

Worship at Home for February 28 2021
Second Sunday of Lent, Recognizing Black History Month

Our written service this week is focussed on Black History in Canada, and is based on a service created by Rev. Sadekie Lyttle-Forbes who is the minister at Sharon-Hope United Church in Sharon, Ontario. It contains prayers and thoughts by Black ministers and leaders working in the United Church today.

You may choose to read right through this document, stopping for your own reflection at any time, or only read the prayers or the scripture or reflection. You might read with family or friends, or alone. Links will take you to music that may enhance your experience as you move through the worship, but you might choose to visit them later, or not at all. Feel free to share this with anyone who might be interested.

If you'd like to comment or have a question, please call or email me directly:
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In the Spirit

Rev. Joanne

Centering Prayer: *adapted words from the hymn "I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say," lyrics by Horatius Bonar)*

We heard the voice of Jesus say, "Come unto me and rest. Lay down, you weary one, lay down your head. With pitying eyes the Prince of Peace beheld our grief. He saw, and O amazing love! He came to our relief. And the light from the lighthouse shone on us and led us out of the storm safely to the shore." It only takes one to initiate change.

Opening Music: "This Little Light of Mine"

Waterloo Region Mass Choir: www.youtube.com/embed/bYzbLEexK9I

Opening Prayer by Rev. Wilson Gonese, Burgeo Pastoral Charge, Burgeo, Newfoundland and Labrador

God of love, peace, and unity,
we thank you for welcoming us all just as we are;
for making us equal as your children
from all corners of the earth;
and for giving us your blessings as your children;
and for making us belong.
We pray that you help us realize that we are

all made in your image, and we need to bring peace
to all your creation as one people who belong to you.
We ask all this through Christ our brother. Amen.

Scripture Readings: Romans 4:13-25

For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations')—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become 'the father of many nations', according to what was said, 'So numerous shall your descendants be.' He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore his faith 'was reckoned to him as righteousness.' Now the words, 'it was reckoned to him', were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

Mark 8:31-38

Then Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

Reflection:

The work of reflecting on the history of Black persons in Canada belongs to all of us who call Canada home. We share a recorded history that has often ignored the contributions of Black Canadians, Indigenous peoples and other people of colour. Rev. Sadekie Lyttle-Forbes offers

us some topics to ponder and suggested music to share as we take a small journey through this history.

Slavery in Canada

Slavery existed in Canada. It is estimated that more than 4,000 Black men, women, and children were held in slavery in what is now Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick as early as 1628. Upper Canada passed the limited Act Against Slavery in 1793, and in 1834 slavery was abolished in most of the British Empire, including the Canadian colonies.

It only takes ONE voice to initiate change.

Music: "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen"

Sam Cooke: www.youtube.com/embed/YEx5pLLTDo

The Underground Railway

In the early 1800s, Canada and the northern part of the United States gained a reputation for being a haven for the enslaved. Canada had the code name "Canaan." Seeking freedom, many enslaved people travelled secretly to Canada (and other regions in North America where slavery was abolished) through a concealed network known as the Underground Railroad.

One common story is of the song "Wade in the Waters," which many believe was sung as a warning to enslaved people to walk through the water so the slave catchers' dogs could not pick up their scent.

Music: "Wade in the Water"

Waterloo Region Mass Choir: www.youtube.com/embed/A48J3nSyGRY

Segregation

Segregated schools (as well as other forms of legislated segregation) existed in Canada. The majority of segregated schools were located in Essex and Kent counties in Ontario, where Black communities had been established during the Underground Railway era.

Father Dean T. Wagner initiated a hospital and school for Black children who were not welcomed in his community. It only takes ONE voice to initiate change.

Music: "Ain't That Good News"

Classical Roots Community Mass Choir: www.youtube.com/embed/YaUQmTmW37A

Race Riots

Race riots existed in Canada. In fact, the first recorded race riot in North America was on July 26, 1784, in Nova Scotia. It lasted for about 10 days. The riot began when a group of White Loyalists stormed the home of David George, a Black Baptist preacher in Shelburne who was baptizing other White Loyalists. The rioting mob tore down the houses of 20 other free Black Loyalists living on the church's property and physically attacked George.

It only takes ONE voice to initiate change.

Muisc: "Precious Lord"

Aeolians of Oakwood University: www.youtube.com/embed/GcOs5kSFqvo

Civil Right Activists

The story of Viola Desmond (a Black businesswoman who refused to sit in the "Blacks only" section of a movie theatre) pre-dates the story of Rosa Parks (a Black Civil Rights activist who refused to sit in the "Blacks only" section of the bus). There have been many Black activists in our country's history, and their influence continues to grow today in the work of anti-racism and justice seeking for all.

It only takes ONE voice to initiate change. That voice, and then another added to it, creates a ripple effect and keeps the change going. Even if protests and court decisions don't work, we can be sure that there will be judgment, so you better mind.

Music: "You Betta Mind"

The Stars of Hope: www.youtube.com/embed/L_TCHbletA0

The struggle continues in different forms, but just like those before us, we will continue to work for equal rights and justice for all. When we see injustice, it is the prompting of the Spirit for us to do something about it.

Prayers of the People written by Alydia Smith, the United Church of Canada's Program Coordinator, Worship, Music and Spirituality

Let us praise God together in prayer.

How good it is to sing praises of your goodness, God;
for you have called us each here,
and have marked us with a desire to learn about the gospel.

We come with many names:
terms of endearment that we cherish
and labels that we seek to one day destroy.
But you call us by one name, beloved.

We remember your healing acts of salvation.
We remember how you gathered the dislocated
and dispersed Black peoples in Nova Scotia
to build communities
and relearn cultures that were torn away.
We remember the Maroons,
who with their hands built a mighty fortress on a hill.
We remember Viola Desmond, Harriet Tubman,
Frederick Douglass, Lincoln Alexander, Michaëlle Jean,
Wilbert Howard, and other heroes and she-roes of the faith that we name to you now...

We remember how your everlasting love
healed the self-esteem and rebuilt the self-worth of Black peoples

who were stripped of their human rights and dignity.
We remember that you continue to heal
the brokenhearted, and bind up their wounds.
In the silence of our hearts
we bring to you those in need of your healing...
(silent reflection)
How good it is, O God, to remember your steadfast presence.
With hands in the air we offer you all of the things
that we can no longer carry on our own:
our burdens, our worries, and our concerns...
We offer to you all of the situations
that we feel ill-equipped for...

When we feel downtrodden by our burdens
and weary to the point of collapse,
when we find ourselves in exile,
help us to hear the words of the prophet:
“Those who wait for the Lord shall...mount up
with wings like eagles, they shall run
and not be weary,
they shall walk and not be faint.” (Isaiah 40:31)
Lift up our weary souls, God,
and remind us once more of your everlasting love.
Amen

Closing Music: “Lift Every Voice and Sing” (James Weldon Johnson)
Stanford Talisman Alumni Virtual Choir: www.youtube.com/embed/o8pGp7N9bG8

Blessing:

Although the road is long and the journey is hard, although the mountains are too high and the valleys are too low,
By your grace, give us hope.
By your power, give us strength.
By your mercy, give us wisdom
so that we may continue to go where you lead us, until all your children are safe from harm. May
we go with your light shining in us, as we carry justice and equality into the world to bring about
change with our voice. Amen.

CHORAL BLESSING

“God Be with You” (Thomas A. Dorsey)
Ella Fitzgerald: www.youtube.com/embed/hK1GpgZMcs8