

# Wilderness

## SINGING THROUGH THE WILDERNESS

### A SERVICE FOR HOLY WEEK

LITURGY WITH ORIGINAL POETRY &  
HYMNS BY SLATS TOOLE

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We invite you to implement this service as-is, or adapt it for your context. Either way, please attribute credit as follows: *Liturgy by Slats Toole* | *A Sanctified Art LLC* | [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org).

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## ABOUT THE SERVICE

When trudging through the wilderness, songs give us strength and courage to keep moving. This service interweaves song and poetry within the passion narrative to keep us singing on the journey to the cross.

This is intended to be a Holy Week service to experience the fullness of the story of the last days before the resurrection. It would be appropriate for either Maundy Thursday or Good Friday, and is particularly intended for churches that only have one service during Holy Week and want to encompass the whole narrative in that one service.

In accordance with the Revised Common Lectionary, the readings are drawn from the Gospel of John. I would advise communities to adjust their translation of these readings to replace “the Jews” with “the religious leaders.” Christianity has a deep history of blaming the crucifixion on the Jewish people, contributing to anti-Semitism.<sup>1</sup> Adjusting this translation not only breaks that pattern, but reminds us of how we are implicated in the story—we, too, have yelled, “Crucify!”

## SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Stations for hand washing. At tables, place bowls filled with water and dry cotton towels for worshipers to wash each others’ hands at the beginning of the service.
- Printed copies of the poem, “you are made,” to place at each hand washing station (see poems formatted separately).
- Elements for celebrating Holy Communion.

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1 Son, Samuel. “Confronting the Church’s Anti-Semitic Roots.” Sojourners. August 24, 2017. <https://sojo.net/articles/confronting-church-s-anti-semitic-roots>

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SINGING THROUGH  
THE WILDERNESS

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SUMMARY ORDER OF WORSHIP

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## GATHERING AROUND THE WORD

WORDS OF WELCOME & HAND WASHING

*With original poem, "you are made"*

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN OF CONFESSION

HOLY COMMUNION

*With original poem, "it begins with grace"*

A PRAYER TO KEEP AWAKE

## PROCLAIMING & RESPONDING TO THE WORD

THE TELLING OF THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

SCRIPTURE READING | John 18:1-12

SUNG RESPONSE

SCRIPTURE READING | John 18:13-27

SUNG RESPONSE

SCRIPTURE READING | John 18:28-19:16a

SUNG RESPONSE

POETIC RESPONSE (*inspired by Psalm 22*) | "this is the breaking"

SCRIPTURE READING | John 19:16b-30

SILENT RESPONSE

SCRIPTURE READING | John 19:31-43

POETIC RESPONSE | "the night weeps"

## SENDING

CLOSING HYMN (*Optional*)

# Wilderness

## SINGING THROUGH THE WILDERNESS

FULL ORDER OF WORSHIP WITH  
LITURGY & LEADER NOTES

### GATHERING AROUND THE WORD

*Before the community gathers, place basins of water with small towels around the space. At each station, place printouts of the following poem:*

you are made, my child, my Beloved  
from water and dust  
both holy  
both mine.<sup>2</sup>

### WORDS OF WELCOME & HAND WASHING

*As music plays softly, invite worshipers to make their way to a hand washing station. You may encourage worshipers to allow their hands to be washed by the person in front of them and to stay to wash the hands of the person who follows them. Invite worshipers to speak aloud the words of the poem as they wash each other's hands.*

Jesus began the final days of his earthly life by washing the feet of his disciples. You are invited to the basins of water around the room to wash your hands or the hands of another. As you feel the coolness of the water, may it be like a spring in the wilderness—a reminder of baptism, the assurance that no matter what happens, God will provide what you need. As you feel the touch of your hands or someone else's, pray that your hands might be the hands of Christ—comforting, healing, and supporting all those you meet.

### CALL TO WORSHIP<sup>3</sup>

*This could be sung or spoken. The sung version can be found [here](#).*

One: Come, come, whoever you are,

**All: Wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving.**

One: Ours is no caravan of despair.

**All: Though we have broken our vows a thousand times,**

One: Come, come again, come!

<sup>2</sup> Poem by Slats Toole.

<sup>3</sup> "Come, Come, Whoever You Are." Text by Rumi. Music by Dale Zola. Can be taught by rote. A video of the music and how to teach it can be found on the *Music that Makes Community* website. Sheet music, if needed, can be found in *Singing in Community*, published by Augsburg Fortress.

### HYMN OF CONFESSION

If there is any time to stop and remember how we have fallen short, it is now.  
If there is any moment when we should be honest about what we have done and what we have failed to do, it is tonight. As we sing, let our voices bring our prayer of confession to God.

#### **Hymn suggestions:**

“Hymn for a New Church” by Slats Toole.<sup>4</sup>

“Just As I Am” by Charlotte Elliot.<sup>5</sup>

“Rock of Ages (When The Day Seems Long)” by Sandra McCracken.<sup>6</sup>

### HOLY COMMUNION

*This poem can serve as the primary liturgy for celebrating Communion, as it includes the Words of Institution. It should therefore be said by someone authorized to celebrate Communion with the appropriate liturgical gestures and elements at the Table. Any instructions about the taking of communion may follow.*

it begins with grace.

it begins with grace  
and ends with grace  
and it is so deeply important  
to know that  
we are carried through  
by grace

because this road gets hard  
the road to redemption  
the road to resurrection  
is the road of uneven ground  
of roots that trip us  
and rocks that make us slip  
and fall  
and it is hard to get back up again  
to keep going.

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4 “Hymn for a New Church.” Text by Slats Toole. Traditional tune. Licensing for this hymn is included with the purchase of this A Sanctified Art resource. Sheet music included in download.

5 “Just As I Am.” Text by Charlotte Elliott. Tune by William Bradbury. Can be found in most hymnals, and is public domain. [https://hymnary.org/text/just\\_as\\_i\\_am\\_without\\_one\\_plea](https://hymnary.org/text/just_as_i_am_without_one_plea).

6 “Rock of Ages (When the Day Seems Long).” Text by Sandra McCracken. Music by Kevin Twit. Found in the *Indelible Grace Hymn Book* (digital resource). Licensing for use is available via CCLI (Song Number: 4903820). <http://hymnbook.igracemusic.com/hymns/rock-of-ages-when-the-day-seems-long>.