

Good Friday All-Age Service

Length: c.50 minutes

Key people:

- two service leaders (ideally male and female) – one could do it, but it's preferable to have two so that one can 'lead' a bit of the service, whilst the other coordinates whichever action is going on simultaneously
- one reader (the readings can be split amongst more readers, if you have them, but the service may run more smoothly if you're just liaising with one person) – if you have two good readers then have one as narrator/Judas and another to speak the words of Jesus

Props:

- 15-20 cardboard boxes – enough to construct a simple 'bed' (see below)
- large sheet of black fabric
- painted backdrop of simple landscape (hills/sky – ask an arty friend to paint it!)
- silver 'coins' – circles cut out of silver card (white/writeable on one side) – you'll need as many as there are people expected at the service
- large cross – ideally one which is freestanding
- red fabric – doesn't need to be large, perhaps 1m length
- 'This is Jesus' sign, with string to hang on cross
- 'King of the Jews' sign, with string to hang on cross
- pretend 'crown of thorns' (I bought a polystyrene ring from a craft shop, painted it brown, then attached to it a whole load of grape stalks – they look effective as fake thorns)
- large dice, with string to hang on cross

Notes:

I've written a script for the service leaders as a guide only – please feel free to re-word as long as the general content remains the same. The Bible readings read by the reader are adapted from the New International Version, and shouldn't be altered from the script.

I haven't put song suggestions, as there are numerous songs suitable for Good Friday, and your worship leader for the service should have a good idea what to include. But I suggest you liaise

with them beforehand, so that they can match songs to readings if they wish.

Before the service starts, make a simple 'bed' by stacking cardboard boxes alongside and on top of each other. Cover with the black fabric. Fold the backdrop and lay it over the top, as a simple bed covering. Add a pillow so it's more obviously a bed! This should be at the front of church, where everyone can see it clearly.

Also before the service, give the silver coins to whoever's on the door, and ask them to hand them out to children and adults as they come in.

Script/action	Time
<p>Service leaders <i>introduce themselves and welcome.</i> (Optional: you could have an opening song here.)</p> <p>Service leader 1: During the service we will be constructing an Easter garden right here in the church. There will be things that all of you can contribute to the garden at different points in the service, and we'll guide you as to how you can get involved. But, to start with, let's cast our minds back to that very first Good Friday, and remember what's been happening. Jesus has been becoming more and more popular with the people – and also more and more unpopular with the government. He knows the time is drawing near when he'll be arrested. So he goes off to the garden with his friends, and he says to them...</p> <p>Reader: "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." He goes a little further, falls with his face to the ground and prays, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."</p> <p>Then he returns to his disciples and finds them...<i>sleeping?!!</i> "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asks Peter. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."</p> <p>Service leader 1: So Jesus' disciples fall asleep. But we too are often lazy or complacent about our faith. The bed which you can see is symbolic of our laziness. At the start of this service, we want to say to God that we are ready and willing to hear from Him and do what He says. So, during the next song, we're going to dismantle this bed, as a sign of getting rid of our spiritual lethargy. I need a few people to help me – could I have some volunteers? <i>Pick 3 or 4 volunteers. Ensure some older children/teenagers/adults in the mix, otherwise they might not cope with the next bit!</i></p>	<p>10 minutes (add an extra 5 for song)</p>

<p><i>Song – during which the volunteers (coordinated by a service leader) dismantle the bed and use the cardboard boxes to junk-model a tomb (again, in a place where everyone can see it). Lay black fabric over the top of the ‘tomb’. Unfold and hang up the backdrop.</i></p>	<p>5 minutes</p>
<p>Service leader 1: So we’ve got rid of our bed, our laziness and complacency. When we were dismantling it we discovered a backdrop for our Easter garden, and we also now have a tomb. Jesus’ death is getting closer and closer – but the soldiers just need some way of getting hold of him. One of Jesus' friends, the one called Judas Iscariot, goes to the chief priests and says:</p> <p>Reader: “What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?” So they count out for him thirty pieces of silver. Judas arranges a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.” Later on Judas goes up to Jesus and says, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and he kisses him. Jesus replies, “Friend, do what you came for.”</p> <p>The soldiers step forward, seize Jesus and arrest him.</p>	<p>5 minutes</p>
<p>Service leader 2: So Judas betrays Jesus – he is more concerned for his own popularity and safety, and puts these ahead of his relationship with Jesus. There are many things that we put in front of Jesus – perhaps our jobs, our friends, Facebook... As you came in today, you were handed a silver coin – the sign of Judas’ betrayal. During the next song, I invite you to write on the back of your coin something you’ve put in front of Jesus recently. When you’re ready, come and bring your coin to the Easter garden.</p>	
<p><i>Song – during which people write on their coins and bring them to the front. While they’re writing, move the cross into the Easter garden. Coins can be laid at the foot of the cross. Ensure song is long enough for everyone to bring their coin forward – this takes longer than you think! Perhaps a hymn with multiple verses, a song with lots of repeat options, or even a couple of songs.</i></p>	<p>5 minutes</p>
<p>Service leader 2 leads a short, simple confession. Use whatever your congregation is used to – but ensure it’s free of complicated words so as to be accessible to all ages.</p>	<p>10 minutes</p>
<p>Reader: Then the governor’s soldiers take Jesus and gather the whole company of soldiers around him. They take off his clothes and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twist together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand as a sceptre. Then they kneel in</p>	

<p>front of him and mock him. “Hail, king of the Jews!” they say. They spit on him, and take the staff and use it to strike him on the head again and again. After they mock him, they take off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they lead him away to crucify him.</p> <p>Afterwards, they divide up his clothes by throwing dice. And, sitting down, they keep watch over him there. Above his head they place the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. <i>(sarcastic tone)</i></p> <p>Service leader 1: Jesus was rejected and humiliated – the worst sort of death. Under the pews are five items which represent how Jesus died. Please have a look under your pew and if you can see one of these items, bring it to the Easter garden during this next song.</p> <p>Song – <i>during which items are brought to the front. Service leaders to hang them on the cross.</i></p> <p>Reader: From noon until three in the afternoon darkness comes over all the land. At three o'clock Jesus cries out in a loud voice, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Immediately one of the onlookers runs to get a sponge. He fills it with wine vinegar, puts it on a staff, and offers it to Jesus to drink. The rest say, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”</p> <p>And Jesus cries out again in a loud voice, then gives up his spirit. <i>(Music to start softly.)</i></p> <p>At that moment the curtain of the temple is torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shakes, the rocks split. <i>(short pause)</i></p> <p>Surely he was the Son of God?</p> <p>Please stand as we sing our final song.</p> <p>Song – <i>at some point, you need to announce that the service will end after this song. We did this by having an instrumental before the final verse, over which one of the service leaders announced that the service would end as soon as the song ended, and said a short prayer to close. This means that, when the song finishes, there are a couple of moments of silence where people are able to sit and reflect, rather than have a service leader butt into their thoughts! Warn the PA people to start playing a quiet-ish CD shortly after the last song has finished, otherwise the silence may become awkward!</i></p>	<p>5 minutes</p> <p>5 minutes</p> <p>5 minutes</p>
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