

Feedback on Good Friday Reflective Service

The Good Friday Meditation was compiled by Jonathan Berkahn for the “choir plus others” small group. It contains a simple liturgy, scriptural references, and pieces of artwork. During the service, Jonathan inserted some hymns, but these are not included in the materials.

The service materials can be found at the following link:

<http://www.stjames.net.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Good-Friday-Meditation.pdf>

Those that participated were deeply moved by the experience and some have shared their feedback. Collated below are some of their comments.

Fiona Hall

As a chorister, Good Friday sometimes felt more like a chore for me, albeit a pleasant one. Loads of mental energy expended in singing the music correctly and as beautifully as possible and listening to the readings and reflections, but in my mind I was already thinking about the next work to sing.

Having this year's Good Friday service on Zoom allowed the choir to gather together while remaining in our own bubbles. This included singing along (with everyone on mute) with Jonathon's accompaniment - which I might add is a little strange when you are accustomed to singing in a group - but also taking turns with the readings and then meditating on one or two artworks after each one. We were encouraged to consider them in silence and then share our thoughts on them. I had no choice but to engage! I am glad that the Zoom screens are quite small and you can shed a tear or two without it being too obvious. I was moved to tears a few times while reflecting on the pictures with the readings so fresh in my mind.

Thankyou to Jonathan for creating such a deeply moving and powerful experience.

Elaine Mosley

We were fortunate indeed to have Jonathan, with his deep artistic understanding, leading us for our Good Friday House Group service. As we read the Gospel story together, traversing through the Stations of the Cross, our meditations were guided by a rich, visual backdrop of Christian art. We could both see and feel the experiences of the individuals within the story. And of course, the music we shared combined to provide an even deeper and more moving Good Friday experience.

All of the paintings are stark in their intensity of emotion. These artists have thoroughly understood and faithfully captured their subjects, in a way that forced me to consider afresh the scenes they portray.

For me, the service provided a deeply personal insight into the characters, actions and confused emotions of the people involved in this well-known, immeasurably tragic, Christian story.

Dulce Johnston

I commend the online prayer services our choir members have been holding under Jonathan's leadership. He certainly employs his time and talent in creating space for us to be present to God and to one another, to pray for one another and for the wider community.

Pauline Thorby

“Conscience” – Nicholas Ge’s dark shadowy painting of Judas as Christ is led away.

As Good Friday passes under lockdown this image of “loss” will stay with me. Judas stares into the darkness which has already swallowed up Christ and realises what he has lost. For me, the sense of loss on Good Friday this year has been striking. No doubt our Easter Sunday will come but for now what we have lost is highlighting what we value. And that is good. Kia kaha.

Helen Willberg

I approached the Good Friday service feeling a little glum. I think our responses have been following a wave of initial almost excitement and have gradually sunk. So, I began the service with few expectations. The rituals of our faith are soothing, and the first song moved us into another place, so when after the beginning reflection the unexpected pictures arrived, they burst upon my isolation with force. I found the whole experience brought me out of myself, and deeply into the reality of other people’s responses to this powerful story. The combination of wonderful artists and moving music brought me to tears with every hymn. The reflections of our own beloved choir members as we shared in the service enhanced the experience in a most meaningful way. I would not have thought to feel such emotions in this locked-down situation. I feel strengthened and supported. Thank you to our church, our Bishops, Guy and Andy, and particularly to Jonathan for making it happen.

Margaret Thompson (Helen passed the document onto a friend)

Thank you Helen, that was really beautifully put together. It must have been a lovely service I have sent it to my other two Grandmas - Janet and Patsy (Kaikoura). We three are all long term church connected and I think they will really like it on their virtual Easters.

Pauline Gibbons

Hi Raewyn

As well as the 'thinking' process during this service that Jonathan led, there was also a non-thinking, experiencing-understanding happening.

A few thoughts:

- in some way the viewing of the art helped clarify my emotional response – in a more complex way than language could
- I was picking up on the emotions of the artist – the feelings & thoughts that s/he was living through whilst painting – and in some ways I was experiencing those feelings and understandings too
- my brain had a freer rein, than just listening to words – I experienced the sections of the story in a different way (and not in a way that I can necessarily put back into words). Experiencing art uses different parts of the brain to understand the world by
- there was an interested interplay of my thoughts and feelings of the Biblical account, and my emotions evoked by artwork, including the recognition of the emotions of the artist

Does that make sense?

I could have noted how some of the paintings increased my understanding of the world at the time / the events, but the emotional understanding (on this instance) is what I want to comment on. I think it was different because I was sitting at home and could just concentrate on the screen. Had it happened at church; it may not have affected me in the same way (others around me ...distractions ...)