

Churches in Solidarity against Violence and Social Injustice

An Ecumenical Walk of the Stations of the Cross

Good Friday, April 10, 2009 9:15 AM-11:30 AM



During this ‘walk’ we will be on our own pilgrimage in solidarity with people from many different churches to reflect on the meaning of Christ’s passion for us here in Rochester today. As we pause at the places where tragedy has occurred we unite our hearts with the hearts of those who suffer from the losses brought about by violence and death. We stand in solidarity with people who experience injustice and all those who suffer in silence. We will also give thanks to the many agencies and organizations that bring hope to the neighborhood and stand shoulder to shoulder with those who need God’s love and guiding hand.

We pray that Christ will be present to those who suffer and help them in their time of need, and that those who are called to help others will be given the strength by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we move from station to station we will walk in *silence* as we meditate on the suffering of Christ and how God so loved the world that He sent us His only begotten Son to redeem us.

Sponsored by:
The Episcopal Diocese of Rochester and
Greater Rochester Community of Churches
2 Riverside St. Rochester, NY 14613 (585)254-2570 www.grcc.org

The Way of the Cross

Gathering and Opening Prayer - Sanctuary of Ascension Church- 1360 Lake Ave

Speaker: The Right Reverend Prince Singh, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester

1st Station: Jesus is condemned to death - Outside Front doors of Ascension Church - Prison Ministry

Speaker: Mr. Bob Crystal, Director of Prison Re-Entry After-Care Ministry (PRAM), and Vice President for Organization at Greater Rochester Community of Churches.

Does it feel like a death sentence? Being locked up and thrown away? In the dark of night, so many fears loom large... with seemingly no answers. None. How long will I be here? Who... or what... will torment me? How will I ever be able to deal with my addictions? My crimes? Does God... can God... hear my plea? But now, here, finally, I am beginning to see a way through the darkness. Here... now... finally, I find support... a path to recovery... a second chance... a way to new life.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you;

People: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

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2nd Station: Jesus carries his Cross - Seneca Parkway & Lake Avenue

The ministry of Greater Rochester Community of Churches (GRCC)

*Speaker: Reverend Alan Dailey, pastor of Riga United Church of Christ, and member of GRCC.*

*Jesus takes up the instrument of this execution. Religious and political interests will have their way with him. His message is too dangerous; he upsets the status quo; he does not respect the rules about the Sabbath, and he eats and drinks with sinners! Through the centuries Christian churches seek to follow this man and his message. We continue to fight over the meaning of his message —dividing the church in the process. Is this not another “cross” that we add to the legacy of Jesus? Did he not pray: “that they be one”? Yet we are divided. The Greater Rochester Community of Churches works to overcome the divide between churches and to work with other faith traditions. We seek unity of the human family, while recognizing the richness of our diverse traditions.*

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3rd Station: Jesus falls the first time - Nazareth Academy and Middle School at 1001 Lake Ave.

Speaker, Ms. Mara Kouides, Senior at Nazareth Academy

On this spot young people pray, attend classes, make music, dance, play sports, and socialize with one another. On this spot and young people work to define their values and on this spot young people struggle to resist peer pressure and sometimes they fail. Young people who have strong values are not of the world. They fix their eyes on the long term goals and are ready to stand up to their peers and face being unpopular because of their choices. Jesus fell and some times young people fall, but just as Jesus found the courage and strength to rise again, schools like Nazareth Academy help young people to find their way through the maze of adolescence.

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4th Station: Jesus meets his mother - Grace United Methodist Church, Wellness in our Neighborhood Campaign at 121 Driving Park

Speaker: Reverend Phyllis Jackson, co-pastor, Grace United Methodist Church

Just as the Heart of Mary was pierced with sorrow to lose the one she had borne into this world, the one who had come to save us, the Son of God, so too, do our hearts break when death, addictions, mental illness, divorce, imprisonment, poverty or any other separation drives families apart. Jesus asks us to be the disciples who are called on to care for those left alone. Our regular daily and weekly worship, praise and prayer, strengthens the church family and aides us as we provide the outreach necessary to bring wholeness and peace to those in need. Together, we are the body of Christ.

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5th Station: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his Cross -

The location where Christopher Jones was murdered on the corner of Pierpont St. and Driving Park Ave.

Speaker: Reverend Marie Jerge, Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Finger Lakes Region

Here, on Nov. 17, 2007, 17-year-old De'Shequan Nathan killed 16-year-old Christopher Jones with a sawed-off shotgun. De'Shequan said he had no choice, that he was trying to stop Christopher from fighting with a friend of his. We may never

know why De'Shequan pulled the trigger, but we do know that choosing the difficult path – as Simon of Cyrene was forced to help Jesus carry the cross. It is often the only way to fully appreciate the humanity of those we otherwise see as mere obstacles in our way. At De'Shequan's sentencing Christopher's mother told the court she was ready to forgive her son's killer — “as soon as he shows remorse.” There is always time to turn from darkness to light.

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**6<sup>th</sup> Station: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus** – Grace Urban Ministry Office at the corner of Dewey Ave. and Driving Park

*Speaker: Ms. Jennifer Wolfley, Director of Client Services, Grace Urban Ministries (Mary Magdalene Women's Outreach Center & Shalom Family Life Center)*

*I know Mary Magdalene well. I know the voices in her head... all the ones that kept her down; like cycles of dependency, drug addiction, alcoholism, and unhealthy relationships. But, then, right here, I discovered the power of Jesus. Through Jesus people... mentors... teachers... and supporters. They have wiped so much pain from my heart... and given me another chance at life. For I am discovering the power of staying clean... of forming healthy relationships... of believing in myself... of naming and living out of the strength of my own gifts. Here's my goal. To go out and tell the Good News to others in need... just as Mary did.*

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7th Station: Jesus falls the second time - Location where Mrs. Latasha Shaw was murdered, Sept. 29, 2007 on the corner Dewey Ave. and Driving Park Ave.

Speaker: Reverend Alan Newton, Executive Minister, American Baptist Churches, Rochester-Genesee-Region

Here is where Latasha Shaw came to confront a few women and teenage girls — some of whom had assaulted her teenage daughter earlier in the day. A large mob set upon her, kicking her, stabbing her, hitting her with other objects, and leaving her dead in the street. Within seconds the crowd dispersed, leaving our community to wonder how so many people participate in or witness such brutality — in broad daylight in a busy intersection — and fail to stop it. Last November, 14 months after the killing, two people were charged in connection with Mrs. Shaw's death. More arrests could come later. But her murder reminds us that all those who watched, even cheered, the death of Jesus, were not so different from us.

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8th Station: Jesus meets the weeping women of Jerusalem – Melita House & Mary’s Place and Holy Rosary Outreach Programs at the corner of Dewey and Driving Park
Speaker: Ms. Susan Aiello, Director of Melita House

We weep for women and children without hope, for those who live without support, for those with no experience of Christ’s love for them. Within our sight is Price Rite Supermarket and Holy Rosary campus. To be without a grocery store within walking distance was no small suffering for families in this neighborhood; one more burden to bear among many others. Price Rite, with its cheerful atmosphere, fair prices, and wonderful produce comforts this neighborhood.

Holy Rosary parishioners now worship at Sacred Heart Cathedral, but her buildings continue to support those who bear the Good News of possibility, hope and new life to women and children, everyday. Melita House lifts up single mothers and their children, providing both emergency shelter, and long term residence in a loving, supportive community; ‘The All Star Scholars’ tutoring program brightens the future of struggling third graders; ‘Mary’s Place’ offers clothing to our refugee neighbors; and the diocesan school supports parents who, each day, strive to nurture their children, often in the midst of their own suffering.

To be without hope is cause for weeping. We are invited to be sources of hope, bearers of Good News. How will we respond to Jesus’ invitation to join Him in turning tears of Despair into tears of Joy?

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9th Station: Jesus falls a third time - Maplewood Library at 1111 Dewey Ave.
Speaker: Mr. John Carr, Sixth Grade student at St. John Neumann Elementary School

The Maplewood Library serves people from birth to advanced age. They provide services those looking for a job, those who want to learn to speak English, and those who want to finish their education with a GED. Children’s programs provide a fun way for little ones to be introduced to literacy. Programs like “Safe to be Smart” provide recreation and formation for young people in this neighborhood. As we

watch Jesus fall for the Third time, we are grateful for places like the Maplewood Library that provide such supportive services for everyone in our community.

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10th Station: Jesus is stripped of his clothes - St. Luke Tabernacle- 1261 Dewey

Speaker: Dr. James Evans, pastor, St Luke Tabernacle

Have you ever been stripped of your human dignity? Stripped because you are one of so many who are considered “less than”? Stripped because you are stuck in poverty... or in an institution that refuses to uphold your human dignity. Stripped because you are considered different, homosexual, a refugee, a migrant, homeless. Or, do WE need to be stripped of our complacency... our sense of privilege... or any one of many ways in which we are considered “better than?” What will it take for us to be in solidarity with all our sisters and brothers? Do we have what it takes?

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11th Station: Jesus is nailed to the Cross - First Spanish Baptist Church at 1401

Dewey Ave.

Speaker: Reverend Efran Aula, pastor, First Spanish Baptist Church

Lord and Savior, You have told us that we too, must accept crucifixion if we are to accept resurrection with You. We are nailed to the cross when we are misunderstood, maligned and abused because we are different from the rest, and when we stand up for what we believe. Lord Jesus, help us to accept the sufferings that come to us each day as we unite our sufferings with yours. Teach us how to forgive one another as you forgave your persecutors, even as you endured the death on the cross. And fill us with love for all your people, so that despite our sins we might come to rejoice with you in the resurrection.

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12th Station: Jesus dies on the Cross - Location where Vincent Dotson was murdered at his Barber Shop at 1428 Dewey Ave. at Flower City Park
Speaker: Reverend Keith Campbell, pastor, Redeemer Lutheran Church

Here, on Dec. 27, 2008, Vincent Dotson, known as “Vinnie the Barber,” was shot and killed. Two brothers have been charged with his death. Vinnie’s life reminds us of that conversion, rebirth and resurrection are always open to us. In 1996, Vinnie was sentenced to 37 months in a federal prison for robbing a bank. While in prison, he overcame his drug habit, developed his hair-cutting skills, and wrote a letter of apology to the teller he robbed. When he was released from prison he helped organize a “cut the violence” campaign, in which city barbers would give children free haircuts, toys and a chance to talk to an adult about whatever struggles they faced in their lives. He often said that it was up to the adults to show children a better way.

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13<sup>th</sup> Station: The body of Jesus is taken down from the Cross - St. Ann’s Adult Day Care Center “Home and Heart” at 287 Flower City Park  
*Speaker: Mrs. Elizabeth Mullin-DiProsa, President and CEO, St. Ann’s Community*

*A crew removes the lifeless body of Jesus from the cross. Michelangelo’s pieta captures the pain of this moment as Mary holds the abused body of her son. Mary has stood by her son in these last difficult hours. That same piety and devotion are visible here at “Home and Heart—St. Ann’s Adult Day Care Center.” Here the elderly find care and companionship in the autumn of their lives. Here love and friendship are experienced when our minds and bodies are diminishing.*

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14th Station: Jesus is laid in the tomb - Sacred Heart Cathedral at 296 Flower City Park
Speaker: Reverend Ruthellen Hoyle, pastor, Wesley United Methodist Church

The body is laid in the tomb, the rock closes the opening. The hope of the apostles is entombed in that cave, with the body of Jesus. As his apostles and followers today, our hope is often entombed in the cave of death, violence, and abuse. The troubles of our lives and our times seem overwhelming. But God is not finished with us. The story is not over. God is at work in our lives and in our neighborhoods. Love is more

powerful than death. Life is God's gift to us. We bring that message of hope to our families, to our city, to our suburbs.

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Reflection and Closing Prayer: – Sacred Heart Cathedral

Speaker: The Most Reverend Matthew H. Clark, Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester

We have walked the streets of this neighborhood, stopping at places of violence and at places of hope and service. Too many innocent people suffer violence and abuse in our community and in our world—as did Jesus. We are in solidarity with those who are suffering.

Many others reach out to help carry the cross of their neighbor and to serve the needs of our children, our youth, our families, and our elderly. We are in solidarity with those who serve the needs of others.

Closing Prayer

Let Us Pray...

Gracious and Loving God, we are grateful for this day, for the life and death of Jesus who showed us how to live and how to care for each other. As we have re-enacted his Way of the Cross in these streets of Rochester, may we learn how to care for each other with justice and compassion. With your help and our efforts, may our streets and homes become places of safety; places where life is cared for and nourished from the very young to the very old. May your blessing and your peace be upon us as we go forth from this place.

Let the people of God say, *Amen.*