



*An Open and Affirming Congregation
of The United Church of Christ*



**Order of Worship for
April 2, 2026 6:00 pm
Maundy Thursday**

**Welcome to Worship at Center Church!
We are delighted that you are with us today.**

ORDER OF SERVICE – MAUNDY THURSDAY
A Service of Communion and Tenebrae

A SIMPLE MEAL

WELCOME

GATHERING MUSIC: *Wondrous Love*

*What wondrous love is this, O my Soul, O my Soul,
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this, that caused the Lord of Bliss,
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul!*

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

1. Luke 18:31-34 - *Jesus Foretells the Passion*

CALL TO WORSHIP (*responsive*)

One: We are each a tapestry of stories.
We are our stories of fear and grief,
As well as our stories of love and joy.
We believe that God sees all of these interwoven truths
And says to our fragile selves:

Many: **“Come in.
Come in from the cold,
Come in from the rain,
Come in from wherever you are,
And be here tonight.”**

One: We believe that God then pours warm water into a basin
To wash off the weariness of the day,

Many: **The bruises of the past,
And the doubt that clings to us.**

One: We believe that this act is an act of love.
Similarly, we believe that God says to us: "Eat."

**Many: And God shares of God's self,
And it is food not only for our bodies, but for our souls.**

One: We believe that all this happens
Every time we close our eyes and imagine God,
And every time we close our eyes and imagine God,

**Many: We believe the parts of our tapestry that feel worn and frayed
Are held together.**

One: So today, we remember. Today we say thank you.

Many: Today, we know—we are held together.

2. Poem *Power Like a Seed*
by Rev. Sarah Speed

In a world that wants power like a machine gun,
power like a bomber plane,
power like a gated fence to keep the hungry out,
I want power like a seed –
power that will crack me open and grow
something good;
power like an open door,
an invitation that says, "Come on in;"
power that feels like a strong spine with a soft heart.
I want the power to listen, to lean in, to ask follow-
up questions.
But more than anything, I want the power to bring
us together, to lift you up.

There are different kinds of power.

One will build a wall.

One will plant a garden.

We should know by now, only one will bear fruit.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (*unison*)

**Holy God who holds us together,
If I were to place myself at your table, I would probably be Peter—
Misunderstanding your radical hospitality,
Sticking to the rules,
Arguing what I do and don't deserve.
Then again, it's possible that I'd be Judas—
The one who betrayed you,
The one who failed to see the good right in front of him,
The one who might have thought he wasn't worthy of your love.
If I were to place myself at your table,
It's possible I would be one of the unnamed disciples—
Watching, but not speaking,
Silently missing the opportunity
To tell you what I believe and how much I love you.
If I were to place myself at your table,
I am confident that I would have made the same mistakes
Your well-intentioned disciples made.
There is no surprise there.
What is surprising is that I know you would have washed my feet nonetheless.
So forgive me, God.
Wash not just my feet, but my hands and my head also. Amen.**

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

One: Family of faith,
Jesus knew that Peter would deny.
He knew that Judas would betray,
And he knew that disciples would hide in fear.
And still – and still – he invited them in.
He washed their feet, and he fed them.
Friends, we worship the living Christ
Whose love shocks, surprises, and far exceeds our understanding of love.
So may this story tonight remind us:

**All: No matter who we are,
No matter where we go,
No matter how great our mistakes or regrets are in life,
We will always be invited in and held together by the Living God.
Again and again and again, we are forgiven.
Again and again and again, we are held. Amen.**

HYMN: *Wondrous Love*

***To God and to the Lamb, I will sing, I will sing,
To God and to the Lamb, I will sing;
To God and to the Lamb, who is the great I AM,
While millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing;
While millions join the theme, I will sing!***

3. John 11: 47-53 “*The Conspiracy and a Scapegoat*”

HYMN: *Ah, Holy Jesus v. 1*

***Ah, Holy Jesus, how has thou offended,
That we to judge thee have in hate pretended?
By foes derided, by thine own rejected,
O most afflicted!***

4. Matthew 26: 14-16 “*The Darkness of Betrayal*”

HYMN: *Ah, Holy Jesus v. 2*

***Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon thee?
Alas, my treason, Jesus, has undone thee!
'Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee;
I crucified thee.***

5. Mark 14: 22-25 “*The New Covenant*”

HYMN: *Go to Dark Gethsemane*

***Go to dark Gethsemane,
All who feel the tempter's power.
Your Redeemer's conflict see,
Watch with Him one bitter hour.
Turn not from His griefs away,
Learn of Jesus Christ to pray.***

COMMUNION SERVICE

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Rev. Dr. Eric J. Hearst

SHARING THE ELEMENTS

We will pass the elements around the table; please allow your neighbor to serve you and serve your neighbor in turn. You may bless one another by saying, “The Body of Christ, broken for you,” and “The Cup of the New Covenant, poured out for you.”

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION AND THE LORD’S PRAYER

**As Jesus nourishes us with his very body,
We become the Body of Christ.
May this feast fuel us for the work
Of joining others in their in-betweens.
Together, as one body, we pray, Our Father...**

6. Poem *Thursday*
 by Hannah Faith Notes

Hands harvested the grapes, and feet crushed
them in the winepress. Hands held
the vessel under the dark stream
till the vessel ran over, sealed up the wine
and carried it down to the cellar.

Hands shaped the water basin on the wheel,
Set it to dry. Hands worked the loom that wove
the towel now folded under the basin.
Fingers held the needle that, hemming
the towel’s edge, drew a drop of blood.

Hands kneaded the unleavened dough,
worked in more flour, stoked the oven coals.
Hands shaped the loaves and baked them,
then set the bread to cool.

Hands picked and washed the bitter herbs.
Hands laid the table, lit the lamps.

And when supper ends and hands raise up
the cup, the men will remember (though
nobody will say), the hands that drew the knife
across the lamb’s throat and held its limbs
while the last twitch of muscle ebbed away.

HYMN: *Wondrous Love*

*When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking down,
when I was sinking down, sinking down,
when I was sinking down beneath God's righteous frown,
Christ laid aside his crown for my soul, for my soul,
Christ laid aside his crown for my soul.*

7. Mark 14:32-36 - *A Lonesome Vigil*

HYMN: *Stay with Me* (Taize)

*Stay with me, remain here with me;
watch and pray, watch and pray.*

8. Poem *Gethsemane*
 by Mary Oliver

The grass never sleeps.
Or the roses.
Nor does the lily have a secret eye that shuts until morning.
Jesus said, wait with me. But the disciples slept.
The cricket has such splendid fringe on its feet,
and it sings, have you noticed, with its whole body,
and heaven knows it ever sleeps.
Jesus said, wait with me. And maybe the stars did, maybe the wind
wound itself into the silver tree, and didn't move,
maybe the lake far away, where once he walked as on a
blue pavement, lay still and waited, wild awake.
Oh, the dear bodies, slumped and eye-shut, that could not
keep that vigil, how they must have wept,
so utterly human, knowing this too
must be a part of the story.

HYMN: *Are Ye Able*

***"Are ye able," said the Master, "To be crucified with me?"
"Yea," the sturdy dreamers answered, "To the death we follow Thee."
Lord, we are able! Our spirits are Thine.
Remold them, make us, like Thee, divine.
Thy guiding radiance above us shall be a beacon to God,
To love, and loyalty.***

9. Lamentations 1: 12, 16, 22 *Suffering and Shame*

HYMN: *When Jesus Wept*

***When Jesus wept, the falling tear
In mercy flowed beyond all bound;
When Jesus groaned, a trembling fear
Seized all the guilty world around.***

10. Mark 14: 43-50 *Jesus is Arrested and Abandoned*

HYMN: *Were You There?*

***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?***

11. John 19:30 *The Death of Jesus*

HYMN: *Were You There?*

***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?***

CHRIST CANDLE EXTINGUISHED

12. John 1: 4-5 *Life and Light*

RELIGHT THE CHRIST CANDLE

13. Poem *Christ Has No Body*
 by Theresa of Avila

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

DEPART IN SILENCE

Thank you to everyone who prepared the meal and participated in tonight's service.

*Please join us tomorrow, Good Friday, for an ecumenical service
at Immanuel Congregational Church, 10 Woodland Street, Hartford*

*We hope you will join us in celebrating the resurrection
at our festive worship service on Easter morning, Sunday, at 10:30 am.*