



## Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

Office of the Bishop *The Rt. Rev. Alan M. Gates, Bishop*

To: Clergy of the Diocese of Massachusetts  
From: The Rt. Rev. Alan M. Gates  
Date: January 2024  
Re: Good Friday Liturgy

Dear Colleagues in Ministry,

I am pleased to **commend to you and authorize the accompanying resources for use on Good Friday**, including a proposed liturgy for trial use and a translation of the Passion Gospel, available in English and Spanish.

Given the difficult history of Jewish-Christian relations and the contemporary rise in anti-Semitism, the ways in which Jews are portrayed in the Holy Week liturgy is an important issue. The Rev. Dr. Dan Joslyn-Siemiatkoski is Director of the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College, a priest of our diocese, and one of our diocesan ecumenical and interreligious officers. He has developed resources to address longstanding concern over the Holy Week texts.

These resources were developed as part of a working group at St. David's Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas, with permission from the Bishop of Texas. These liturgies have been used for the past three years in the Diocese of Texas and other dioceses where bishops have granted permission for its use. [Resolution D058](#) was submitted to the 2022 General Convention to provide permission for churchwide use of these materials. This request is currently being considered by the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music.

For a fuller review of changes, one can consult the [explanation for Resolution D058](#) in the General Convention 2022 Virtual Binder and [watch the video presentation](#) on the Diocese of Texas clergy resource page.

What follows below is a review providing brief context and explanation of the materials, based upon Dr. Joslyn-Siemiatkoski's scholarly work. I hope you will engage with this work, and I commend these resources to you and your congregations.

Faithfully, in Christ,

The Rt. Rev. Alan M. Gates

There are two aspects to this proposed alternate rite for Good Friday. First is the Passion according to the Gospel of John. There is no rubrical option for another Passion reading in the Book of Common Prayer. Thus, we need to reckon with the depiction of *hoi Iudaioi* in this text. The NRSV and most English language Bibles approved by The Episcopal Church render this as “the Jews.” The Common English Bible uses “the Jewish leaders” which is accurate in some ways but not others. The accompanying translation renders this term as “the Judeans.” This is an accurate descriptor for a period when regional, religious, and political belonging were complex and not easily separated. As the annotations in the trial-use liturgy show, this also highlights the regional rivalries between Galilean and Judean elements in early first-century Jewish life.

Second is a revised Good Friday liturgy. The vision here is to create an alternate rite to the Good Friday liturgy rather than to replace the BCP liturgy. We offer alternate epistle readings that provide other scriptural perspectives on the meaning of the crucifixion. We also provide the option for a shorter Passion Gospel that helps ameliorate some of the problems of an anti-Jewish interpretation of the whole Passion Gospel.

The major revision is to the Solemn Collects. Historically, the church would pray on Good Friday that Jews, who had been blamed for the death of Jesus, would convert away from their blindness and hardness of heart. Too often, following Good Friday services Jews would be attacked after Christians had been stirred up by such prayers. While such a prayer has never been in The Episcopal Church’s Book of Common Prayer, it is a legacy to which we are accountable. In our own time, the Christian churches have begun to repair our relationship with the Jewish people, including developing prayers during this service affirming God’s relationship with the Jewish people. Notably, the Anglican Church of Canada and the Church of England have such prayers. Now seems like a good time to develop a similar Solemn Collect. This appears as the first of the collects in order to center God’s redemptive work as beginning with the Jewish people (Israel) from whom Jesus is born.

The Collect for those who suffer has been revised with “person first language,” an approach that ensures that those who experience various conditions are not defined by those exclusively. Additionally, some new categories that have emerged within the collective consciousness of the church over the past several decades have been added. A specific petition for persecuted Christians has been added as a reminder that globally many still suffer for Christ’s sake.

The final Solemn Collect retains the original petitions but its bidding and conclusion have been revised from the current rite. This collect does not frame the possibility of redemption solely within an acceptance of the Gospel, but as a question of how people respond to the work of the Triune God. The human failings named in this petition are measured in terms of loving responses to God in the world, whether within or outside the church. The final prayer especially names the importance for Christians to make amends for sins committed even as it hopes that all people may turn to God.