

Heritage Presbyterian Church

Jan. 10, 2021

As We Prepare for Worship

In this country, American means white. Everybody else has to hyphenate.

~ Toni Morrison, writer, teacher, Nobel Prize winner, and recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom

Prelude

“Seek Ye First”

Karen Lafferty

Gathering Words

Psalms 46 (CEB)

Be still and know...

that God is near.

God is our refuge and strength, a help always near in times of great trouble. That’s why we won’t be afraid when the world falls apart, when the mountains crumble into the center of the sea, when its waters roar and rage, when the mountains shake because of its surging waves. (Psalm 46:1-3, CEB)

Be still and know...

that God is reliable.

There is a river whose streams gladden God’s city, the holiest dwelling of the Most High. God is in that city. It will never crumble. God will help it when morning dawns. Nations roar; kingdoms crumble. God utters his voice; the earth melts. The LORD of heavenly forces is with us! The God of Jacob is our place of safety. (Psalm 46:4-7, CEB)

Be still and know...

that God is in control.

Come, see the LORD’s deeds, what devastation he has imposed on the earth— bringing wars to an end in every corner of the world, breaking the bow and shattering the spear, burning chariots with fire. (Psalm 46:8-9, CEB)

Be still and know...

that God is to be worshipped.

“That’s enough! Now know that I am God! I am exalted among all nations; I am exalted throughout the world!” The LORD of heavenly forces is with us! The God of Jacob is our place of safety. (Psalm 46:10-11, CEB)

Be still and know... that God IS.

Thanks be to God.

Gathering Song

“God Reveal Your Presence” 412

Video

Matthew 25 “Being Black in America”

Call to Prayer

Called to be God’s holy people, let us gather in prayer.

Prayer of Confession

from enfleshed Liturgy Cooperative¹

God, though we may be quick to pray for your justice to roll down like waters, we can be slow to accept what that may require of us. We struggle - is justice sweeter than security, than survival, than power, or comfort?

When our hearts are stubborn, grounded more deeply in protecting what is [probably unjustly] ours than in the commitment to collective well-being, soften us.

When our legs shake with fear because we have been trained in maintaining the peace, not rocking the boat, or choosing to get along even when it means upholding harm, give us the courage to act anyway.

When we tremble because our words proclaiming the dignity of our own people or that of others may cost us, steady us.

When we are seduced by theories of change that protect the harmful at the neglect of the harmed, teach us through your prophets.

When we are arrogant or patronizing towards those we have power over, presuming we know their struggles and what it will take to see liberation better than they do, convict us.

When we wonder if we are powerful enough. If we are smart enough. If we are brave enough. If we are strong enough. If we are gentle enough.

Assure us, O God, that together, we have everything we need to rise, to rally, to proclaim, to create, to feed, to dream your will into life.

silent confession

On this day, and always, wherever white supremacy rears its ugly, evil head, in rallies, in words, in norms, in prayers, in institutions, in relationships, let nothing take precedence over our commitment to Love. Love that overturns evil. Love that protects. Love that lays down its life for its friends. Love that acts in solidarity. Love that refuses to compromise on the belovedness of your people. Love that confronts, Love that heals. Love that looks inward, Love that shuts down hatred.

¹ <https://enfleshed.com/pages/addressing-white-supremacy>

May our prayers for your justice be enfolded in our minds, our bodies, our hearts, our commitments. Amen.

Words of Life

Ephesians 4:32 (CEB)

Be kind, compassionate, and forgiving to each other, in the same way God forgave you in Christ.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

Response

“There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy” 435 v. 2

The Peace

Prayer for Illumination

Lord, we want to hear your voice. May your Holy Spirit open our ears and our hearts so that we may live the word you speak to us. Amen.

Having been asked whether a man had been born blind due to his sins or his parents, Jesus said, “Neither.” He healed the man, inciting controversy for it was the Sabbath. The religious leaders brought the man and his parents in for questioning, unable to believe the man had been born blind because such a miracle is impossible. They bring the man into questioning a second time, which is where we join the story.

A Reading from the Gospels

John 9:24-41 (NRSV)

NRSV-John 9:24 So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, “Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.” ²⁵ He answered, “I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” ²⁶ They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” ²⁷ He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?” ²⁸ Then they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” ³⁰ The man answered, “Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”

³⁴ They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?” And they drove him out.

John 9:35 Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶ He answered, “And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” ³⁷ Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” ³⁸ He said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped him. ³⁹ Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.” ⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not blind, are we?” ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.

The Word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

Message

“Unprecedented”

Rev. Michelle Henrichs

Prayer of Challenge and Hope

Introduction

Jeanne Musolf

This fall, we adopted a statement against racism. We felt so strongly about it that we didn’t only adopt it but have included it in the organizing articles of our Manual of Operations. We said, “This is who we are; yet knowing we are not yet, who we strive to be.”

As a confession of what we believe and who we hope to be, let us pray.

Heritage Presbyterian Church pledges not to be silent about structural racism.

We will listen to and seek out opportunities to be led by People of Color to understand their experiences and perspectives on needed structural changes. We will call out the powerful and privileged, who in seeking their own interests, knowingly or unknowingly oppress and harm People of Color.

God of Justice, these are bold statements, privileged even. We believe we can do these seemingly impossible things, even as we believe we can’t. In our eagerness to see justice fulfilled, teach us patience. Not patience because there is no hurry for justice, but patience in knowing it will not be easy. When we fail, forgive us, pick us up, and show us the next step.

We commit to discovering and recognizing our own complicit bias and participation in structural racism through study and discussion.

Truth be told, we don’t really want to do this. We’d much rather be comfortable with the things we think we know. Open our hearts and minds to what you would have us learn.

We commit to learning how to identify microaggressions against People of Color and using this knowledge to combat the negative impact of microaggressions made by family, friends, and those around us by not being silent in the face of such statements.

Facebook is such a convenient place to teach people about their wrongs. And it is not a hard thing to share pretty graphics with pretty words. And it is especially easy to stay silent when people say racist things. But silence is approval, and, Lord, we do not approve. Grant us the words to speak the truth in love.

We commit to sharing our own discoveries and learnings with others through worship and mission to provide education and theological perspective on structural racism and ways to work for change.

We join Moses in saying we are not good speakers, please send someone else. But you have chosen us. Discovery and learning are meaningless if they only remain an idea. God of righteousness, show us how to share what we learn.

We commit to acting and advocating in accordance with our faith, we will communicate with elected and civic leaders to break down systems, practices and thinking that perpetuate the oppression and discrimination of People of Color.

Jesus, you said that even if we are not of the world, we are still in the world. As a result, our faith is not contained to a day of the week, a Bible study, or even our conversations with others. For if we love justice, then we must seek it in the world around us. And if we desire changes to our systems and institutions, then we must tell those with the power over them what change is needed. Holy Spirit, pester us in our apathy that we might write a letter, an email, or make a phone call.

We commit to supporting entities that make a positive impact on dismantling structural racism, with intentional consideration of organizations led by People of Color.

It is hard to be led by others — especially those we don't really know or understand. It is part of our privilege to think we know the best and right way or the most important issue. But we have not lived with racism every day of our lives. We have never lost anything because of it. Jesus who gave up the glory of heaven to dwell with us, guide us to give up our well-intentioned plans to accept direction by those who are living it.

pause for reflection

Holy God who is the creator and keeper of all things, we pledge not to be silent about structural racism.

Teach us the way. Amen.

Anthem

“For Everyone Born”

Murry & Mann

Lord's Prayer

Call to Offering

An encounter with Jesus is life-changing, or we have not encountered Jesus. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Use us, God. Show us how to take who we are, who we want to be, and what we can do, and use it for a purpose greater than ourselves." To what greater purpose is God calling us?

pause for reflection

Through our offerings, we stand with God in matters of peace, justice, and care for those in need. Let us worship with our offering.

Doxology

"Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow" 609

Prayer of Dedication

with Amos 5:24

God of this life and the next, we come before you with the offerings of our lives. May they serve to further your Kingdom here on earth, leading to the day when *justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream*. Amen.

Sending Song

"Help Us Accept Each Other" 754

Postlude

"Majesty"

Hayford