

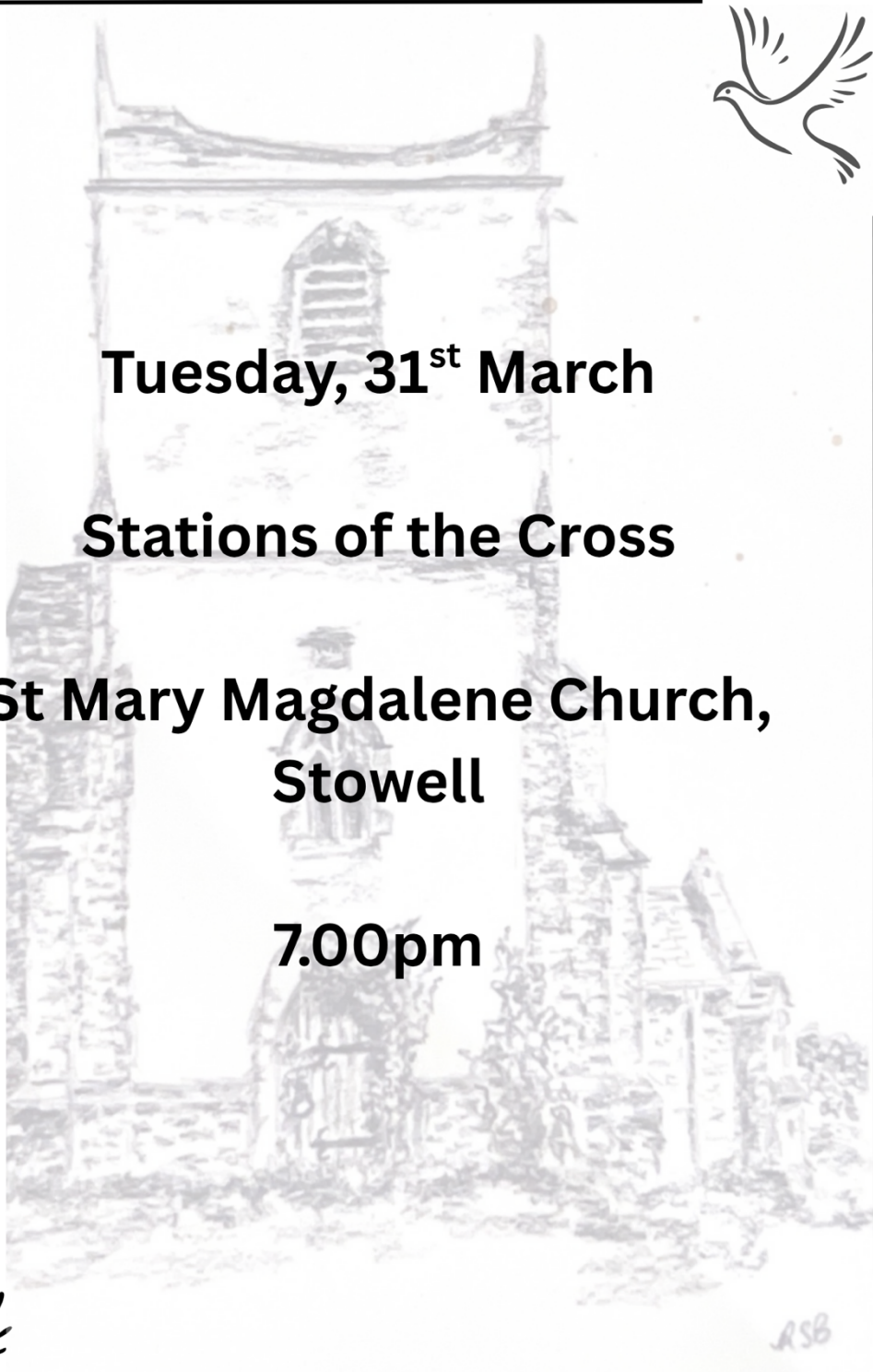


Tuesday, 31st March

Stations of the Cross

**St Mary Magdalene Church,
Stowell**

7.00pm



Tuesday, 31st March 2026



**Stations of the Cross,
St Mary Magdalene Church, Stowell**

1. Readings: **Mark 14**: 55-64 : and Malcolm Guite, 'Jesus is condemned to death'
2. Readings: **Mark 15**: 16-20 and a poem, 'Jesus takes up his cross'
3. Readings: **Isaiah 53**: 1-4 and The Way of the Cross, 'He Falls'
4. Readings: **Luke 2**:34-35 and Malcolm Guite, 'Jesus meets his mother'
5. Readings: **Mark 15**: 21 and a poem, 'Simon helps Jesus'
6. Readings: **Matthew 25**:35-36, 40 and Darkness Yielding, 'Veronica wipes the face of Jesus'
7. Readings: **Isaiah 53**:7 and Malcolm Guite, 'Jesus falls for the second time'
8. Readings: **Luke 23**:27-31 and a poem, 'Jesus consoles the women'
9. Readings: **Isaiah 53**:4-6 and Malcolm Guite, 'Jesus falls for the third time'
10. Readings: **Mark 15**:24 and The Way of the Cross, 'He is stripped'
11. Readings: **Luke 23**:35-49 & Darkness Yielding, 'Jesus is nailed to the cross'
12. Readings: **Matt 27**:45-46 and Malcolm Guite, 'Jesus dies on the cross'
13. Readings: **Mark 15**:42-46 and 'Jesus is handed to his mother'
14. Readings: **Mark 15**:46 and 'Entombed'





Station 1

Malcolm Guite: Jesus is Condemned to Death

The very air that Pilate breathes, the voice
with which he speaks in judgment. All his powers
of perception and discrimination, choice,
decision. All his years, his days and hours,
his consciousness of self, his every sense,
are given by this prisoner, freely given.

The man who stands there making no defence,
is God. His hands are tied, His heart is open
and he bears Pilate's heart in his and feels that
crushing weight of wasted life.

He lifts it up in silent love. He lifts and heals.
He gives himself again with all his gifts into our
hands.

As Pilate turns away a door swings open.
This is judgment day.



Station 2 Jesus takes his cross.



The Weight of Love

Not forced, but received—
the rough grain of wood laid across
shoulders that once cradled children,
healed wounds,
lifted the broken.
The weight is not just timber,
but every sorrow,
every silence,
every cruelty hidden behind
a smiling face.
He does not resist.
There is no cry of protest.
Only breath—
gathered quietly,
as if preparing to carry not just a cross,
but all of us.
The road ahead is not unfamiliar.
He has walked beside suffering before,
but never like this—
never as the one who must now bear it all.
Each footstep—
deliberate,
as though the earth itself must feel
the love that bleeds through pain.
Not loud. Not grand. But steady. Enduring.
This is not defeat.
This is what love looks like
when it refuses to turn away.
And still—
he walks.





Station 3

The Way of the Cross He Falls

He came to a bend in the road, and fell in the dirt.
The cross fell on top of him, so they kicked him.
He got up, shattered with weariness, and loneliness.
A week ago they had called him 'Son of David',
welcoming him as a Messiah:
Now the same people cursed him and humiliated him.

Lord Jesus, this was the first fall. Of failure.
You could not manage by yourself.
The shock and the shame of fall and failure –
I know it and try to hide it.
In some way you fall in me, when I fall.
The harder we fall, the harder to rise again.
Help me, by your power and example, to keep going,
and help the world to rise up into a better world for
us.





Station 4

Malcolm Guite – Jesus meets his mother

This darker path into the heart of pain
was also hers whose love enfolded him
in flesh and wove him in her womb.

Again the sword is piercing. She, who cradled him
and gentled and protected her young son
must stand and watch the cruelty that mars
her maiden making.

Waves of pain that stun
and sicken pass across his face and hers
as their eyes meet.

Now she enfolds the world
he loves in prayer; the mothers of the disappeared
who know her pain, all bodies bowed and curled
in desperation on this road of tears.

All the grief-stricken in their last despair,
are folded in the mantle of her prayer.



Station 5
Simon helps Jesus



He was just passing by—
a stranger to the moment,
a man with hands made for fields,
not crucifixions.

They called him out,
pressed him into the suffering
of someone else's story.

He did not choose this.

At first, his steps were heavy with protest—

Why me? Why now?

But then he saw him—

the man, the eyes, the silence not of defeat, but of
endurance stretched thin.

And something in Simon broke open—
not in anger, but in understanding.

This was not shame, but honour hidden beneath suffering.

This was holy.

So he reached—

not to rescue,
but to stand beside.

The cross was still cruel, still crushing, but less lonely.

Two shoulders now. Two hearts,
beating beneath the burden.

For a moment,
grace became shared weight.

He did not remove the pain.

But he did not leave it alone.





Station 6

Darkness Yielding: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Tradition has it that as Jesus climbed towards Golgotha he was met by a woman. who broke through the crowd to wipe his ravaged face with a linen cloth. Forever after, it is said, the face of Jesus remained imprinted on her square of linen. The woman is remembered as Veronica because her name is Ver Ikon which means true likeness.

Who was she then, this Veronica?
People get uptight about her, cynical, superior, or plain sentimental.
But they would, wouldn't they?
Standard feelings for a woman doing a dirty job:
after all, earlier, a woman had washed his feet and got short shrift.
I love her, I truly love her.

God knows in his time Jesus had wiped away
tears, sweat, blood and broken dreams enough.
Running along the Via Dolorosa she saw it was his turn now.
Breaking through the embarrassment,
the hostility, the convention, the violence,
she held up everything in the universe for one small moment,
and wiped the face of God.
It left an impression.
It left an impression lasting a lifetime.
This is what he looks like, she would say, holding up her precious cloth.
Only if we reach out and touch the tears, sweat, blood and broken
dreams of some fallen Jesus on a twisting, latter-day Via Dolorosa,
only then can we say with Veronica, THIS.
This is what he looks like.





Station 7
Malcolm Guite - Jesus falls for the second time

Through all our veils and shrouds of daily pain.
Through our bruised bruises and re-opened scars,
he falls and stumbles with us, hurt again
when we are hurt again.

With us he bears the cruel repetitions of our cruelty;
the beatings of already beaten men.
The second rounds of torture, the futility
of all unheeded pleading, every scream in vain.

And by this fall he finds the fallen souls
who passed a first, but failed a second trial.
The souls who thought their faith would hold them whole
and found it only held them for a while.

Be with us when the road is twice as long as we can bear.
By weakness make us strong.



Station 8
Jesus consoles the women



They saw him coming—
bruised, bloodied, already half-gone—
and still, they wept for him.
Not as strangers,
but as mothers, sisters, women who had learned
what it means to carry grief
in the hollow places of their bodies.
Their cries were not for spectacle.
They were not loud enough
to stop soldiers, not sharp enough to break the wood.
But they were true.
And he—
amidst the dust, and the ache, and the nearing end—
turned to them.
Do not weep for me, he said.
Weep for your children.

He was not dismissing them.
He was naming the deeper sorrow still to come.
The sorrow of bombed-out kitchens, empty cradles,
bodies buried beneath rubble
before they could be given names.
The sorrow of sleepless nights
in Kyiv, in Gaza, in every Jerusalem of the heart
where mothers learn to pray
without words.
He saw them—
these women, then and now—
and gave them what little he had left:
his eyes, his presence, his knowing.
And in that moment, the man carrying the cross
became the one who still carried them.





Station 9

Malcolm Guite - Jesus falls for the third time

He weeps with you and with you he will stay
when all your staying power has run out.

You can't go on, you go on anyway.

He stumbles just beside you when the doubt
that always haunts you, cuts you down at last
and takes away the hope that drove you on.

This is the third fall and it hurts the worst.
This long descent through darkness to depression
from which there seems no rising and no will
to rise, or breathe or bear your own heart beat.

Twice you survived; this third will surely kill,
and you could almost wish for that defeat
except that in the cold hell where you freeze
you find your God beside you on his knees.





Station 10
The Way of the Cross - He is stripped

He stood tall on top of the hill,
the angry and anxious crowd looking up at him,
as they stripped off his clothing,
exposing his bleeding battered body.

He was basically a shy man
and had often said "Tell this to no man".
Once before on a mountain he had shone as the sun,
with clothes as white as snow,
revealing his glory to three friends.
Now all the world could see him in all his humiliation.

Lord Jesus, let me not be ashamed.
Inside me there is my very own self
that I cannot hide from you.
When style, clothes, friends,
and all I love has been taken away,
and I stand my real self alone before you,
let me be real. At least for you.
Till then let me live without pretence.



Station 11
Darkness Yielding: Jesus is nailed to the cross



“They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha,
and there they crucified him.”

Someone, somewhere,
thought it up, this method of execution.
Was it one man? Or the chairman? (I choose the word
carefully, sisters),
the chairman of some efficient Roman board?
Oak or ash, sycamore or pine, beech or elm or lime,
what wood was it, his cross?
Those naturalist’s eyes would have remembered the
leaves,
those carpenter’s hands felt the warp and woof of the
bark.
He knew the tree – and the seed from which it grew.
Maybe the very worst thing at this screaming moment
was not the shuddering physical agony,
but the chilling winter knowledge that somewhere,
at some time, one of his brothers,
running amok down the dark corridors of imagination
with brilliant, twisted ingenuity,
had thought up this idea of slaughter,
leaving him pinned like a broken butterfly to a piece of
wood,
which once, wind sighing through the filigree of its
branches,
had been a living tree.





Station 12

Malcolm Guite - Jesus dies on the cross

The dark nails pierce him and the sky turns black.
We watch him as he labours to draw breath.
He takes our breath away to give it back,
return it to its birth through his slow death.
We hear him struggle, breathing through the pain,
who once breathed out his spirit on the deep.
Who formed us when he mixed the dust with rain
and drew us into consciousness from sleep.
His spirit and his life he breathes in all.
Mantles his world in his one atmosphere
And now he comes to breathe beneath the pall
Of our pollutions, draw our injured air
to cleanse it and renew. His final breath
breathes us and bears us through the gates of death.





Station 13
Jesus is handed over to his mother

Held

She does not cry out.
The world has already broken open.
There is nothing left
but to hold him.

His wounds
rest against her hands
as once his newborn skin did—
the same body,
then breathing, now still.

Grief does not need words.
It needs arms.
And so she cradles,
love torn open,
and calls it son.





**Station 14 Jesus is laid in the tomb
Entombed**

Stone closes
like a final breath.
There are no angels here,
no songs,
no light—
only cold linen,
and a silence so complete
it feels
like the end of God.
The women wait.
The earth holds its breath.
And time
stops.
This is the day between—
when hope lies buried,
and all we can do
is
not let go.





Conclusion

A Light That Does Not Leave

And now, the footsteps have stilled.
The road has been walked,
the burden borne.
Blood, breath, body— all poured out.
But even now,
when the tomb is sealed
and the sky is empty— this is not the end.
Because love has not left.
It lies hidden,
yes—
folded into the shadows,
quiet beneath the weight of grief.
But still alive.
Holy Saturday is where we often live our days—
between loss and resurrection,
between sorrow and rising.
But even here,
in the silence,
a pulse remains.
He is not gone. He is waiting.
And so, we wait with him.

