



Simple Tenebrae Template

A service of light and shadow

Introduction

A Service of Shadows

The service of Tenebrae, meaning “darkness” or “shadows,” has been practiced by the church since medieval times. Once a service for the monastic community, Tenebrae later became an important part of the worship of the common folk during Holy Week. We join Christians of many generations throughout the world in using the liturgy of Tenebrae.

Tenebrae is a prolonged meditation on Christ’s suffering. Readings trace the story of Christ’s passion, music portrays his pathos, and the power of silence and darkness suggests the drama of this momentous day. As lights are extinguished, we ponder the depth of Christ’s suffering and death; we remember the cataclysmic nature of his sacrifice as we hear the overwhelming sound of the “strepitus”; and through the return of the small but persistent flame of the Christ candle at the conclusion of the service, we anticipate the joy of ultimate victory.¹

Liturgical Template

- Prayers of Welcome
- Readings

Each reading may be followed by a short reflection, a poem, artwork, or a piece of music.

- Matthew 26:20-25
 - Matthew 26:31-35
 - Mark 14:32-41
 - Matthew 26:47-52
 - Luke 22:54-62
 - John 18:33-38a
 - Matthew 27:20-26
 - Mark 15:16-20
- Concluding Prayers

Strategies for inviting reflection at home

Invite people to create an appropriate environment at home with candles. Aim to start the service between 7-8pm so that families can participate where possible.

If people want to light and extinguish candles at home let them know how many candles they will need.

If you are going to record or broadcast the service ensure that everyone has access to good hardware and the correct reading. Most modern cell phones will record quality sound files. Therefore you could invite several people to read and submit recordings in advance.

¹ <https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/tenebrae-a-service-of-shadows/> (last accessed March 30, 2020)

Platforms for sharing service

- Zoom is a video conferencing tool that enables you to broadcast live – a free account gives you a 40-minute window of opportunity.
- Powerpoint/Google Slides enable you to create a slideshow for your service with scope to insert video and audio clips (either embedded or linked to external sources, therefore requiring access to internet). You can even record the whole show and convert it to an mp4.²
- Conference call
- PDF/Document with clickable links. You could write the liturgy out in full and add links to specific audio files or videos, as well as inserting images and poetry as necessary.

² <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/turn-your-presentation-into-a-video-c140551f-cb37-4818-b5d4-3e30815c3e83> (last accessed March 30, 2020)