WAY OF THE CROSS FOR JUSTICE

End the Death Penalty

Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center

Begin each stop with observation of the city context.
End each stop with reflection.

Donate to the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center (IJPC) in their work to end the death penalty:

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I at Saint Francis Seraph - The Way of Cross for Justice

Theme: The traditional First and Second Stations: Jesus is condemned to death and takes up his cross.

Context: His sentence was unjust. How many others today are "sentenced" to all kinds of deaths and sufferings? Sometimes this is at the hands of police. Sometimes it is the result of false testimony or inadequate defense. So many circumstances relegate people into suffering.

Scripture: Luke 23: 22-24. Pilate addressed them a third time, “What evil has this man done? I found him guilty of no capital crime. Therefore I shall have him flogged and then release him.” With loud shouts, however, they persisted in calling for his crucifixion, and their voices prevailed. The verdict of Pilate was that their demand be granted.

Quote: “Today we state clearly that the death penalty is inadmissible and the Church is firmly committed to calling for its abolition worldwide.” -- Pope Francis in Fratelli Tutti.

Song/Prayer:

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble,
Were you there when the crucified my Lord?
II at Connector Stop 14 (Washington Park Entertainment District) – Way of the Cross for Justice

Theme: Putting people before profit, recognizing the dignity of the human person

Context: When Jesus entered the temple and drove out the sacrificial animals and overturned the tables of the moneychangers, he was challenging the unholy alliance of worship and commerce, provoking the religious leaders to plot his demise. In our city, our elected officials have desecrated the neighborhoods of low income citizens—in OTR, in Walnut Hills, in Madisonville...by caring more about commerce than about the right of all people to the dignity that comes from secure housing.

Scripture: Mark 12: 12a, 13. Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there.... “It is written,” he said to them, “My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.”

Quote: “Just because people have pennies in their pockets or are poor doesn't mean that they don’t care about their community or they shouldn’t have a right to a roof over their head.” -- Bonnie Neumeier

Prayer: God of love, Jesus proclaimed your message of care for the dignity of every person. Just as Jesus reached out to the neglected and marginalized of his day, so may we embrace those who are relegated to the forgotten corners of our city. May no person be denied access to safe, decent, affordable housing in our city. May those who sit in the seats of power and hold the purse strings of our economy recognize that people are more important than profit and that everyone deserves a seat at the table as well as a roof over their head.
Theme: Care for Creation and Food Justice

Context: As Jesus carried his cross, he fell three times, crushed under the weight of a burden too great to bear. Today, many of us likewise feel crushed by the realities of climate change and global hunger, unsure how to protect our families, how to keep our neighbors safe and healthy, how to heal a broken earth. Let us remember that like Jesus, we are never alone. May we find support among those who journey with us, may we collectively act to carry one another’s crosses, may we build deep relationships with our neighbors and all created beings.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:25-26. “So that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”

Quote: “The care of the earth is our most ancient and most worthy and, after all, our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it, and to foster its renewal, is our only legitimate hope.” - The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry

A Prayer for Our Earth – Pope Francis, from Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light. We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace. Amen.
Theme: Hospitality, Homelessness & Affordable Housing

Context: The Cincinnati community has long been experiencing a housing crisis as we lack more than 40,000 affordable units and now, homelessness continues to be on the rise. Just as Jesus instructed his disciple, John, with some of his last breaths from the cross to welcome, care for and house his mother after his death, so too, are we instructed to welcome, care for and house all who are in need.

Scripture: John 19:26-27. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

Quote: “How can we worship a homeless man on Sunday and ignore one on Monday?” -- Shane Claiborne

Prayer: God of all Mercy, who bleeds, suffers and dies, be especially near to all those who bleed, suffer and die this day. Bring your healing comfort to all who feel alone and who are without permanent affordable housing in our community. Guide us, by Your Spirit, to welcome them, care well for them and house them because we are all members of your family. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.
Theme: The Role of the City -- both the people of the city and their government

Context: God's people multiplied over the earth and gathered sharing resources to the benefit of their community. The structure of the city has been entrusted with a great responsibility as more have gathered and the common needs become more complex. How is this city holding all residents within this contract of care? What clauses allow money, gender exclusion, and divisive politics to undermine God's love, Christ’s forgiveness, and the Spirit’s desire that all should be cared for? Let us gather at the table together to review and ensure the language remains for all.

Scripture: Psalm 107 4:9. "Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited town; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress; he led them by a straight way, until they reached an inhabited town. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. For he satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry he fills with good things."

Quote: “And so anytime when we see millions of people without health care and silence too often by the church, when we see 62 million people without living wages and silence from too many of the churches, we see 140 million people living in poverty, and there not be an outcry from the church, then we actually enable greed by our apathy and absence from the public square.” -- Rev. William J. Barber II

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we bless You because You are the Lord over our cities. We pray for every city leader, that even though they may not know what to do in tough times, their eyes will be fixed on You. Lord, grant them wisdom and help them to remember that it is You who gives wisdom because from Your mouth comes knowledge and understanding. We thank You Lord, for granting wisdom for our city leaders, Amen. -- Proverbs 2:6; 2 Chronicles 20:12
VI at Connector Stop 1 (Freedom Way/Freedom Center) – Way of the Cross for Justice

Theme: Racial Justice and Professional Sports

Context: In August of 2016, Colin Kaepernick, the former quarterback of the San Francisco 49ers, made what would become a fateful choice for his career when he refused to stand during the playing of the national anthem before a pre-season game in protest against social injustice, especially over the death of Black people at the hands of police. In so doing, he joined the ranks of a cloud of witnesses in our nation who have used their platform and spotlight to shine a light on injustice broadly and on systemic racism in particular. His very public and non-violent demonstration led him to face public jeers during games, personal insults by people in positions of power, harassment of his family, and the eventual side-lining from the sport he loves.

Scripture: John 19.1-13 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him scourged. And the soldiers wove a crown out of thorns and placed it on his head, and clothed him in a purple cloak, and they came to him and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck him repeatedly.

Quote: “I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color...If they take football away, my endorsements from me, I know that I stood up for what is right.” -- Colin Kaepernick

Prayer:
from *I'm Gon’ Stand!!!* by Sweet Honey in the Rock

“We will not bow down to (uh-uh)...racism!
We will not bow down to...injustice!
We will not bow down to...exploitation!
Whatchou goin’ do? I’m gon’ stand!

I just can’t tolerate...racism!
I just can’t tolerate...injustice!
I just won’t tolerate...exploitation!
Whatchou goin’ do? I’m gon’ stand!”
Theme: Mental Health and Supportive Services intersect the crucifixion of Jesus. Look to the Helpers who wiped the face of Christ and carried the cross of Christ

Context: The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic recession have negatively affected many people’s mental health and created new barriers for people already suffering from mental illness and substance use disorders. During the pandemic, about 4 in 10 adults in the U.S. have reported symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder, up from 1 in 10 adults in 2019. As the pandemic wears on, ongoing and necessary public health measures have exposed many people to experiencing situations linked to poor mental health outcomes, such as isolation and job loss. The ongoing stress, fear, grief, isolation and uncertainty created by COVID-19 pandemic can wear anyone down, but many children and teenagers have had an especially tough time coping emotionally. At the same time, many families have been separated from loved ones and caregivers, including grandparents, who may serve as vital sources of support.

Scripture: John 19.26-27. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

Quote: "I will definitely say that talking about mental illness can be extremely difficult in the African-American community. A lot of black people have been raised on strength and being able to handle things. It’s difficult to handle, to wake up every day as an African American and see everything in the news. You can start small. It doesn’t have to be protesting. Something small, personal, just in your family – any step, big or small, is still a step forward." -- Miana Bryant

Song: Help Us Accept Each Other, Fred Kaan/John Ness Beck
Teach us, O Lord, your lessons, as in our daily life
We struggle to be human and search for hope and faith. Teach us to care for people, for all, not just for some, To love them as we find them, or as they may become.
VIII at Connector Stop 5 – The Way of the Cross for Justice

Theme: End the death penalty

Context: 135 individuals sit on Ohio’s death row, because our county prosecutors argue a sentence we keep as an option for crimes committed. We know that the death penalty does not make our communities safer by deterring crime. We also know that it is disproportionately applied to the poor and to Black defendants (especially those whose victims are white), and that from county to county and state to state, the death penalty’s application is wildly uneven. We know that there are innocent people who have been freed from death row, and we know that means we have certainly executed innocent people, too. In calling for the death penalty, we continue to cry "crucify him!" in our present day.

Scripture: Luke 23:23-24. But they kept on shouting at the top of their voices that Jesus should be crucified, and finally their shouting succeeded. So Pilate passed the sentence on Jesus that they were asking for.

Quote: "I don't think the threshold question of the death penalty is, 'Do people deserve to die for the crimes they've committed?' I think the threshold question is, 'Do we deserve to kill?"
-- Bryan Stevenson

Prayer:

My people, my people
What have I done to you;
Or in what have I offended you?
Answer me.

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https://www.classy.org/give/331678/ - !/donation/checkout
IX at Connector Stop 8 (School for Creative and Performing Arts/Music Hall) – Way of the Cross for Justice

Theme: LGBTQ Justice

Context: Like Jesus who, in his hour of need, was denied by his own friend and companion, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people are excluded and persecuted, even by our own Christian communities. The Gospel, though, calls us to love and advocate for all people.

Scripture: Luke 22:59-61. Still another insisted, “Assuredly, this man too was with [Jesus], for he also is a Galilean.” But Peter said, “My friend, I do not know what you are talking about.” Just as he was saying this, the cock crowed, and the Lord turned and looked at Peter; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.”

Quote: “Are we not all made in the image of God? If the same God that you’re professing made me in his image, how can you deny me? To deny me is to deny Christ. I can’t be an activist without ministry because of who I am; it’s all holy work. I cannot be silent. I have to answer the call to that work. And it’s not really work, it’s my life.” -- Deacon Ryan Amir Harris, Community Activist

Prayer: Loving God, you have created each of us in your image; help us to recognize the holiness of all members of the Body of Christ, particularly LGBTQ people. Help us to affirm rather than deny each other, and move us to advocate for the rights of all people.
X at Connector Stop 9 (Near Bobbie Sterne Health Center) – Way of the Cross for Justice

**Theme:** Health Care Justice

**Context:** Health Disparities are a major reason why US life expectancy trails many peers' nations. Income levels can create a life expectancy gap as wide as 15 years in men and 10 years in women. Health disparities are exacerbated among poor Americans by: substandard biased care, lack of access, poor housing and degraded environments, higher rates of violence, accidents, drug overdoses, suicide, smoking and stress.

**Scripture:** Matthew 10: 8. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

**Quote:** "Health care must be recognized as a right, not a privilege. Every man, woman and child in our country should be able to access the health care they need." -- Bernie Sanders

**Prayer:** O most Divine healer! You healed those who approached You through Your gentle touch or kind word. None who came to You were denied. Let Your justice roll down on this country. Through your suffering, convert our hearts to understand the pain these health disparities cause.
Offering Link:

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The following persons and organizations contributed encouragement, prayers, research, writing, editing, art, publicizing, creativity, administrating, imagination, organizing, and crafting the 2021 Way of the Cross for Justice. Remember them with gratitude for their contributions.

Persons
- Pat Berning, Bellarmine Chapel
- Mary Anne Bressler
- Fr. Al Hirt, OFM, St. Francis Seraph Church
- Jeff Hutchinson-Smyth, Bellarmine Chapel/IJPC
- S. Leslie Keener, CDP, Congregation of Divine Providence, God Space Community
- Brianna Kelly, Artist
- Pastor David Meredith, Clifton United Methodist Church
- Daniel Pfahl, Bellarmine Chapel
- Allison Reynolds-Berry, Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center (IJPC)
- Tim Severyn, Bellarmine Chapel
- Brooklin Taylor, Christ Church Cathedral

Partner Organizations
- Bellarmine Chapel
- Christ Church Cathedral
- Clifton United Methodist Church
- Congregation of Divine Providence
- God Space Community
- Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center (IJPC)
- St. Francis Seraph Church