

Compendium of Local Church Exercises to Help us Grow in the Lord **A Week in Jerusalem**

What: On Easter Sunday morning, people are invited to arrive at the church an hour before the normal service time. Each family stays in their vehicle. At the appointed time, we ring the church bells and the procession of vehicles heads out of town. Along the 20–30-minute route the string of cars will slowly pass by 'stations of the cross' that are set up just off the road. Some of the stations are manned by live, costumed, actors; some of the stations are static displays without live actors. We have chosen to portray scenes that line up with what we encounter in the Bible [rather than stations that come forth out of church traditions]. The stations we have portrayed to date include: the disciples asleep in the Garden, the condemnation of Jesus by Pilate, Jesus carrying his cross, the women of Jerusalem, casting lots for Jesus' clothes, Joseph of Arimathea taking away the body of Jesus, the sealed tomb, and the empty tomb. Passengers in the procession of vehicles read aloud, to the other vehicle occupants, the relevant scripture passages with respect to the upcoming station. When the procession returns to the church, we then experience a joyful Easter Sunday service – finishing with communion [when our church was shut down during Covid, people remained in their vehicles and we tonged sealed communion elements through their car windows].

Pictures:



Why: The rationale behind staging such a processional drive is to help people interact with the Bible narrative of Holy Week. By doing so on Easter Sunday morning before the worship service, it helps to bring the whole story together. It can be very impactful to witness a station and it can help to bring to life what we read on the pages of the Bible. Driving past keening women reminds us of the deep sorrow and chaos experienced by many as Jesus was moving towards Golgotha. Witnessing costumed actor being whipped as they carry a cross can be sobering; a good reminder of what our Lord went through. All ages of people are invited to participate as actors – and it can be particularly impactful for young children to play a role for they will discover how their station fits into the overall story of Holy Week. Having different families interpret the stations helps to spread the impact, year in and year out. Inviting community residents to supply props or locations, can also be impactful to them, as they are part of something big and sacred.

How: Staging most of the stations is fairly simple. Families that volunteer can each be assigned a station to interpret. The props for most of the stations are generally quite easy to create, simple to set in place and not burdensome to clean up afterward. Props from previous years can be adapted for next year's stations. Elaborate props can be created by those with a passion for this sort of thing. From a number's standpoint, we've landed on about 6 or 7 stations as being a good quantity for our routes and time frame [we prefer staging stations on quieter county roads]. This could also be undertaken in an urban area...with stations set up on a route through residential neighbourhoods with the scenes and actors on front lawns.

Resources available: We can supply an example of a 'Reflections Handout' that is given ahead of time to each vehicle; a passenger reads aloud the passages and reflections from this sheet as they approach the next station.

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