



**Detroit Peace Community  
Stations of the Cross 2021**

## Introduction (St. Peter's Church)

**Song:** 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?

*“Take up his cross and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24)*

On January 6, violent, white supremacists invaded the US Capitol prepared to kill to ensure Trump remain in power having been fed the Big Lie. At the same time, supporters of “Stop the Steal” gathered in Lansing. Waving Trump flags and guns, they prayed and then lifted a 20-foot cross in front of the Michigan Capitol.

All around the country, Christianity's tentacles have bound themselves to patriarchy, nationalism, and white supremacy. It is of course nothing new and haunts of burning crosses and lynching trees.

We reject a Christianity that bears the cross as a threat, a weapon, or a sign of supremacy. Instead, we gather this Good Friday to remember a man executed 2000 years ago for casting a vision of Beloved Community. We carry the cross to remember those executed and persecuted by the powers and principalities in this moment and in this place. We carry this cross with love, repentance, grief, and a cry for justice.

This year has been a year of grief and rage like none other. Usually, we would carry the cross with our bodies. We would walk the streets of Detroit with our feet to remember the ways our lives are both complicit in the oppression and living signs of Gospel imagination. Alas, while COVID numbers are on the decline they remain higher in Michigan than they were last Easter. We are yet again reading these words from the shelter of our homes. We wait and hunger to walk together again.

*Rubrics: The gong: Thich Nhat Hahn speaks of the “inviting bell” (the bell of awareness) at the beginning of meditation. We will sound a gong to invoke silence and to help everyone center their thoughts for the words about to be spoken at each station.*

## 1. Homelessness (Manna Meal)

**Chant:** Listen listen listen to my heart's song.

Listen listen listen to my heart's song.

I will never forget you, I will never forsake you.

I will never forget you, I will never forsake you.

**Leader:** Christ was pierced for our sins.

**All:** Christ was crushed for our offenses.

*“In my God’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.” - John 14: 1-3*

If this winter was like years past (and we know, for so many, it has been worse), over 700 people across this country will have died of hypothermia. Or, to put it more viscerally, over 700 human beings will have frozen to death, trapped in the streets of our own so-called civilization. For those who survived, too, the effects have been devastating. Here, on these streets between Manna Community Meal and Day House Catholic Worker, the cold has taken fingers and turned toes black beyond resurrection, even as luxury condos echoed in silence above.

Despite Jesus’s 2,000 year-old declaration of housing abundance, we have not yet learned to live in the Father’s house. How far we are from inhabiting that home -- that Kin-dom -- where God has prepared a place for each one of us to rest. We have broken our side of the covenant, and bodies break further with each year it is neglected. Where in your body do you feel this lament?

We pray, today, that this sacred covenant will finally be honored. We pray that all humans will have dwelling places; that all will be warm and fed and cared for.

We remember: “The temple stands unfinished until all are housed in dignity” (- *St. Ambrose*).

**Song:** *Were you there when they could not find a home?*

## 2. The Pandemic and Social Divisiveness (Holy Trinity)

**Chant:** There's only one river, there's only one sea.  
And it's flowing through you, and it's flowing through me.  
We are one, we are one. We are one, we are one.

**Leader:** Christ was pierced for our sins.  
**All:** Christ was crushed for our offenses.

*“Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Genesis 4:9)*

The pandemic has clearly revealed the answer to Cain’s question in the biblical story: we are our brother’s keeper. When the contagious coronavirus began to spread worldwide, the medical science stressed the necessity of mask-wearing and social distancing in public as crucial for not only protecting oneself, but stopping its spread to others. Accordingly, government at all levels mandated or strongly encouraged these practices.

But tragically, many Americans have refused to observe such restrictions. Most are white who self-identify as Christians. Their strong opposition has awakened us to an existing depth of divisiveness among us we had not previously been aware of. The ensuing election rhetoric only amplified and made this more evident.

In his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* Pope Francis states that at the root of this divisiveness is the answer people give to the question “who am I?” He says we tend to see and identify ourselves within such categories as nationality, race, religious tradition, or political affiliation. He calls each of us to expand our sense of self by fundamentally knowing oneself as a sister/brother to all. He reminds us that Jesus’ answer to the question “Who is my neighbor?” is the parable of the Good Samaritan. He invites us to reflect on who we are in the story. Are we the robber who exploits another for selfish gain? Or are we the priest of Levite who shows indifference to a person in pain? Or, can we be the Good Samaritan who goes beyond the differences of citizenship, ideology, and caste to see a brother or sister in need? The parable tells us it is not sufficient to think of ourselves only in terms of American or foreigner, white or black, Christian or Muslim, Republican or Democrat. Then finally, he reminds us of Jesus’ final words to his Jewish questioner who admitted he hated the foreigner was the one who acted as neighbor: “Go, and do likewise.”

**Song:** *Were you there when they knew not who they were?*

### 3. Earth, Our Home (Detroit River)

**Chant:** The earth is our mother, we must take care of her (2x)

Hey yana, ho yana, hey yan yan (2x)

b) Her sacred ground we walk upon with every step we take.

c) The earth is our mother, she's taking care of us.

**Leader:** Christ was pierced for our sins.

**All:** Christ was crushed for our offenses.

*"I came that you may have life and have it to the full"* (John 10:10)

This quote is not heard around Holy Week or Good Friday, yet it sums up Jesus' life, his ministry, and journey through Calvary.

*Life creates conditions conducive to Life* – comes from my study of biomimicry (emulation of life). It inspires and guides me as I try to respect, honor, restore, connect and live within Earth's amazing gifts and systems.

As we ponder Earth's plight today; we remember recent floods, fires, hurricanes, droughts, 400+ years of racism & colonialism. What can we do to re-member our planet and the suffering, the Calvary of the many species disappearing each day? Note water's pain, air's pain, soil's pain and earthlings' pain George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, the 500,000+ Covid deaths and the grief of those left behind.

George Floyd cried: *I can't breathe...* Jesus cried: *I thirst... Why have you abandoned me!* Hear Earth's cries: air, soil and water pollution, malnourished children, genetically modified seeds, Indigenous knowledge ignored, Asians beaten, and caravans at the border... The list goes on.

Please spend some time in/with Nature as often as you can as SHE will confirm her goal *to create conditions conducive to life* for you and your loved ones. Jesus's willingness to die so we *may have life, and have it to the full* created conditions conducive to life for all of us. As we extend our love to each other as kin, as earthlings during our remembering of the PASCHAL MYSTERY; may we *create conditions conducive to LIFE*.

**Song:** *Were you there when the earth cried out in pain?*

## 4. Coronavirus (TCF Center)

**Chant:** Deep down inside of me I've got a fire going on.  
Deep down inside of me I've got a fire going on.  
Part of me wants to sing about the light.  
Part of me wants to cry, cry, cry.

**Leader:** Christ was pierced for our sins.

**All:** Christ was crushed for our offenses.

*“[They] joined in the mockery: “He saved others” they said, “but he cannot save himself.”*  
(Matthew 27:41)

For us, the COVID 19 pandemic has been marked by two Holy Weeks observed at compassionate distance, with digital and virtual Good Friday walks. The pandemic’s season has been not only tragic and grief-filled, but murderous.

For most of it we suffered national leadership that washed his hands of responsibility, standing by, mocking, spiritually incapacitated, unable to grieve, unwilling to mourn, and so offering up victims by the millions on our planet. That leadership fostered a wound in the social fabric, a contempt for the common good, an idolization of individual liberty, an assault on safe practices and policy. It harbored rage in lockdown, with deadly consequences.

The virus exposed again the structural inequities of race and economy, where hospitalizations and deaths were disproportionate in Black, Brown, and poor communities. Now, in the era of vaccination a similar divide prevails both nationally and globally. Ninety percent of vaccinations world-wide have gone to wealthier and middle-income nations, with other countries expected to wait for years. Government funded research remains protected and unshared by corporate patents.

Racial scapegoating, stirring and provoking the Crowd with slurs of the “China virus,” have targeted Asian-Americans for threat, violence and mass murder.

In Christ, we mourn today all who have suffered and died in the shadow of this deadly plague. In Christ we lift their lives and loved ones in the intercessions of this hour.

**Song:** *Were you there when the virus struck them down?*

## 5. Energy (DTE)

**Chant:** I hear the voice of my grandmother (grandchildren) calling me (2x).

"Wake up! Wake up!" she says (they say) "Wake up! Wake up!"

Listen, listen, listen, listen!

May the rivers all run clear! May the mountains be unspoiled! May the air be pure.

May the trees grow tall. May the earth be shared by all!"

**Leader:** Christ was pierced for our sins.

**All:** Christ was crushed for our offenses.

*"But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken."* (Mark 13:24-25)

Pearl Street station, in Manhattan's Financial District, was the first power plant to operate in the United States, serving 85 customers in 1882. Eleven years later, the City of Detroit began building a power plant it would own and operate near where the Ren Cen stands today. By 1910, the City had decommissioned this plant and decided to rely on Detroit Edison (now known as DTE Energy) for all of its electricity generation.

As the electrical grid expanded across the nation in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, private companies made massive infrastructure investments in exchange for limited or no competition and guaranteed profits—a bargain that continues to this day. Michigan's utility regulators, who are appointed by the Governor, who is elected by us, guarantee DTE a 10% return on investments like building new power plants.

In spite of unreliable service for customers, guaranteed profits mean that folks like Gerry Anderson, the company's Executive Chairman, bring home very reliable paychecks. While Mr. Anderson earned over \$12,000,000 in 2019, a quarter of low-income households in Detroit have an energy burden of 19%. This means that their energy bills are almost 1/5 of their gross household income. For context, 3% is the national median energy burden. Six percent is considered "high." Ten percent is considered "severe." Twenty percent is an outrage.

In December of last year, 367,000 DTE customers were more than 90 days behind on payments. Policymakers and advocates view the "forgiveness" of ratepayers' debts as a necessary relief strategy, and it is. But it is no substitute for affordability and income-based rates. And let it not distract us from the true identity of *who* should be seeking "forgiveness" in this scenario, and from whom.

**Song:** *Were you there when they could not pay their bills?*

## 6. Police Brutality (Police Headquarters)

**Chant:** And we will rise with the fire of freedom. Truth is the fire that will burn our chains.

And we will stop the fire of destruction. Healing is the fire running through our veins.

**Leader:** Christ was pierced for our sins.

**All:** Christ was crushed for our offenses.

*Then Jesus said to the... officers of the temple police, and the elders, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? ...But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!" (Luke 22:52-53)*

In *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, James Cone argues the function of lynching and crucifixion are the same: to rule by torture and terror, by the power of death. That this direct connection is missed entirely by white theologians is a symptom of white supremacy.

As Lent 2021 turns to Passion Week, Officer Derek Chauvin, stands trial in the killing of George Floyd by asphyxiation. That lynching, made public by social media, instead of spreading terror, exposed it and unleashed a movement for justice (not unlike the passion of Jesus sparking the rise of the early Christian movement).

Here, Detroit Will Breathe (DWB), was daily in the street with marches, vigils, and rallies. Then last summer, Hakim Littleton, having fired on police during the arrest of a friend, was tackled, disarmed, and killed – Detroit police operating as judge, jury, and executioner. At this writing, we still await response from Wayne Co. Prosecutor, Kym Worthy.

After Hakim's death, Detroit Police became more aggressive, violently assaulting DWB, arresting some 300 people. Nearly all 398 cases have been dismissed for lack of evidence. When DWB brought a lawsuit, the Court ruled that DPD must cease the use of "beatings, tear gas, pepper spray, rubber bullets, sound cannons, flash grenades, chokeholds and mass arrests without probable cause." A countersuit against DWB was filed by Mayor Duggan and Police Chief Craig, funded by City Council for \$200,000. It was thrown out by Judge Laurie Michaelson, and permanently dismissed.

Mayor Duggan's recent State of the City address made no mention of police violence or reform but only the implementation of aggressive force and punitive justice against crime. He proposes an increase of \$41 million to the budget for police. But for us the season is a call to defund and disarm white supremacy.

**Song:** *Were you there when they came with guns and clubs?*

## 7. Gentrification (Site of New Luxury Hotel)

**Chant:** We've got to humble ourselves in the eyes of the poor. We've got to bend down low.  
Humble ourselves in the eyes of the poor. We've got to know what they know.  
We can lift each other up, no matter who we are. We will lift each other up.

**Leader:** Christ was pierced for our sins.

**All:** Christ was crushed for our offenses.

*“You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.” (James 5:5)*

A large Not-For-Sale sign hangs on side of St. Peter’s Church as a promise to soup kitchen guests, poor people, unhoused and marginally housed friends, that there will still be a place for them in Corktown. Two years ago, suburban developers offered first to buy the church and then to move St. Peter’s and its clientele “to a more appropriate place.” Corktown will be utterly changed over the next few years. Ford is coming to the Michigan Central Station and the 7-story boutique Godfrey Hotel will be built next door to St. Peter’s Church, home to Manna Community Meal and Corner Shower and Laundry. Corktown is in the belly of the beast.

Change happens. But it doesn’t *just* happen. Gentrification is the direct descendant of colonization. This has been going on for a long time. All euro-americans are implicated. It’s complex and multi-layered. And there are winners and losers by design. Covid has revealed what this means even more clearly.

Gentrification in Detroit involves dislocation: moving people out of one place to up the value of another. The winners have their tools: foreclosures and water shut offs, denying city services, eminent domain. Fast-tracked deals are cut between suburban developers, venture capitalists and the city’s planning department. Private consultants and tax incentives smooth the way. The Winners have decided development is more important than public schools, libraries, parks and city infrastructure in the short run. Actual low-income and affordable housing units are converted to market-rate luxury apartments and condos. New housing is built that most Detroiters can’t afford. Change doesn’t just happen.

The market operates by the adage: Whomever has the gold, rules. Jesus calls us to live by a different Rule. Who has the right to occupy a place? To claim and re-name and change a place? To decide who wins and who loses? Or who is welcome and who is not?

**Song:** *Were you there when they occupied the land?*

## 8. Christian Nationalism (St. Peter's Peace Pole)

**Chant:** For each child that's born a morning star rises and sings to the universe who we are (2x).  
We are our grandmothers' prayers. We are our grandfathers' dreaming.  
We are the breath of the ancestors. We are the spirit of God.

**Leader:** Christ was pierced for our sins.

**All:** Christ was crushed for our offenses.

*"Thou shall have no other god before me." (Exodus 20:2)*

We have seen what happens when religion wraps itself in the flag. When the cross of Christ is converted into a sword of the state. When demagogues are deified and patriotism is promulgated from the nation's altars by false prophets preaching a gospel of greed disguised as goodness.

Altars upon which all that is decent and true is sacrificed in service to a national myth rooted in racism, xenophobia, bigotry, and violence. Altars wreathed with the stench of idolatry that hangs in the air like a devil's incense. Altars that await the next wave of victims who will satiate the bloodthirst of the mob. Who will it be this time? Immigrants? Muslims? Jews? Asians? The LGBTQ+ community?

The marriage of American exceptionalism to white Christian religion has given birth to the moment in which we now find ourselves after a long gestational period that began when colonizers claimed indigenous land on behalf of cross and crown. Murder wrapped and swaddled in the Doctrine of Discovery. For all but the oppressors, a Doctrine of Domination, Destruction, and Death.

A long gestational period seeded by white men wielding a whip in one hand and a bible in the other. Trumpism is the predictable legacy of this toxic partnership. The offspring ideology of lies rooted in exceptionalism and an Anglo-God's favor raining down upon His chosen ones who clutch their guns like rosary beads from atop their shining city on a hill.

U.S. history is sprinkled with the names of this theology's strange and brutal saints. Slave-owning Founding Fathers and bible-thumping bigots and hatemongering talk show hosts who have been sanitized and canonized. Christian nationalism marches to its own liturgical beat. January 6th now added to the calendar of high holy days.

The sermon Dr. King was writing on the day he was killed was titled, "Why America May Go to Hell." It is a question worth asking.

**Song:** *Were you there when they wrapped God in a flag?*

## Closing Service

**Song:** Amazing Grace

*Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me  
I once was lost, but now am found  
T'was blind but now I see*

*T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear  
And Grace, my fears relieved  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed*

*Through many dangers, toils and snares  
We have already come.  
T'was grace that brought us safe thus far  
And grace will lead us home.*

*When we've been there 10,000 years  
Bright shining as the sun  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Then when we first begun*

**Prayer:**

Oh God,  
whose spirit rests in the  
contours of Indigenous lands,  
whose breath rises in the streets  
chanting "Black Lives Matter."  
whose rage boils when the cross  
is raised as weapon,  
whose being is re-imagined by the honeybees,  
the mycelium, and the snow-covered cedars.

We stand at a time when  
the powers of death are gasping for air.  
We are witnessing the ways that  
Christianity's tentacles have bound themselves  
to patriarchy, nationalism, and white supremacy.

For many of us rooted in this tradition,  
this is a moment of reckoning with its violence.

We watch in terror, but not shock  
grief, but not despair,  
trembling with the question...  
What does it mean to be a Christian?

We ask you to hold us in this tension.  
Help us ground in our bodies  
and remember our histories and yearnings.

Send us Shiphrah and Puah  
to summon our courage of disobedience  
and resistance to empire's demands.  
Send us Miriam  
to remind us to sing and dance and trust the waters  
as the walls come crumbling down.  
Send us Mary and Magdalene  
to help us tend to bodies and the places of death  
despite the risks and fears.

May we find church in the small and prophetic,  
entwined with justice, community, and liberation.  
May guns be beaten into garden tools.  
May history be studied and ancestors be summoned.  
May we pray for the nonviolent collapse of the US empire.

And may the remnants of these prayers be on our hands  
and woven into our lives in the days to come.

**Amen.**

## **Prayers of the People**

With word and song, we have brought our prayers, our cries, and our repentance. And yet we know that these stations are unfinished. So, for who else and what else do we pray?

*(hold a time of silence or name out loud prayers for whom we will all hold)*

For all the prayers and those we hold in our hearts, let us pray God. **“God, hear our prayer.”**

God, hold us all close as we let the pain and rage and tears shift our hearts. May it move us into deeper love of humanity and the Earth. May we continue to uncover the injustices that surround us and may we move forward leaving behind footsteps of beauty and new life. **Amen.**

## **Closing Song: Low to the Ground**

*Chorus:*

*Stay low to the ground. Live close to the Earth.*

*Don't stray very far from your soul.*

*It's simple things show us the reason we're here.*

*And it's simple things keeping us whole.*

*1) We stand on the edge of a cliff in the deepest night I've ever seen.*

*People looking for light. People who cherish a dream.*

*But the light's shining out from our eyes. And the dream's resting deep in our souls.*

*If it's magic we're needing to keep us from falling, it's magic we already know.*

*It's music that keeps us alive. It's dancing that sets our hearts free.*

*It's children remember the laughter in life. It's animals teach us to see.*

*2) Tell me the place you were born, the lives that your ancestors led;*

*the ground that surrounded the people you love; the streams from which you were fed.*

*It's the wind that carries the seed, and the seed that carries the song.*

*The food that we're eating is rooted in soil. And it's soil that is keeping us strong.*

*3) The temples are falling around us. We stand strong and fierce where they've been.*

*I never have seen a holier sight than a person who sings in the wind.*

*Our blood is the river of life. Our joy is the sun on the land.*

*All of the love that's inside this heart is more than one person can stand.*

## **Parting Blessing:**

Go forth into the world in peace.

And be of good courage.

Hold fast to that which is good and render unto no one evil for evil.

Strengthen the fainthearted, support the weak, guide the eager, help the afflicted

Honor all people. Honor Earth.

And love and serve God rejoicing in the power of the Spirit,

trusting that She can do far more than we can hope or imagine.

**Amen.**