

TENEBRAE SERVICE

The service of Tenebrae, or “shadows”, grew out of a combination of night prayer, with and additional focus on the commemoration of the Passion of our Lord. The latter was usually read by several deacons and later, in the Middle Ages, was read by monastic choirs. This service is a tradition, used in the last days of Holy Week, to impress upon the hearts of believers the awful consequences of sin and the magnitude of the Savior’s sacrifice.

The name Tenebrae is also given to various [Holy Week](#) services held by some [Protestant](#) churches. Variations of Tenebrae are sometimes celebrated in many of the less formal or [non-denominational](#) churches as well. Protestant versions of Tenebrae service, particularly on Good Friday, often contain readings from the gospels which describe the time between the [Last Supper](#) and the [Passion of Christ](#). Another frequent element in Protestant Tenebrae services is the inclusion of the last seven sayings of Jesus, assembled from the various gospel accounts. Some churches have the people who read scripture snuff out candles when they finish their passage to represent the flight of the [disciples](#) and the approach of the dark hate of [Jesus'](#) enemies and the [Passion of Christ](#). When the last passage has been read the church is completely dark and recalls the days when [Jesus](#) was in the [tomb](#).

The large candle on the altar represents the Savior himself. It is removed from the altar to symbolize the death of Jesus. The candle is removed from sight (“A little while and you will not see me”). After the Psalm 51, a time of silence is observed in total darkness. The silence is broken with the “strepitis”, a loud noise symbolizing the closing of the tomb.

The church is brightly lit and starts the service at a day light time such that the end of the service will be in darkness outside as well as inside the church. The pastor explains the service is to: Dwell on our sinful nature and that Christ died for each of us personally; carrying the weight of all of **our** sins as HE suffered through the trail, torture and crucifixion until HE said; "IT IS FINISHED" and died for you and me.

The order of service is explained as a sequence of readings of the gospel account from the last supper Matthew 26 verse 1 until Matthew 27 verse 60. An additional option is to include a video portion of the passion that corresponds to the reading. Such video segments taken from "The Passion of the Christ" by Mel Gibson. . Each reading (and video) is followed by a hymn. After the hymn is concluded, the reader will extinguish one candle of the nine candles representing the abandonment of Christ by all who have sinned. After the 9th hymn, the ninth candle, (the CHRIST candle) remains lit, but is carried out leaving the church in total darkness - symbolic of Christ death.

Then from the back the pastor will read Matthew 27: 57 through 60. This is followed by a "loud bang" which resounds through the church. This is symbolic of the great stone being rolled to shut the tomb. This is followed by a bell being rung 33 times - once for each year of the life of Christ. Then in the total darkness, a powerful solo voice sings, "Where you there when they crucified my Lord?" The church stays dark and silent for one minute for individual prayer and reflection, and then minimal light comes on to allow the worshippers to leave quietly in silence to contemplate in prayer until the Easter morning the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior.

Individuals that feel a deep need for prayer, or are wanting to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior are invited to stay after the service and come to the front in prayer where a pastor or church elder will assist them.

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After opening prayer, the instructions for the order of service are explained and the words of institution for communion are given. The service continues as follows:

1. The reading of Matthew 26: verses 1 through 25, followed by the video and the singing of; Hymn: **"Nothing but the Blood"** verses 1 - 3
This is followed by the reader extinguishing one outer candle and the lights are dimmed.
2. The reading of Matthew 26: verses 26 through 35, followed by the video and the singing of; Hymn: **"Let us Break Bread Together"** verses 1 & 2
(Communion follows this Hymn)
This is followed by the reader extinguishing the other outer candle and the lights are again dimmed slightly.
3. The reading of Matthew 26: verses 36 through 46, followed by the video and the singing of; Hymn: **"Go to Dark Gethsemane"** verses 1 - 3
This is followed by the reader extinguishing one outer candle and the lights are dimmed.
4. The reading of Matthew 26: verses 47 through 75, followed by the video and the singing of; Hymn: **"The Old Rugged Cross"** verses 1 - 3
This is followed by the reader extinguishing the other outer candle and the lights are again dimmed slightly.
5. The reading of Matthew 27: verses 1 through 14, followed by the video and the singing of; Hymn: **"At the Cross"** verses 1 - 5
This is followed by the reader extinguishing one outer candle and the lights are dimmed.
6. The reading of Matthew 27: verses 15 through 31, followed by the video and the singing of; Hymn: **"A Purple Robe"** verses 1 - 4
This is followed by the reader extinguishing the other outer candle and the lights are again dimmed slightly.
7. The reading of Matthew 27: verses 32 through 46, followed by the video and the singing of; Hymn: **"O Sacred Head, Now Wounded"** verses 1 - 4
This is followed by the reader extinguishing one outer candle and the lights are dimmed.
8. The reading of Matthew 27: verses 47 through 50, followed by the video and the singing of; Hymn: **"Tis Finished! The Messiah Dies"** verses 1 - 4
This is followed by the reader extinguishing the other outer candle and the lights are again dimmed slightly.
9. The reading of Matthew 27: verses 51 through 56, followed by the video and the singing of; Hymn: **"Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound"** verses 1 - 4
This is followed by the reader carrying out the Christ candle still lit, and the lights are again dimmed to full darkness and the projection screens go off.

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