offers the messy, inconvenient, gut-wrenching, never-ending work of healing and reconciliation."

- Rachel Held Evans

"Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and Finding the Church"

Prayer Leader: God of forgiveness, we cannot comprehend the mystery of your reconciling love, drawing near to us even in our sin. We are humbled by your Spirit, turning us toward the unspeakable wounds of our world, the pain of which touches us all. May we find ourselves strengthened to love fiercely and fully, transformed by your dreams for a new creation.

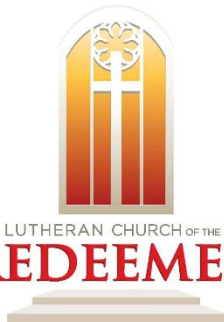
Prayer Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,

All: because, by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.

A prayer experience created by



ALL
SAINTS'
EPISCOPAL CHURCH



LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE
REDEEMER



SAINT MARK
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH