

Wandering Heart

Figuring out faith with Peter

Stations of Peter Liturgy

for a communal worship service

Liturgy & Original Artwork by
Rev. T. Denise Anderson

We invite you to implement this service as-is, or adapt it for your context. Either way, please attribute credit as follows:
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About the liturgy

This creative liturgy invites you to walk “the way of sorrows” to the cross, but through the eyes and experiences of one of Jesus’ closest disciples. As a nod to the Stations of the Cross,¹ this service highlights Peter’s role in the crucifixion narrative. In this way, we follow Jesus to his death with Peter as our companion. By focusing on Peter, we imagine how we might have acted and behaved had we been there as one of Jesus’ followers and friends.

Each station provides multisensory ways to engage, confess, and lament. The 6 stations focus on the following narratives:

1. **John 13:1-20** (*Peter resists then receives the foot washing*)
2. **John 13:31-38** (*Jesus foretells Peter’s denials*)
3. **John 18:1-11** (*Peter draws his sword*)
4. **John 18:12-18** (*Jesus is arrested and Peter denies Christ*)
5. **John 18:19-27** (*Peter denies Christ again and again*)
6. **John 19:1-30** (*Jesus is crucified*)

About the service

This liturgy is designed for in-person worship services (with options for virtual participants). The entire congregation participates in each station synchronously together while seated in chairs or pews. Each station features scripture readings, as well as some special readings, and ways for the congregation to respond. You will want to assign at least 3 readers to help lead the service. In the liturgy, Reader 3 plays Peter; there are a few times when Reader 3 will offer monologues from Peter’s point of view. During the times of praying and responding, you may wish to have music playing softly in the background.¹

¹ This blog post includes recommendations for recorded, offertory, or congregational music for this Lenten series: sanctifiedart.org/blog/wandering-heart-music-suggestions

Materials needed

At the start of the service, everyone will need a writing utensil, such as a pen or pencil. You may wish to have all items available in the pews (or under chairs) when the service begins. Otherwise, you will need to pass out the needed materials as you move through each station. Here are the specific items needed for each station:

- **Station 1:** Dissolvable paper sheets and pens. Cut the dissolvable paper down into smaller squares or rectangles for worshipers to write prayers on. You will need at least 2 slips for every worshiper. In this first station, worshipers will write on the first dissolvable slip.
For virtual participants: a pen and regular sheet of paper.
- **Station 2:** Dissolvable paper sheets and pens. Worshipers will write on the second dissolvable slip.
For virtual participants: a pen and regular sheet of paper.
- **Station 3:** No supplies needed.
- **Station 4:** The image file (included), “The Descent, Closeup,” featuring part of an artwork by Rev. T. Denise Anderson. Print this image in your bulletin, and/or project it on screens. Worshipers will look closely at the image and listen to an excerpt from the artist’s statement.
- **Station 5:** The image file (included), “The Descent,” featuring the complete artwork by Rev. T. Denise Anderson. Print this image in your bulletin (perhaps as the cover), and/or project it on screens. Worshipers will look closely at the image and listen to an excerpt from the artist’s statement. Additionally, you will need clear basins (or glass bowls) filled with water, placed where worshipers can drop their dissolvable paper slips (from Stations 1 & 2) into the water. Alternatively, you could invite worshipers to place the slips in your baptismal font.
- **Station 6:** No supplies needed.

About the artwork

This liturgy features original artwork, *The Descent*, by Rev. T. Denise Anderson, inspired by Peter’s three denials. As part of Station 4, worshipers will be instructed to gaze upon a closeup portrait of Peter’s face, which is a cropped portion of the artwork. They will then look closely at the full artwork in Station 5. Therefore, we encourage you to print both images—the cropped closeup and the complete artwork—in your bulletin, or project both images on screens. These images, as well as the full artist’s statement, are included with this liturgy.

About the liturgy outline

- *Italicized lines are notes for worship leaders.*
- Unbolded lines are to be spoken by worship leaders and, when appropriate, printed in bulletins or projected on screens.
- **Bolded lines are to be spoken by the congregation and printed in bulletins or projected on screens.**

Proposed Order of Service

Gathering

Our worship service today is a different take on the Stations of the Cross. Together, we will journey through Jesus' final moments through the eyes of his disciple, Peter. In Peter, we see a little of all of us — he is devout and resolute, zealous and rash, and even fearful and flawed. If any of us can locate ourselves in the crucifixion story, it is likely we can see ourselves in Peter.

This is a service of confession, lament, and repentance. Through Peter's experience, we will consider our own. We will look closely at the events of Good Friday to help us honestly assess who we are. As Jesus tells Peter the truth about himself, we will consider the truth about ourselves.

James Baldwin once said, "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced."² Let us journey together through this difficult day, trusting in God's power and willingness to bind our wandering hearts to God's own self.

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

"Come Thou Fount"³

Sing just the first verse, as you will sing the other verses progressively throughout the service.

Station 1: Peter resists then receives the foot washing | JOHN 13:1-20

Reader 1: Read John 13:1-20 in your preferred translation.

Reader 2: We have heard the words of scripture. Let us now use our holy imaginations to read between the words and consider how Peter might have felt in these moments. Hear now a dramatic reading inspired by John 13:1-20.

Reader 3 (Peter): This feels . . . strange. What does Jesus mean by all this? What does he mean by saying that not all of us are clean? He washed our feet, which was . . . strange. But I trust my teacher. I've given up everything to follow him. Is that not love? His words seem . . . strange. What does he know? What is he not saying?

Congregational Response *(Naming who we are called to serve)*

Invite the congregation to consider Jesus' commandment to "wash one another's feet." Whose feet are they being called to wash? While music plays softly, pass out slips of dissolvable paper and pens. Invite each participant to take two slips. On the first slip, ask participants to write the names of people and/or communities they feel God is calling them to serve. They will need to hold onto these written prayers for a later station. Their second slip, will be used at the next station.

For virtual worshipers: On a small sheet of regular paper, invite participants to write the names of people and/or communities they feel God is calling them to serve. They will need to hold onto these written prayers for a later station.

² "As Much Truth As One Can Bear" by James Baldwin. *The New York Times*. January 14, 1962. [nytimes.com/1962/01/14/archives/as-much-truth-as-one-can-bear-to-speak-out-about-the-world-as-it-is.html](https://www.nytimes.com/1962/01/14/archives/as-much-truth-as-one-can-bear-to-speak-out-about-the-world-as-it-is.html)

³ "Come Thou Fount" by Robert Robinson (1758); Altered by Martin Madan (1760). Tune: NETTLETON. Public domain.