

**Westhampton Congregational United Church of Christ
an Open and Affirming Congregation**

Maundy Thursday Service of Tenebrae

April 2, 2026

Call to Worship

One: We gather tonight, in the week called holy,
Many: to sit at Jesus' table and journey to his cross.
One: We come, as a community of disciples,
Many: to keep company with the one we follow.
One: We come to sit in darkness,
Many: to remember the light that endures even there.
One: We come to remember what is holy in this week,
**Many: love that stays present,
love that suffers, love that rises.**
One: And so we turn our eyes, our hearts,
and our spirits to Christ,
**Many: from table to cross, from light to shadow,
we walk with Christ in love**

Hymn *What Wondrous Love is This*

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 Christ should come in bliss
To bear the heavy cross for my soul, for my soul,
To bear the heavy cross for my soul!

Unison Prayer of Invocation

Holy One, we gather tonight to remember Jesus' sacrifice of love for us. We gather to remember his last meal with his closest friends and disciples, the betrayal he would suffer, and the pain that he would bear. We gather to grow in our faith and be renewed once again by the story of your wondrous love for us. We gather to bear witness; to remember that death does not have the final word; and to wait and watch for the hope and joy of resurrection. Send your Spirit to be with us this night till Easter morning. In Christ we pray. Amen.

Call to Confession

Unison Prayer of Confession

Eternal God, on this holy of holy nights, we doubt that we are worthy of your love. We promise to be faithful, but we grow weary. We forsake you, flee from you, betray you. We deny you, watch from afar, and disbelieve that your kingdom is at hand. We are afraid. Change us, we pray. And hear our silent prayers for grace . . .

Silent Confession

Assurance of Pardon

Pastor: In Christ we are made whole, restored to live lives of goodness, grace and gratitude. Thanks be to God.
All: Amen.

Invitation to the Lord's Table

Hymn *Eat This Bread*

Eat this bread, drink this cup, come to me and never be hungry.
Eat this break, drink this cup, trust in me and you will not thirst.

Words of Institution

One: Let us begin by remembering together how we have been loved. How on the night of betrayal & desertion, on the eve of his death, Jesus took bread, and after giving thanks, broke it, and gave it to the disciples, saying:

“This is my body which is broken for you.

Do this in remembrance of me.”

In the same way also the cup, after supper saying:

“This cup is the covenant in my blood.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Therefore, by this bread and this cup we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

All: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Sharing the Bread and Cup (Intinction)

Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving

Holy One, we thank you for this table of grace. In bread broken and cup poured out, you have shown us the depth of your love and nourished us for the way ahead. As we leave this table and move toward the cross, shape us to love as Christ has loved us, broken open for the sake of your world. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Service of Tenebrae (Shadows)

After each scripture is read, a candle is extinguished.

Readings and Extinguishing of Lights

1. Shadow of Betrayal – Matthew 26:20-25
2. Shadow of Pride – Mark 14:26-31
3. Shadow of Desertion – Mark 14:32-42

Hymn *Were You There? verse 1*

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
O ----- sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Readings and Extinguishing of Lights

4. Shadow of Agony of the Soul – Luke 22:39-44
5. Shadow of Unshared Vigil – Luke 22:54-62
6. Shadow of Arrest – Matthew 26:47-50, 55-56

Hymn *Were You There? verse 2*

Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?
Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?
O ----- sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they nailed him to a tree?

Readings and Extinguishing of Lights

7. Shadow of Denial – Matthew 26:69-75
8. Shadow of Judgment – Mark 15:1-15
9. Shadow of Mockery – Matthew 27:27-31

Hymn *Were You There? verse 3*

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
O ----- sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Readings and Extinguishing of Lights

10. Shadow of Crucifixion – Luke 23:39-43
11. Shadow of Death – Luke 23:33-38, 44-46
12. Shadow of Burial – Mark 15:42-47

The Stripping of the Altar Table

The Christ Candle is Extinguished

The Christ Candle is Relighted

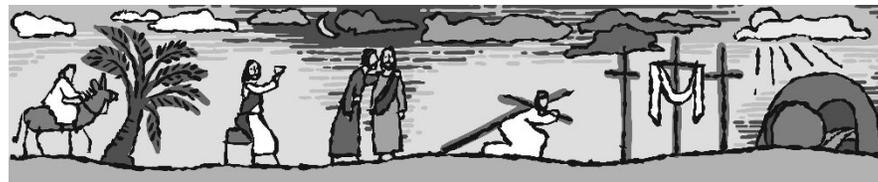
The relit Christ Candle stands as a symbolic promise of the resurrection.

Hymn *O Sacred Head Now Wounded*

O sacred Head, now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded with thorns, your only crown,
How pale you are with anguish, with sore abuse and scorn!
How does your visage languish which once was bright as morn!

— We depart in silence —

There is no benediction because the events of this night do not conclude until Jesus' resurrection on Easter morning. Tonight, we leave this service in silence, to keep watch by our own individual prayer and vigil for the dawning of Easter.



A Short Explanation of Tenebrae and the Stripping of the Altar

Tenebrae (Latin for *shadows*) is a service of scripture and silence that leads us into the darkness of Christ's suffering and death. As the story of the Passion is read, candles are gradually extinguished. The twelve candles represent the disciples; the larger candle represents Christ. The growing darkness symbolizes betrayal, abandonment, and the suffering of our Lord.

During this service, the altar is stripped of its linens, paraments, candles, and communion elements. This ancient Maundy Thursday practice recalls Christ's humiliation and self-giving love. As Jesus' life was stripped away, so the altar is stripped of the signs of celebration and feasting, preparing us for the sorrow of Good Friday.

At the moment when the Christ Candle is extinguished, a loud sound (*strepitus*) is made, symbolizing Christ's death and the closing of the tomb. The candle is then relit as a promise that darkness does not have the final word. Because this night's story does not conclude until Easter morning, there is no benediction, and we depart in silence, keeping watch for the dawn of resurrection.



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MAUNDY Thursday

Thursday, April 2, 2026
7:00pm