

SOCIAL JUSTICE



Stations of the Cross

Since the 1500s, Christians have walked and meditated on the Stations of the Cross. It's a series of moments, some based on the biblical text and some on oral tradition, that tell the story of Jesus' final hours as he was forced to carry his cross to the hill where he was crucified.

There are many different ways people make meaning of Jesus' experience of suffering and death. One such understanding is seeing Jesus' murder at the hands of the state as a direct consequence of a life lived in fierce solidarity with the poor and marginalized. Through his teachings, healings and associations with others, Jesus called out the individuals, institutions and systems that devalued the God-given dignity of every human life.

THE STATIONS & SOCIAL JUSTICE

This meditative, interactive exhibit seeks to make connections between the stations and some of the social justice concerns of our time. You are invited to spend time engaging with any or all the stations in ways that feel meaningful to you.



THE FIRST STATION: JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

After he was taken into custody by the Roman occupation forces, Jesus was whipped, crowned with thorns, and mocked mercilessly. Though wrongfully accused, Jesus absorbed the condemnation of the authorities and the approving nods and jeering shouts from the crowd. No one comes to his defense or aid.

Jesus is trapped by the same system that brings us the death penalty, the harshness of life imprisonment, torture, racial profiling, differential sentencing, and the criminalization of the poor. Consider the vast reaches of the **Prison Industrial Complex**, which is understood as the surveillance, policing, and imprisonment that government, industry and others use for monetary gain and/or as solutions to economic, social, and political problems.

A report released in May 2020 counted over 4,100 corporations that profit from the mass incarceration of the United States' most marginalized communities, offering minimal wages and few protections. For example, New York State pays 65 cents an hour for prisoners to make license plates, while the state minimum wage ranges between \$11.80 - \$15 per hour. Given that the vast majority of prisoners creating such profit are black and brown men, many ask whether this is "legitimate" business or a new form of slavery.

Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and the recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed."

Luke 4:18
New International Version



THE FIRST STATION: JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH



THE SECOND STATION: JESUS IS MADE TO CARRY HIS CROSS

Jesus experienced the humiliation and violence that comes when humans use cruelty as a means of dominating others and implementing control over them. Through great strength and love, Jesus did not meet violence with violence or use his power and privilege to escape prosecution – but carried his cross in solidarity with all those who are oppressed.

Jesus carried his burden as do all those who work the land, labor for low wages, struggle to find work, care for their children and family, worry over their debts, strive for their children, attend poor schools, are abused by their bosses, or in any way struggle to make it in this world.

It is widely recognized that farmworkers across the U.S. face poverty-level wages, grueling work hours, and inhumane labor and housing conditions. For over a year, dairy workers in Vermont organized through Migrant Justice and the Milk With Dignity campaign have called upon Hannaford Supermarkets to address dangerous conditions at farms producing their store brand milk. Despite making record profits during the pandemic, Hannaford has yet to take action on cleaning up their supply chain and ensuring fair treatment for workers.

Jesus said, 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

Matthew 11:28-30
New Revised Standard Version



THE SECOND STATION: JESUS IS MADE TO CARRY HIS CROSS



THE THIRD STATION: JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME

The burden of the cross and the staggering emotional weight of condemnation and sentencing brought Jesus to his knees. The spectacle amused soldiers and onlookers who teased and taunted him as he resumed his painful journey.

Jesus endured the abusive taunts from the crowd alone. Many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ+) youth experience such isolation when facing hostility and violence from their peers. In their 2020 national survey on mental health, the Trevor Project found that 1 in every 3 LGBTQ youth had been physically threatened or harmed in their lifetime due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

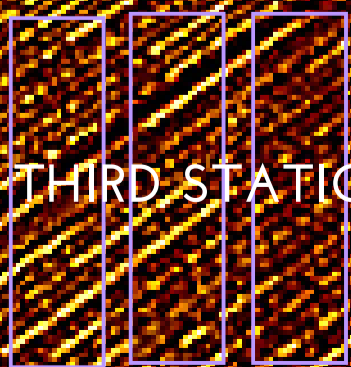
Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people, and continues to disproportionately impact LGBTQ+ youth. The same survey found that 40% of respondents seriously considered attempting suicide in the past twelve months, with more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth having seriously considered suicide.

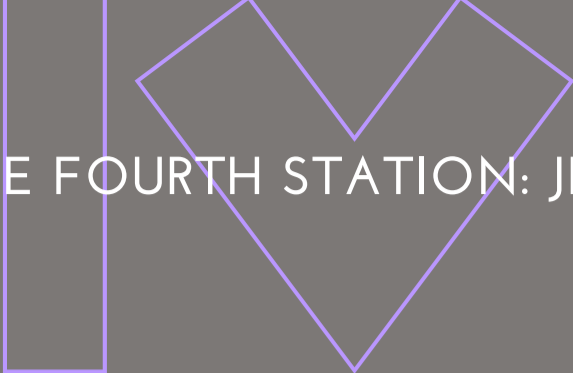
Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

Matthew 25:40
New Revised Standard Version



THE THIRD STATION: JESUS FALLS THE FIRST TIME





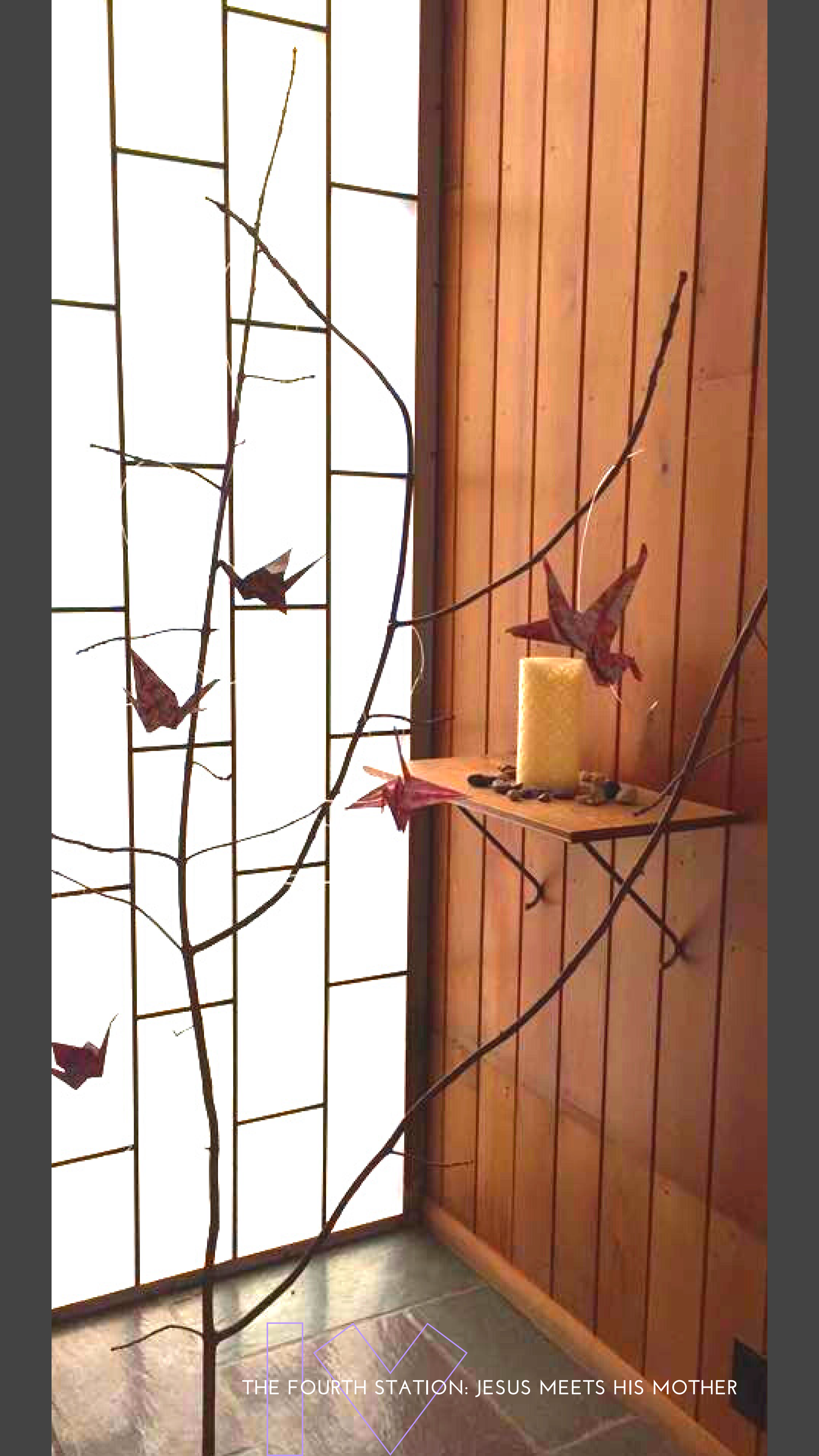
THE FOURTH STATION: JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

Jesus must have wished that his family members wouldn't have to witness his final, harrowing hours. However, Jesus encountered his mother along the path. Mary shared in her son's painful journey as she traveled with him toward Golgotha, the site of his crucifixion. She, along with Jesus' family and friends, carried this painful burden even further as they would remember this experience long after he was gone.

Suffering is not just individual but communal. It is carried in our bones through both flesh and spirit. It has the power to shape experiences, perspectives, and choices in life. First recognized in studies of children of Holocaust survivors, **generational trauma** affects the genetic processes in populations who experience great suffering and extends from one generation to the next. The symptoms of generational trauma may include hypervigilance, a sense of a shortened future, mistrust, aloofness, high anxiety, depression, panic attacks, nightmares, insomnia, a sensitive fight or flight response, and issues with self-esteem and self-confidence.

You are invited to fold a paper crane in remembrance of an experience of individual or communal suffering, as well as in hope for this suffering to be eased and transformed.

The practice of folding paper cranes for peace originates from the true story of Sadako Sasaki - a young girl who died from leukemia due to radiation from the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima by the United States. She was inspired by the Japanese legend that one who creates a thousand origami cranes will be granted a wish by the gods.



THE FOURTH STATION: JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER

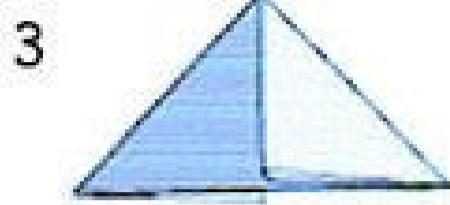
HOW TO FOLD A PAPER CRANE



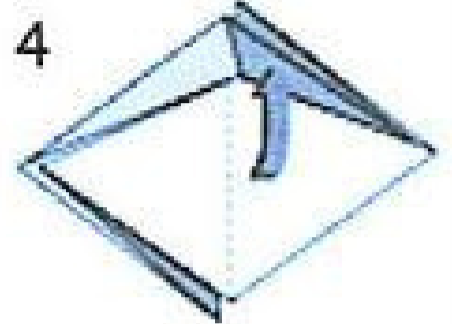
1 Fold a perfectly square piece of paper in half lengthwise along the dotted line.



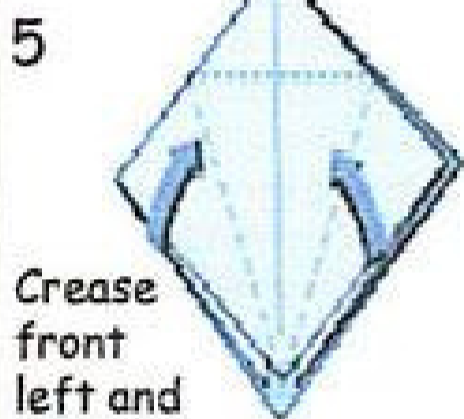
2 Make a crease down the middle to mark the center, then diagonally fold down the right side of the paper toward the front.



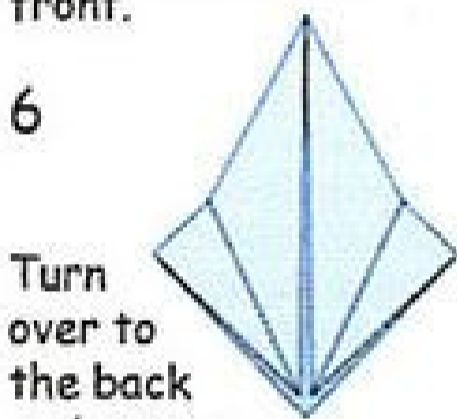
3 Diagonally fold the left side toward the back.



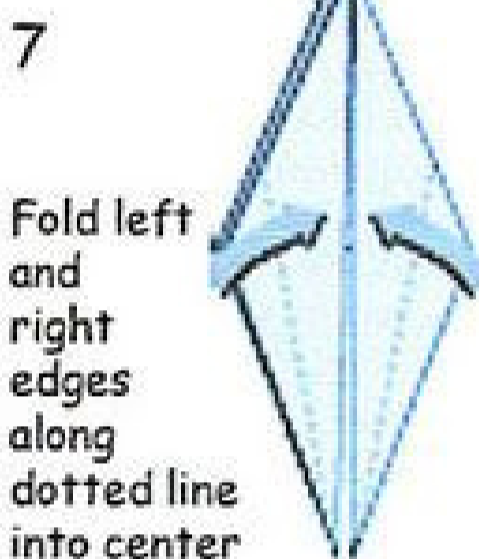
4 Open the bottom by inserting your finger and fold left and right points together spreading the front and back crease.



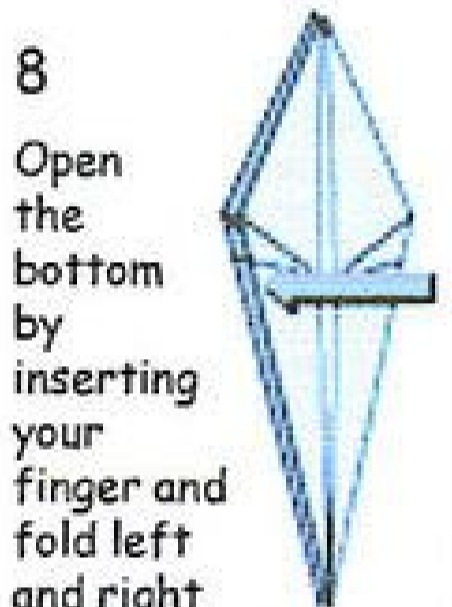
5 Crease front left and right edges to the center, then back out and pull up bottom point to produce shape shown in next panel.



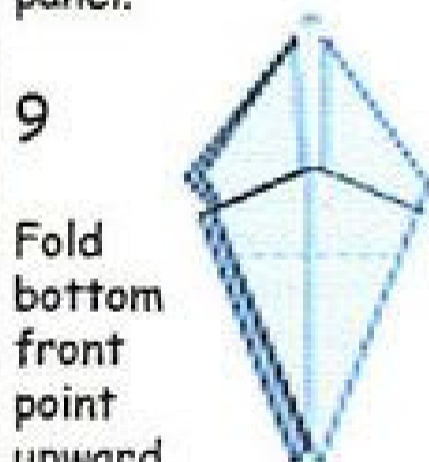
6 Turn over to the back and repeat for the back side.



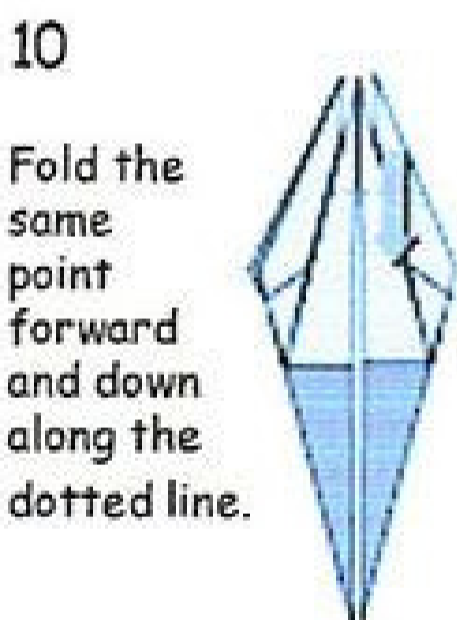
7 Fold left and right edges along dotted line into center for both front and back sides.



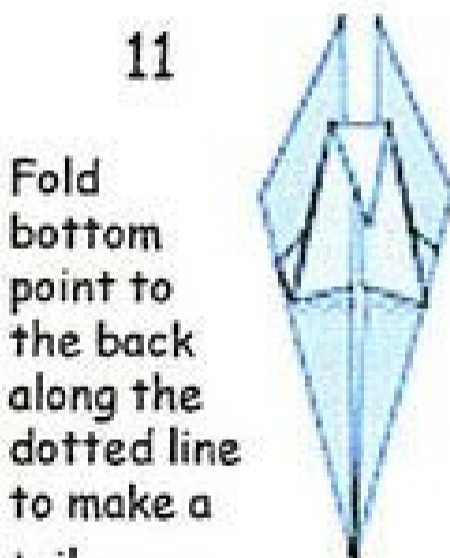
8 Open the bottom by inserting your finger and fold left and right points together spreading the front and back crease.



9 Fold bottom front point upward along the dotted line.



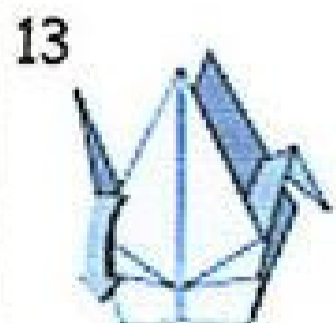
10 Fold the same point forward and down along the dotted line.



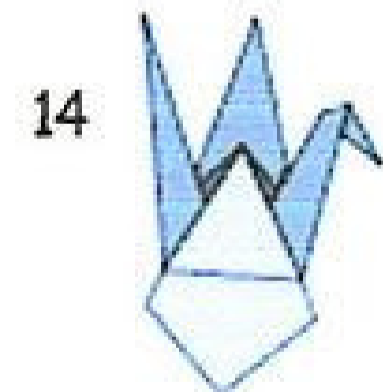
11 Fold bottom point to the back along the dotted line to make a tail.



12 Open left and right sides and crease.



13 Fold down the wings and gently pull on head and tail to expand the body.



14 To complete your paper crane, blow gently into the bottom to help expand the body.

Cranes for Peace

Sadako Sasaki was 2 when Hiroshima was bombed and later died of leukemia. She tried to fold 1000 cranes believing she would get well by doing so. People from around the world now send origami cranes to the Hiroshima Peace Park as a symbol and wish for peace.

It is Japanese legend that folding 1000 cranes (senbazuru) grants the folder a wish. Sadako's story, told in several books, has become an inspiration for people world-wide.



THE FIFTH STATION: SIMON HELPS JESUS CARRY HIS CROSS

Simon of Cyrene began as an innocent bystander to Jesus' public humiliation. He was just passing by when Jesus' stumbled under the weight of the cross. Roman soldiers then pulled Simon from the crowd and forced him to share in the condemned man's burden.

Jesus' story becomes Simon's story as well. While Simon was forced into service, an ally is someone who chooses to align with and support a cause with another individual or group of people outside of their own community. For example, one can act as an ally with the the disabled community by regularly advocating for accessibility (e.g., asking stores why they don't have a ramp or elevator, asking podcast creators why they don't provide transcripts).

Acting as an ally involves understanding that we are all devalued and diminished by unjust systems, our own liberation is tied up with that of others, and our ability to transform the world is made more powerful and joyful when we join together as one.

You are invited to reflect upon what it means to act as an ally.

Take a strip of ribbon and respond to the following prompt. Write your answer on the strip and weave it into the frame.

- Blue: How has it felt to act as an ally with an individual or community?
- Purple: How has it felt to have someone align with you?
- White: What might you need to learn/experience to be a better ally?

*Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*

*Ecclesiastes 4:12
New International Version*



THE FIFTH STATION: SIMON HELPS JESUS CARRY HIS CROSS



THE SIXTH STATION: JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME

The path toward impending death, under the burden of pain and humiliation, brought Jesus to the dreaded moment of falling again. A few in the crowd leave the scene – not wanting to witness, or be associated with, his continued suffering and inevitable death.

The burden that crushes Jesus is unfair, as are the economic, political, and social inequalities of our day. So often systems are structured to favor some at the expense of others. And while we may be willing and ready to agree that some are disadvantaged on the basis of such characteristics as race, gender identity, socio-economic status, or educational access – sometimes we may have difficulty acknowledging and admitting the ways in which we are privileged. Like those in the crowd who turned away from the scene, privilege allows some the choice of when, where, if, or how they want to engage with a particular social justice issue. Privilege can also grant greater safety to some people when they do choose to engage in acts of social justice. For example, white people who take part in protests or demonstrations are less likely to be harmed by the police than black and brown people who do the same.

What are the challenging places in your life and society from which you might be “turning away?”

Privilege is like “an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious... [it] is like an invisible weightless backpack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks.”

Peggy McIntosh

“White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Backpack”



THE SIXTH STATION: JESUS FALLS THE SECOND TIME



THE SEVENTH STATION: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS

Slipping from the crowd, Veronica removes the veil from her head and without words wipes the face of Jesus. It is an act of courage, as she offers dignity and compassion to the one whose humiliation, torture and murder serves to remind all of the state's power and their place as oppressed people. Her action is graced with tenderness and respect as she responds to his immediate need.

In the midst of our work for social justice to transform the systems that strangle individuals and communities, we must also attend to the immediate needs of now — needs such as food, clothing, shelter, safety and health care. This is especially important as COVID-19 has exposed dramatic health and wealth disparities affecting BIPOC communities, resulting in disproportionate levels of infection, mortality, and economic hardship due to the virus.

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

Luke 10:30-37

New International Version



THE SEVENTH STATION: VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS