

February 9 Black History Celebration

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Check In: Sharing History

Acknowledgement of the Land and Commitment to Reconciliation: Video

Call to Worship

It is by grace that we are who we are:

people who are called by Jesus, yet fearful to follow.

It is by God's grace that we can become followers:

people who are fearful, yet gifted with courage beyond wonder.

It is with God's grace that we become who we might be:

people who step out in faith, sharing the good news generously.

So, let us worship

in this place that God is creating,

where all are embraced.

Together we become beloved community.

Song of Praise: There's a Wideness in God's Mercy VU271

- 1 There's a wideness in God's mercy
 like the wideness of the sea;
 there's a kindness in God's justice
 which is more than liberty.
- 2 There is no place where earth's sorrows
 are more felt than up in heaven;
 there is no place where earth's failings
 have such gracious judgement given.
- 3 There is plentiful redemption
 in the blood that Christ has shed;
 there is joy for all the members
 in the sorrows of the Head.
- 4 Troubled souls, why will you scatter
 like a crowd of frightened sheep?
 Foolish hearts, why will you wander
 from a love so true and deep?
- 5 For the love of God is broader
 than the measures of the mind,
 and the heart of the Eternal
 is most wonderfully kind.

Opening Prayer

As we gather to celebrate God's presence, we remember the blessings of the dark...

Blessed be the deep rich soil
where plants take root.

Blessed be the protective cradle of the womb
where new life grows.

Blessed be the dark night sky
where stars' bright lights shine.

Blessed be the cool midday shade
where earth's creatures can find rest.

Amen.

(Alydia Smith, from Parables, Prayers, and Promises (UCPH))

Lighting of Christ Candle

Prayer: As we light this Christ Candle, may it remind us that Christ is in the world and in us.

Sung Response

Open our hearts, open our minds.
Open our lives to you O Loving God, Open our hearts.

Peace of Christ

The Story: Luke 7:1-17

7 After Jesus had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. 2 A centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly and who was ill and close to death. 3 When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. 4 When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, 5 for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us." 6 And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; 7 therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. 8 For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me, and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it." 9 When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and, turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." 10 When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

Jesus Raises the Widow's Son at Nain

11 Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. 12 As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow, and with her was a large crowd from the town. 13 When the Lord saw her, he was moved with compassion for her and said to her, "Do not cry." 14 Then he

came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stopped. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" 15 The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. 16 Fear seized all of them, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen among us!" and "God has visited his people!" 17 This word about him spread throughout the whole of Judea and all the surrounding region.

Song for Reflection: Come and Find the Quiet Centre VU374

- 1 Come and find the quiet centre
 in the crowded life we lead,
find the room for hope to enter,
 find the frame where we are freed:
clear the chaos and the clutter,
 clear our eyes, that we can see
all the things that really matter,
 be at peace, and simply be.
- 2 Silence is a friend who claims us,
 cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us,
 knows our being, face to face,
making space within our thinking,
 lifting shades to show the sun,
raising courage when we're shrinking,
 finding scope for faith begun.
- 3 In the Spirit let us travel,
 open to each other's pain,
let our loves and fears unravel,
 celebrate the space we gain:
there's a place for deepest dreaming,
 there's a time for heart to care,
in the Spirit's lively scheming
 there is always room to spare!

Sermon:

Offering of Thanksgiving

"A man ain't nothing but a man," said Baby Suggs. "But a son? Well now, that's somebody."
Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

Special Music (Anthem): "Hands United in Peace"

Offertory Response When Hands Reach Out

When hands reach out and fingers trace
The beauty of a loved one's face,
We thank you, God, that love relies
On gifts of grace not seen with eyes.
Your Spirit gives us differing ways

To serve you well and offer praise.
When all are joined as one, we'll be
Your able, strong community.

Prayers of the People a Prayer for Justice

God of peace,
give us the courage, strength and perseverance needed,
to challenge the corrosive systems of racism,
so that we can clear a path for your justice, peace, and equity.

We believe racism is present
in our society and in our church,
and throughout time has manifested itself in many forms and in varying degrees.

We know racism is alive
in our language and in our structures,
and through our systems it actively works to deconstruct your glorious design,
blocking the path to justice, equity, and peace that Jesus brings.

Racism exists, and it challenges the gospel message that we cry.

We cry abundant life for all,
knowing that some are slowly being suffocated by the pervasive evil of racism:
 some of us are choking;
 some of us cannot breathe;
 some of us are dead.

We cry peace,
knowing that we are the instruments of God's peace
and that such peace cannot exist without justice, equity, compassion, and God's grace.

We cry Emmanuel, God with us,
knowing that to God, every one of us is holy and precious—God is with all people—
even though as a community and as a society
we have stated through our actions that some lives matter more than others.

Compassionate One,
Help us to understand how racism finds life in our hearts and in our cries.
In this time of tense anticipation,
may we commit ourselves to be people of your way
crying and creating a path for justice, equity, and peace
for all people in this wilderness of hatred and racism.

Amen.

—a prayer for Black History Month by Alydia Smith

Lord's Prayer

Our Father/Mother...
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Song for the Journey: For the Healing of the Nations VU678

- 1 For the healing of the nations,
 God, we pray with one accord;
for a just and equal sharing
 of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action
 help us rise and pledge our word.
- 2 Lead us forward into freedom,
 from despair your world release;
that, redeemed from war and hatred,
 all may come and go in peace.
Show us how through care and goodness
 fear will die and hope increase.
- 3 All that kills abundant living,
 let it from the earth be banned:
pride of status, race or schooling,
 dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice
 may we hallow life's brief span.
- 4 You, Creator-God, have written
 your great name on humankind;
for our growing in your likeness
 bring the life of Christ to mind;
that, by our response and service,
 earth its destiny may find.

Extinguishing of the Candles

Blessing

Closing: Go In Love

Postlude

Beyond Sunday: Who Am I?

As we celebrate Black History Month today, there is an invitation to reflect on the fact that history, especially personal history, has been deliberately erased or obscured. Black History Month is about finding it again. The reflection below is about ancestry. It starts with the stark reality of what enslavement meant for people. It cut them off from family, communities, and culture. And yet there has been resilience. This hopeful reflection encourages us all to reckon with the difficult past, to recognize the harm done. And then look forward, to the strength and beauty of the diaspora. We are invited to celebrate and honour the creation of a new family.

SHARING OF THE PEACE by Rev. Dr. Velda Love

Voice of the Diaspora:

Who are my people?

What manner of soil gave birth to my ancestors?

When I go and search for their origins and first beginnings, will the soil receive me, welcome me, and teach me who I am?

What nation, tribe, clan, family line do I belong?

I imagine those who come with the same inquiries will fill the continent searching, seeking, asking and wanting to know ... who are my people?

Which of the 3,000 distinct ethnic groups do I belong? Which of the 2,000 plus languages do I possess in my DNA? Who are my people?

Am I Dinka, Fang, or Fulani? Am I Watutsi, Zulu or Igbo? Do I descend from the Hausa, Jukun, Kassena, Kongo, Lemba, or Nande? Perhaps my ancestors are Wolof, Xhosa, Tsongo, or Zulu. I look into my eyes and think these are Ashanti, Ewe, or Maroon eyes.

I do not yet know. But I am confident my ancestors and their DNA reside on every country on every continent on this planet. My siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, and extended family are Afro-Brazilian, Afro-British, Afro-Indian, Afro-Asian, Afro-Canadian, Afro-Mexican, Afro-Barbadian, maybe Afro-Irish, Afro-French, and Afro-Arab. For it is from the African soil that the Cradle of Civilization rose.

Oh, what a day that will be when we gather for the family reunion. There will be every conceivable shade of luscious brown, black, cocoa, and mocha ready to embrace, looking for a hug, smiling and greeting with welcome home. No one will be asking, "are you my people? We will be certain we are family and we are the people we've been waiting for. Ashe

The Peace of Christ be with you