



The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Interactive Stations of the Cross

Christians around the world gather during Holy Week to journey with Jesus during the final hours of his life through contemplation and prayer. In recent years, many churches in the Reformed tradition have been creatively adapting the Stations of the Cross exercise, historically practiced by Anglicans and Catholics, to suit the theological vision and spiritual needs of Reformed worshippers.

In the December 2016 edition of [Reformed Worship](#), Chris Walker describes the purpose of inviting congregants to journey with Jesus through the stages leading to his death: "the goal is always to help the pilgrim contemplate and be shaped by the self-giving sacrifices of Christ for the world" (p. 9). To best facilitate this spiritual pilgrimage, Walker recommends transforming the Stations of the Cross into an "interactive, meditative, and multi-sensory journey" (p. 8).

Stations of the Cross

In a traditional Stations of the Cross experience, congregants listen to the following readings, often accompanied by images and music, and spend time meditating on the final hours of Christ's life. For more details, see PC U.S.A.'s Stations of the Cross worship resource found [here](#).

- 1) Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-41)
- 2) Jesus is betrayed and arrested (Mark 14: 43-46)
- 3) Jesus is condemned by the religious council (Luke 22: 66-71)
- 4) Jesus is denied by Peter (Matthew 26:69-75)
- 5) Jesus is judged by Pontius Pilate (Mark 15: 1-5, 15)
- 6) Jesus is scourged and marked (John 19:1-3)
- 7) Jesus is condemned by crowd to bear the cross (John 19: 6, 15-17)
- 8) Jesus is helped by Simon of Cyrene (Mark 15:21)
- 9) Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem (Luke 23: 27-31)
- 10) Jesus is crucified (Luke 23:33-34)
- 11) Jesus promises his kingdom (Luke 23: 39-43)
- 12) Jesus speaks to mother and beloved disciple (John 19: 25-27)
- 13) Jesus dies on the cross (Luke 23: 44-46)
- 14) Jesus is placed in the tomb (Matthew 27: 57-60)

Interactive Stations

A creative Stations of the Cross experience adds visual, sensory, meditative, and interactive elements to the telling of Christ's last hours on earth. These elements, which can be as simple as a few candles or as elaborate as a video montage, draw participants into deeper engagement with the story. It is not necessary to make every station interactive. Even adding interactive elements to two or three of the stations will add a significant amount of depth and meaning to the experience. You can either set all the stations up in one room (the sanctuary, gym or large meeting space) or you can have participants walk throughout the whole building to experience different stations in different rooms.



The Presbyterian Church in Canada

- For an idea of how to create interactive stations using **props**, check out this short video from a United Methodist Church in Nashville: umc.org/news-and-media/rethinking-stations-of-the-cross
- For an idea of how to incorporate **audio, video, lighting, and interactive elements** to your Stations of the Cross experience, visit Re:think Worship's website: rethinkworship.com/complete-journey-to-cross-stations/

Questions to help you get started

- **How many stations will you be using? How many will be interactive?**
Traditionally, there are 14 Stations of the Cross; however, many congregations that engage in this spiritual practice choose to focus on a select number of stations. Chris Walker's church chooses "the seven or eight stations that they are inspired to create, while still being able to give a faithful picture of the whole story" (p. 8).
- **Who is your audience? Children, youth, adults, or everyone?**
You should gear your stations to your audience's needs. If it is for children and/or youth, be sure to include lots of hands-on and multi-sensory elements to your stations. Adults like these elements too, but will also appreciate opportunities for reflection and quiet contemplation.
- **When will you host your Stations of the Cross experience? How long will you leave the stations up?**
You may choose to host a Stations of the Cross experience anytime during Holy Week by building it into a worship service and/or by setting it up as a self-guided prayer walk. Leaving it up for several hours or even days will allow for members of your congregation and community to visit according to their schedule and return multiple times for prayer and reflection.
- **Who will be preparing and setting up the interactive stations?**
In an [article on the Ministry Matters website](#), Mary Beth Franklyn recommends inviting different groups from your congregation to take on the creation of stations. Invite each group to reflect and pray about the Bible passage connected to their station and then decide together how they will make the station creative and interactive.

Web Resources: For more creative ideas on how to make your Stations of the Cross immersive and interactive, use the following Internet search terms: interactive Stations of the Cross, prayer stations, creative prayer, and contemplative prayer stations.

Bibliography

Walker, Chris. "The Final Hours: Experiencing the Stations of the Cross." Reformed Worship, December 2016.