



**Celebrating  
180 Years**



**April 3, 2026**

Melville United Church  
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Melville united church

Good Friday

April 3, 2026

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Presiding: Rev. Tom Watson  
Ministry of Music: Colleen Weber

**Prelude**

**Welcome & Announcements**

**Land Acknowledgement**

**Lighting the Christ Candle**

**Call to Worship**

Today the sky peels back to purple...

**In the distance, thunder rumbles...**

And the tears of all who grieve...

**Are released to drench the earth.**

For today is the day Jesus died on a cross...

**The ones who followed him huddle together...stunned—**

Can it be? Can it really be?

**And...in the distance...the angels weep.**

**Hymn — When I Survey the Wondrous Cross VU 149**

1. When I survey the wondrous cross

On which the Prince of glory died,

My richest gain I count but loss,

And pour contempt on all my pride.

2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,

Save in the death of Christ, my God:

All the vain things that charm me most,

I sacrifice them to His blood.

3. See from his head, his hands, his feet,

Sorrow and love flow mingled down!

Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,

Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

4. Were the whole realm of nature mine,

That were a present far too small:

Love so amazing, so divine,

Demands my soul, my life, my all.

**Gathering Prayer (in unison):**

**Gracious, loving, grieving God: be with us during the hours of this dark day. Be with us as we reflect on how the ways of the world lie in contrast to this one act of self-giving love. Comfort us, bless us, and free us. Amen.**

**Hymn — Were You There VU 144 vv. 1, 2, 3 and 5**

1. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?  
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?  
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.  
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

2. Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?  
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?  
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.  
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

3. Were you there when the sun refused to shine?  
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?  
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.  
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

5. Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?  
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?  
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.  
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

**Ministry of Music "Wood and Nails"** by Keith Watts, Isaac Wardell, Madison Cunningham arr.  
*Dan Galbraith, Performed by: Spirit Sings*

**Gospel Reading — Matthew 27:45-46 Reader:** Alison Rainford

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land...until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

**Good Friday Dialogue — "At the Foot of the Cross"**

*(Martha Duncan and Tom Watson)*

Good Friday arrives quietly. Not with celebration, not with triumph, but with a weight that settles into the room. Today we stand at the foot of the cross, unsure of what to say, unsure of what to feel.

Tom:

We come with questions. With grief. With the uneasy knowledge that this story is not distant history. It reaches into us, asking something honest, something costly.

Martha:

So we speak together today—two voices, but with one mutual longing—to understand what happened on this day, and what it still means.

### Scene 1: The Garden

Tom:

It begins in a garden. A place meant for peace becomes a place of pressure. Jesus kneels in the darkness, and the weight of the world presses down on Him.

Martha:

He prays words that echo through every troubled heart: "If it is possible...let this cup pass from me."

A plea. A human cry.

Tom:

And yet—He stays. He chooses to remain in the story, even when the story turns toward suffering.

Martha:

We watch Him choose love over escape. And we wonder:

When have we chosen escape instead of love because love asked too much?

### Scene 2: The Trial

Tom:

The night becomes morning, and morning becomes accusation.

Jesus stands before power—silent, steady, unarmed.

Martha:

The crowd shouts. The leaders scheme.

Fear moves like a current through the people, pulling them toward a verdict they barely understand.

Tom:

And Jesus...does not defend Himself.

He does not retaliate.

He does not return insult for insult.

Martha:

He simply stands in truth.

And truth, when spoken without violence, can feel strangely vulnerable.

Tom:

We see ourselves in the crowd —

sometimes shouting,

sometimes silent,

sometimes unsure where we belong.

### Scene 3: The Cross

Martha:

And then—the hill.

The cross.

The moment the world breaks open.

Tom:

We hear the hammer.

We see the sky darken.

We feel the earth tremble beneath the weight of what is happening.

Martha:

Jesus speaks seven times from the cross, but one line reaches us first:

"Father, forgive them..."

Forgiveness spoken while the wounds are still open.

Tom:

Who does that?

Who forgives in the middle of the hurt, not after it has healed?

Martha:

Only someone whose love is not fragile.

Only someone who sees beyond the moment into the heart of humanity.

Scene 4: The Thief

Tom:

Beside Him hangs a man who has run out of chances.

A man who knows exactly what he has done.

A man who has no defense left.

Martha:

He turns to Jesus with a simple request:

"Remember me..."

Tom:

And Jesus answers with a promise:

"Today you will be with me in paradise."

Martha:

A dying man receives hope.

A condemned man receives mercy.

A broken man receives belonging.

Tom:

Good Friday reminds us that grace does not wait for perfection.

It meets us in our final, fragile honesty.

Scene 5: The Mother

Martha:

At the foot of the cross stands Mary—a mother watching her son suffer.

No words can hold that kind of pain.

Tom:

Jesus sees her.

Even in His agony, He sees her.

He entrusts her to John, and John to her—a new family formed in the shadow of the cross.

Martha:

Love does not stop, even when breath grows thin.

Love keeps creating connection.

Tom:

And we are invited into that same kind of love —

a love that notices,

a love that protects,

a love that makes family where there was none.

Scene 6: The Final Breath

Martha:

The moment comes.

Jesus gathers His final breath and speaks:

"It is finished."

Tom:

Not "I am finished."

Not "All is lost."

But "It is finished."

The work of love completed.

The sacrifice offered.

The story carried to its necessary end.

Martha:

The curtain in the temple tears.

The barrier falls.

The way opens.

Tom:

And the world...for a moment...is still...and holds its breath.

Scene 7: The Silence

Martha:

Good Friday ends not with answers, but with silence.

A silence that asks us to sit still,

to feel the weight of love that went all the way to the end.

Tom:

We do not rush to Easter.

We do not skip the sorrow.

We stay here, in the quiet,

because this quiet is holy.

Martha:

Today we remember a love that did not turn away.  
A love that stepped into suffering.  
A love that held nothing back.

Tom:

And we stand at the foot of the cross,  
two voices, but one heart,  
grateful...  
humbled...  
changed.

Closing

Martha:

We leave this moment slowly.

Tom:

We carry the silence with us.

Both:

And we wait for the dawn that has not yet come (pause) ... but will.

### **Hymn — Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross VU 142 vv. 1 and 4**

1. Jesus, keep me near the cross, there a precious fountain,  
Free to all, a healing stream, flows from Calvary's mountain.

In the cross, in the cross, be my glory ever,  
Till my raptured soul shall find rest beyond the river.

4. Near the cross I'll watch and wait, hoping, trusting ever,  
Till I reach the golden strand just beyond the river.

In the cross, in the cross, be my glory ever,  
Till my raptured soul shall find rest beyond the river.

**Instrumental — Glory Be to Jesus** by Robert A. Hobby based on *WEM IN LEIDENSTAGEN* by Friedrich Filitz

### **Our Good Friday Prayers**

#### **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Hymn — Stay With Us Through the Night VU 182**

1. Stay with us through the night. Stay with us through the pain.  
Stay with us, blessed stranger, till the morning breaks again.

2. Stay with us through the night. Stay with us through the grief.  
Stay with us, blessed stranger till the morning brings relief.

3. Stay with us through the night. Stay with us through the dread.  
Stay with us, blessed stranger till the morning breaks new bread.

*the sanctuary candles are now extinguished  
the cross and Bible are covered with a black cloth*

**Benediction**

The candles go out. And we take our leave, to watch and wait in other places...

**Until we return on the third day hence.**

For then the voice of God...

**Will once again pierce the pervading darkness with sounds of new life.**

Until then...with all the world...

**We will await the good news of Easter!**

**Welcomers:** Mary Lloyd, Annie Denny

*We leave the sanctuary in silence.*