

# Countryside Community Church WORSHIP



*The Descent* by Rev. T. Denise Anderson @sanctifiedart

**Good Friday**  
**March 29, 2024**

Countryside Community Church  
13130 Faith Plaza | Omaha, NE 68144 | 402-391-0350  
countrysideucc.org

# ORDER OF WORSHIP

† Indicates those places where those who are able are invited to stand.  
Text in **bold** indicates places where the congregation is invited to join in response.

## A Service of Lament & Prayer

### PRELUDE

### WORDS OF WELCOME

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

### INVOCATION

Holy God, as we journey through this familiar story, help us to understand it anew. Show us, O God, where we find ourselves in the narrative, and move us toward a more just and compassionate future. Amen.

†**OPENING HYMN #202:** *O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*

### INVITATION

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

Starting with Station 1, we invite you to read the scripture, look closely at the art, and reflect upon the artist's words. We have also provided ways for you to tangibly and prayerfully respond to the scripture. Please take your time as you take in the images, the words and your own thoughts from station to station. At the conclusion of the service, we will sing together "Come Thou Fount" as we continue to travel "the way of sorrows," following Jesus to the cross as if we are walking in Peter's shoes.

## STATIONS OF PETER | PRAYER STATIONS

### **STATION 1: Peter resists then receives the foot washing**

#### SCRIPTURE:

John 13:1-20

Reader: Kathleen Samland

## LOOK

Look closely at the artwork: *Golden Hour* by Nicolette Peñaranda.  
As you gaze upon the art, what do you see? How do you feel?

## REFLECT

Read, silently, the corresponding artist's statement. As you listen to the music, what new meaning do you glean from the artist's perspective?

## MUSIC MEDITATION

*Cross Road Blues*

Robert Johnson

### **ARTISTS'S STATMENT: *Golden Hour*** by Nicolette Peñaranda

The story of Peter brings us to the Last Supper. The disciples are tucked away in the upper room. Within the overall composition of this piece, we see the West African symbol, Aban, which means fortress and demonstrates power and authority. Aban is the central image of *Golden Hour* and it is duplicated around the perimeter of the piece like a mighty fortress. The gold-plated vessel at the top represents the water Jesus uses to wash the disciples' feet. Around it are miniature Mpuannum, the five tufts of hair. In Ghanaian culture, it is said that a priestess wore this hairstyle giving the symbol a meaning of deep loyalty and priestly office. The water drips directly down onto swollen feet, feet that bear no name.

The section to the left of the vessel holds a tearful Peter. He refuses Jesus' hospitality and then backtracks when he learns the value of merciful water. Around him contains Dwannini Mmen, the horns of rams, and Nyansapo the wisdom knot. Both sit subtly in the background. If only Peter remembered that pride is a vice and through curiosity, we are exposed to the interconnectedness of wisdom and knowledge. Across from the image of Peter, we see the Eucharist. When orienting this piece in a diamond formation, the cup looks overflowing.

But when the canvas is sitting as a square, the wine is tipping out of the chalice, dripping in unison with the vessel onto the Aban. The Eucharist is also one of the ways we receive Christ's mercy. Body and blood broken for us. Water is very versatile. The vessel of water is providing mercy. The swollen feet are receiving mercy. Peter is asking for mercy. The chalice has shed mercy. There is a particular time of day we refer to as the "golden hour." This is when photographers love to take photos as the sun sits at a particular point, either after sunrise or before sunset, when daylight is redder and softer than when the sun is higher in the sky. A serious photographer does anything to capture that moment.

When I reflect on the entire Passion story, this might just be the golden hour for the disciples. Jesus and his crew are tucked away, having their Passover meal. They are cleansing themselves and carrying on not realizing this will be the last moment of peace they will have. Sharing a meal with the people you love is one of the most glorious moments anyone could have—before what will end as a night of torture and betrayal. While Peter is tearful in this image, the overall vibe of Golden Hour is soft, rich. It feels like it is captured in marble as if nothing can destroy it.

—Rev. Nicolette Peñaranda

## **RESPOND**

Consider Jesus' commandment to "wash one another's feet." Whose feet are you being called to wash? Take a slip of dissolvable paper and write the names of people and/or communities you feel called to serve. When you are finished, hold onto your paper slip, as you will use it at a later station.

## **STATION 2: *Jesus foretells Peter's denials***

### **SCRIPTURE:**

John 13:31–38

Reader: Todd Samland

### **LOOK**

Look closely at the artwork: *Really?* by Hannah Garrity.

As you gaze upon the art, what do you see? How do you feel?

### **REFLECT**

Read, silently, the corresponding artist's statement.

As you listen to the music, what new meaning do you glean from the artist's perspective?

### **MUSIC MEDITATION**

*The Lonesome Road*

Rosetta Tharp

**ARTISTS STATEMENT: *Really?*** by Hannah Garrity.

In this pulpit parament, drawn with ink on paper, Jesus looks up at the congregation asking, "Really?" In my unique first glance at this story, looking through the eyes of Peter, I was floored by Jesus' judgment of Peter in this text (John 13:38). Jesus's response to Peter sounds harsh coming from a loving God. I think that that is why I was so surprised as I studied the scripture. So I looked deeper to see what Jesus is actually going through, to see where his perspective may be coming from. Trauma.

With this lens, my fragile frustration with Jesus is really me centering myself. Jesus is constantly putting himself in harm's way and now he's heading toward the cross. Yet, I am still demanding him to be polite to me, not to or an educator can better serve their patient or student with an awareness of their ACE score. My frustration with Jesus unveils my impatience with being treated in a way I consider rude by a person with a high ACE score. My reaction is to push back, to not have sympathy and deference for the real difficulty he is going through.

I wonder in my daily life whose trauma I am still approaching ineffectively. How can I learn from Jesus' valid impatience with Peter's empty, well-meaning promises? —Hannah Garrity

## **RESPOND**

Consider Jesus' charge: Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another.

Take a slip of dissolvable paper and write the names of people you profoundly love. When you are finished, hold onto your paper slip, as you will use it at a later station.

## **Station 3: Peter draws his sword**

### **SCRIPTURE:**

John 18:1-11

Reader: Kathleen Samland

### **LOOK**

Look closely at the artwork: *Disarming Peter* by Lauren Wright Pittman.

As you gaze upon the art, what do you see? How do you feel?

### **REFLECT**

Read, silently, the corresponding artist's statement.

As you listen to the music, what new meaning do you glean from the artist's perspective?

### **MUSIC MEDITATION**

*Death Don't Have No Mercy*

Gary Davis

### **ARTIST'S STATEMENT: *Disarming Peter*** by Lauren Wright Pittman

In *disarming Peter*, Christ disarms all Christians. — Tertullian (160–220 CE) Pressed in by soldiers and religious leaders, surrounded by lanterns, torches, and Weapons, Peter does what many of us would do. He responds to the threat of violence with violence. With sword in hand, he tries to take the unfolding narrative into his own hands and cuts off Malchus' ear. Jesus tells Peter to "put the sword back into its sheath" (John 18:11). This is the moment I wanted to capture in this image. I imagine a rush of emotions surge through Peter's body like a bolt of lightning. I imagine he feels the sting of shame after being admonished by his teacher for his violent actions. I imagine he feels the searing grief that comes with the realization that his teacher and

friend will in fact die, and he is helpless to do anything about it—perhaps the most painful of all. Peter had a choice. He could continue down the path of violence, fight the soldiers and religious leaders and protect Jesus from the inevitable, or he could yield, dropping his sword and surrendering to the cup that God has placed before his friend.

In the image, this choice is suspended in time. Is Peter releasing the sword and choosing the way of peace? Or is Peter about to take up the sword and choose the way of violence? On the left in the image, leaves from the garden's olive grove reach out to shade and comfort him. This is the way of peace. On the right, the soldiers are looming with the flames closing in around him. This is the way of violence. Peter releases the sword as if it was on fire, as hot tears of shame, grief, and helplessness pour down his face.

Which way will we choose? – Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

## **RESPOND**

Pray silently to yourself. You can pray the prayer printed below, or one in your own words:

Holy One, we are convicted of our addiction to violence. We lament the proliferation and use of firearms. We bemoan the staggering statistics of intimate partner violence. Yet, we confess our own complicity in the pain of our neighbors. Whether we have picked up a gun, uttered harmful words about each other, or simply refused to acknowledge another's pain, we have betrayed the peace you left with us. We have built war economies that make conflict profitable. We have created societies that justify the violence of food and housing insecurity, racism, discrimination, and marginalization.

God of grace, have mercy upon us, and save us from weak resignation to these evils. Amen.

## **Station 4: *Jesus is arrested, and Peter denies Christ***

### **SCRIPTURE**

John 18:12-18

Reader: Todd Samland

### **LOOK**

Look closely at the artwork: *The Descent*, by T. Denise Anderson.

As you gaze upon the art, what do you see? How do you feel

## REFLECT

Read, silently, the corresponding artist's statement.

As you listen to the music, what new meaning do you glean from the artist's perspective?

## MUSIC MEDITATION

*Calvary*

Richard Smallwood

### **ARTIST'S STATEMENT: *The Descent***, by T. Denise Anderson

I love portraiture and textiles, but until now, I've never married those two things. At the time of this piece's creation, I'd been doing a lot of sewing, particularly of stoles and vestments. When it came to choosing a medium for this collaboration, fabric would not let me go! It makes sense that, as we consider the interweaving of Peter's own story with that of the crucifixion, the medium for this piece would itself be woven. What must Peter have felt in those fateful moments of betrayal?

Here, I try to capture Peter's initial paralysis when he's first asked if he's one of Jesus' disciples. When Jesus was arrested, Peter had only begun to see the full extent of the empire's cruelty. "Would they do to me what they've done to him?" he must have asked himself. Maybe he could be so zealous for Jesus in the past because it was all an abstraction. Now, things have gotten frighteningly real.

From there, Peter descends into more fear—the kind that does not help us to be our best selves. I depict him going from stunned to defensive and then to belligerent, navigating the full spectrum of the fight, flight, or freeze responses to a perceived threat. By the time the cock crows as Jesus predicted (see if you can make out the bird's faint silhouette in the lower right-hand corner), Peter probably no longer recognizes himself. He must feel deflated and ashamed. At the end of his descent he is different, so I depict him differently from his three prior denials. He has much less fire in his countenance and can't even open his eyes to face what he's done.

The flames recall the fire where Peter warmed himself, but they also represent purification and illumination. Peter is forced to see himself as he truly is—as Jesus had already shown him. Who will he choose to be after this? When we are confronted with who we truly are, who will we choose to be after that confrontation? As we look at Peter's journey, it's my prayer that we will consider and meditate on our own. —Rev. T. Denise Anderson

## **RESPOND**

When we think of violence, we think of calculated, deliberate, or impassioned action. In this station, we are confronted with the violence of inaction. Peter has now seen the lengths that power would go to silence Jesus. When asked if he was one of Jesus' disciples, Peter freezes. He must suspect that, if his association to Jesus were made known, he might be met with the same violence.

- hold silence for all the victims of violence -

Please join me in prayer, lamenting and confessing together all the ways we have participated in the violence of inaction.

**All: Merciful God, we confess that, too often, we've been inactive bystanders in the face of someone else's victimization. Forgive us for choosing self-preservation over justice. Amen.**

## **Station 5: Peter denies Christ again and again**

### **SCRIPTURE**

John 18:19-27

Reader: Kathleen Samland

### **LOOK**

Look closely at a portion of the artwork: *The Descent, Closeup* by T. Denise Anderson. As you gaze upon the art, what do you see? How do you feel?

### **REFLECT**

Read, again, the corresponding artist's statement printed above at Station 4.

As you listen to the music, what new meaning do you glean from the artist's perspective?

### **MUSIC REFLECTION**

*Were You There*

## **RESPOND**

Take your two slips of dissolvable paper (from Stations 1 & 2) and place them in one of the water basins scattered about the sanctuary. Watch them dissolve into the water. In this act, we symbolically participate in Peter's denial. We recognize the times we have turned away from those we love and from those whom God has called us to serve. We feel the pain of facing the worst part of ourselves.



## Station 6: *Jesus is Crucified*

### SCRIPTURE

John 19:1–30

Reader: Todd Samland

### LOOK

Look closely at the artwork: *Were You There?* by Lisle Gwynn Garrity. As you gaze upon the art, what do you see? How do you feel?

### REFLECT

Read, silently, the corresponding artist's statement.

#### **ARTIST'S STATEMENT: *Were you there?*** By Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Were you there when they crucified my Lord? This refrain from a well-known Gospel song dances in circles in my mind as I wonder where Peter is when Jesus is crucified. We know that Peter follows Jesus into the courtyard of the High Priest. We know he warms himself by the fire when, again and again, he denies being one of Jesus' disciples. Then Jesus is dragged away – to be tried, sentenced to death, and finally, killed. But where is Peter? Since we have to fill in the gaps of the story with our imaginations, this image functions like visual Midrash of Peter's experience when Jesus dies. I imagine Peter is frozen—with guilt, rage, and regret—still standing by the fire. I imagine he remains there for hours, unable to move, paralyzed by fear. I imagine he mourns privately, pleading for a miracle, praying the worst will not come, crying out again, "God forbid it!" (Matthew 16:22) In the background, the shadow of a cross flickers like flames rising from the charcoal fire.

Whenever I try to make sense of Peter's actions, I have often thought of attachment theory. Attachment theory, pioneered by British psychologist John Bowlby, explores how a child's relationship with their caregivers early in life determines how they navigate secure (or insecure) emotional bonds into adulthood. There are four primary attachment styles:<sup>14</sup> anxious (driven by the fear of rejection and abandonment), avoidant (driven by the fear of vulnerability and intimacy), disorganized (exhibiting inconsistent and unpredictable behavior led by distrust), and secure (signified by good self-esteem and seeking support from others). I wonder if Peter shows us the full spectrum of attachment styles throughout his journey. Again and again, Jesus invites him into secure attachment—through catching him when he sinks, offering him food and forgiveness, washing his feet. And yet, Peter often responds with behaviors that might define anxious, avoidant, or disorganized attachment styles: he resists, he pulls away, he draws his sword, he denies knowing Jesus.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

For Peter, the answer is “no.” He has left the God he loves. However, the good news about attachment theory is that even if you have an anxious, avoidant, or disorganized attachment style, you can gradually—through healthy relationships, vulnerability, and interdependence—find secure attachment. In this image, God’s river of grace flows out from the cross and spills out before a bereaved Peter. Even in this moment of deep despair, God’s abundance rushes to greet him. Peter’s nets may feel as empty as the day Jesus crawled into his boat (Luke 5:5a), but we know that an abundant feast—around another charcoal fire—shall soon come (John 21:9–14). – Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

†**HYMN** #198

*Were You There (vs. 3)*

### **RESPOND**

In this final station, hold the tiny rock you received in your hand, feel its course edges and its smooth sides. Feel the way it moves and changes as you rotate it from palm to palm. Just like Peter, the Rock, we are sometimes faithful and willing servants, loving, caring, and exuberant about our faith. Other times our edges protrude, and we reject what we know to be true, forgetting the love and grace God offers. Like Peter, despite our circumstances, we are called to follow Jesus on the way of peace, to repent, and confess God’s love, to speak out loud and to pray silently –

### **THE LORD’S PRAYER**

**Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

### **SENDING**

In closing, you are invited to bring your rock forward and lay it at the foot of the cross, leaving with it any regrets, fears and hopes with Jesus in whom we place our trust.

†**CLOSING HYMN:**

*Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing (vs. 1, 2, 3)*

## **BENEDICTION**

*Prone to wander, Lord, we feel it, prone to leave the God we love.* Friends, we are more like Peter than we may like to admit. Our Lord has died and we were not there. And so, tonight we grieve with Peter. Our wandering hearts are heavy.

But as you leave this place, remember: your wandering heart is always tethered to the love of God. God's abundant grace existed for Peter and it exists for you. God's love will never run out. So go now in peace, trusting that streams of mercy shall find us all. Amen.

All worshipers depart in silence

### **Music Notes:**

The Blues, with roots in African American spirituals and work songs, has a long history of expressing deep emotions and experiences of struggle and loss. The early-twentieth-century socio-political struggle that birthed the blues has parallels to the time of Christ's Crucifixion - itself a story of socio-political oppression. Throughout history, those facing oppression and persecution have found solace and inspiration in the story of the Passion- certainly true of Blues music.

Crossroad Blues was written and recorded by the legendary bluesman Robert Johnson in 1936, and tells the story of a man who has reached a crossroads in life and is a classic example of the Delta blues style with haunting vocals and atmospheric sound that emphasize the sense of tension and uncertainty that is at the heart of the lyrics - rich with symbolism and metaphor. Some have interpreted the song as a reflection of Johnson's own struggles as a traveling musician in the segregated South, while others have seen it as a commentary on the broader social and political struggles of the time. An intriguing reference is to Blues musician Willie Brown, a friend and musical partner of Johnson. The reference may have been a nod to this, but in the blues community at the time, a legend developed that Johnson had made a deal with the devil at a crossroads, trading his soul for the ability to play the blues (his first time playing the guitar was a disaster, and a short time later he had mastered it), so he called out to his friend Brown to rescue him from the devil's grasp.

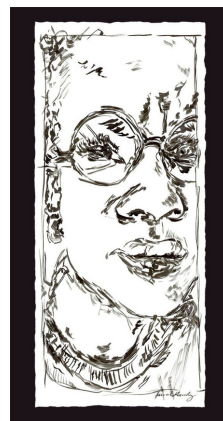
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Sister Rosetta Tharpe was a pioneering African-American gospel singer, songwriter, and guitarist who played a pivotal role in the creation of the rock and roll genre. No one was as important to the development of the genre as she was. Tharpe was also a trailblazer for African-American women in music – as one of the first African-American women to perform on television and in concert venues – breaking down racial and gender barriers and paving the way for future generations of artists. Her classic blues staple, Lonesome Road, is a song about the journey of life, with all of its ups and downs and the constant need for guidance and support from a higher power.

The lyrics of the Reverend Gary Davis's classic, Death Don't Have No Mercy, describe the experience of facing death and the accompanying fear and uncertainty. The lyrics plead with the Lord for mercy, acknowledging mortality, the fragility of life, and the inescapable reality that death must be faced.

Richard Smallwood was a pioneer in the gospel music industry and had a profound impact on the genre. Calvary is a modern take on Gospel Blues, a unique genre of music that blends elements of traditional gospel music with the blues, which was developed and championed in the early twentieth century by Mahalia Jackson, Reverend Gary Davis, and Sister Rosetta Tharpe.



## Easter Sunday March 31, 2024

*Wandering Heart. And I Hope*  
Luke 24:1-12

**Sunrise Service, 7 a.m.**  
**Worship, 9 a.m.**  
**Brunch, 10 a.m.**  
**Worship, 11 a.m.**



Scan the QR code to  
register for brunch!

Where? | Hannah Garrity | sanctifiedart.org

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