

Home Worship, June 7, 2020

Gathering Music

Siyahamba [a Zulu song] Angel City Chorale and Amy Foundation Choir
Siyahamba kukhanyenkwenkhos etc. {means We are marching in the light of God}

<https://youtu.be/QGOiANtGmhE>

Prayer [adapted from Alice Finnamore, Prince William Community of Faith, NB]

Creator, Holy One, Universal Christ, by whatever name we use, none is big enough to hold the fullness of You. May we turn to your Endless Unity in wonder. May we see holiness and divinity in the heavens above, in the stars and planets, in the vastness of the Universe. May we see the face of the Holy in everyone around us. May we see the Holy in every Black face, in every Indigenous face, in every Asian face, in each neighbour near and far. May we see the Holy in every aspect of Creation. May we hear the voice of every hurting person, every fearful person, and respond with Love. May we open our eyes to see all of Creation, all manner of creatures, all colours and races and genders as you do, with love and respect and patience. We are sorry for the times when our eyes, our minds, are hearts have been closed. We offer our tears and regrets. We seek to walk humbly with you as we live into this time- a time for a new beginning, for a new creation. Together may we seek a healing not only from the COVID-19 pandemic but also the pandemic of racism. May it be so!

We Sing

MV 142

Oh A Song Must Rise

Paul Svenson

[with the high-energy LVUC choir - if watching this at home fast forward to about 2 minutes 15 seconds]

<https://youtu.be/Y4Q7XghWg-c>

Oh ,a song must rise for the Spirit to descend.

Oh, a song must rise once again.

Singing out God's praises and glory, the faithful voices blend.

Oh a song must rise for the Spirit to descend.

From the mountains and the valleys , from the desert to the sea,

A song must rise once again.

From the voices of our leaders, the voice of you and me.

A song must rise for the Spirit to descend. O a Song must rise...

From poverty and riches, from the voice of young and old,

A song must rise once again.

From the free and the imprisoned , the timid and the bold,

A song must rise for the Spirit to descend. O a Song must rise...

From every house of worship, in every faith and tongue,

A song must rise once again.

From the villages and cities, a new song must be sung.

A song must rise for the Spirit to descend. O a Song must rise...

Readings

Micah 6:8

Listen here, mortal. God has already made abundantly clear what “good “ is and what Yahweh needs from you: simply do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God”

Acts 2:16-18

It's what Joel the prophet spoke of :In days to come - it is our God who speaks- I will pour out my spirit on all humankind. Your daughters and sons will prophesy, your young people will see visions and your elders will dream dreams. Even on the least of my people, both women and men, I will pour out my Spirit in these days, and they will prophesy

Luke 4:16-20

Jesus came to Nazareth , where he had been brought up. Entering the synagogue on the Sabbath, as was his habit, Jesus stood up to do the reading. When the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed him, he unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:” The Spirit of our God is upon me , because the Most High has anointed me to bring Good News to those who are poor. God has sent me to proclaim liberty to those held captive, recovery of sight to those who are blind and release to those in prison- to proclaim the year of our God's favour”. Rolling up the scroll, Jesus gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he said to them “Today, in your hearing , this scripture passage is fulfilled.

Reflection

Life is complicated these days. One pandemic is one pandemic too many.

And now we see we have another pandemic. The pandemic of racism. We've had it all along . And it's not just south of the border - it's here too- just as COVID-19 is here- even if we don't see it.

Now what has this to do with us, and what are we to do about it? We have to do our part to deal with COVID-19? But what can we do about racism? And if we are nice people who do our best, isn't that enough?

The trouble is all of us who have the racism virus. It's not our fault. We were born with it. . We've lived all our lives in a country where white people have a different life experience from that of Black or Indigenous people, or Chinese Canadians or Japanese Canadians. We don't know their experience- and we don't know what racism does to them.

Back in school, I learned everything from the point of view of white North Americans and Europeans. They wrote the history books and story books I read - back then they were the journalists, the government, the clergy- almost all of them male but that's another story.

What did I know about life in residential schools? What did I know about having my culture or language taken away? What did I know of the obstacles faced by black Nova Scotians? What did I know of the internment of Japanese Canadians in World War 2?

What did I know of the living conditions on reserves? What did I know of how the police or how the church or how potential employers commonly treated those of a different race from me? The answer- basically nothing. I'm learning now- but I still have miles to go.

I imagine myself in a footrace- not the real kind where I always came in last-

But a kind where some people start way ahead, almost near the finish line, and some way back behind the official start line- and maybe they have to jump over or run around obstacles- and then see who gets to the finished line first. There are people ahead of me, but there are far more way behind, and I don't see them.

I don't like this being ahead of other people- it doesn't feel good.

But to change it, I've got to look back and see who's behind, whom I am not seeing.

That's why I need to say - for instance- Black Lives Matter , Indigenous Lives Matter.

Of course my life matters too but that's not the point.

If you open the Bible - not brandish it like some- but open it- you will run into God's care for the poor , the marginalized , the racialized. Of course God loves those of us who are white and more comfortably off. But we don't get a free pass- we've got work to do.

Our job is to seek justice and love kindness , walk humbly with our God. How do you seek justice? You look to see who needs justice most- maybe you need justice but maybe there are people who need it even worse than you do- and you do something about that.Loving kindness- that's kindness for everybody- but we need to ask- who is being treated unkindly because of who they are- that's got to stop, don't you think? Walk humbly with our God- humbly means we are limited to our own human experience, we don't know everything, we have got a lot to learn.

And then there's Jesus reading Isaiah- the Spirit of God wants him to preach good news to those who need good news most- those who are poor and oppressed and lacking in freedom- He says- that's happening now- here.

The story goes on. His audience think great- that means for us. But then Jesus goes on about others whom God might want to help, those of other races, those they might want nothing to do with. It's as if Jesus came and told us mostly white people-

Black Lives matter. Indigenous lives matter. It's as if he asked us- what will you do to make a just and fair society for those who need good news and liberation?And perhaps - when we ask, well then, who's blind ? Jesus would ask us.well, what about you?

And if we still don't get it ? Perhaps Jesus might tell us the story of the 100 sheep?

Which sheep did the shepherd go after? Did she take care of the 99 who were huddled together and doing just fine? No , she left them to take care of themselves,

And went looking for the one who was out on his own. All was not well for that sheepfold until everyone was safe. And so for you- he might say- You are not OK until everyone else is OK.

There's the ancient story of the body of Christ - going back to an even more ancient fable- If part of the body is hurting, then the rest of the body suffers too.

I once broke my arm -I soon found out what difference it made to the rest of me.

We may ask- does it really hurt us if someone we don't know suffers? But these days we are all waking up.

Whenever we keep distance and wear our masks, we are protecting everyone we run into, whether we know them or not, plus all their contacts and everyone they run into- even if we don't know them. And people we don't know are doing the same and directly or indirectly protecting us.

And so with the disease of racism- it does affect who we are- it makes us less than we should be- it's a virus that spreads and it's time to stop the spread and begin the healing.. And the healing begins when we admit- it's not just someone else's virus , we've got it too.

What better way to celebrate Pentecost? A time when all young and old, of all genders, of all conditions, have visions and dream dreams and prophesy. Including the least of God's people- not those God considers the least- but those whose lives seem to matter the least in our world. Visions and Dreams of a wonderful world for all. And Prophesying- that means speaking, shouting those visions and dreams - and not falling silent until they have come true.

We are vulnerable sector- marching may not be for us. But we can still stand alongside the "least of these" - adding our voices- until they are no longer the least, until their lives matter as much as ours do? The choice is yours.The choice is mine.

The Reflection continued in song

Wade in the Water [Sweet Honey in the Rock]
<https://youtu.be/RRpzEng14Hs>

Minute for Mission Remembering Alvin Dixon [*whom Shirley Clarke and Jane heard at General Council 2012*]

As a church we continue to work toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Mission & Service supports this work through your gifts for the National Indigenous Church.

We are thankful that we have Elders like Alvin Dixon to lead us on the path of reconciliation. Alvin, a residential school survivor, was taken from his community and sent more than 500 kilometres to the Alberni Residential School. Alberni was a United Church of Canada–run school where many children suffered sexual, physical, and psychological abuse. Alvin was beaten when he spoke his Indigenous language of Heiltsuk rather than English.

Alvin survived the school, earned a university degree, and later counselled fellow residential school survivors. He also found comfort in the Christianity he learned at the school. Alvin became a leader in the path of reconciliation. He was a Caretaker of the Indigenous Circle, a Mission & Service–supported program. As an activist in the United Church, he helped guide us to an apology to Indigenous peoples and to becoming a driving force behind the demand for a public inquiry into conditions at the residential schools, which led to the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Alvin died from cancer in 2014 at the age of 77, but his legacy of activism lives on in the work of reconciliation. If Mission & Service giving is already a regular part of your life, thank you so much! If you have not given, please join me in making Mission & Service giving a regular part of your life of faith. Loving our neighbour is at the heart of our Mission & Service.

Offertory by Jane

Holy One, we offer our gifts and we offer ourselves- seeking to tend this community with love, seeking to mend this world, seeking to spread healing, compassion and good news wherever we can. May it be so!

Prayers of the People by Jane

We give thanks for the beauty and grace and wonder around us, and within us. May we show up! May we delight in creation! May we delight in the divine expressions all around us. We are bearers of divine light and love and wisdom, even when we forget it. We seek to remember who we are and let that light and love and wisdom radiate through us, birthing that which the world most deeply needs.

Alone, we get discouraged. But if we join hands and hearts, who knows what we can do? We commit to reach out to those who can share our hopes and longings. Together we work and pray and hope for the new life abornin' and listen for the Spirit to show us the way.

We are troubled by so much in this broken world. What we can do feels very small. But divine love and energy are in motion within us, and we send them forth to those places of need – where there is suffering from COVID-19 and from isolation, where there is suffering because of the pandemic of racism, wherever the world needs mending, wherever Spirit needs to travel.

Nearer to home, we hold in divine Light and love those who need our prayers - in a moment of silence. We seek that same light and love for ourselves as we go about the sacred work of healing and mending, and as we seek to survive and endure and yet find the joy that sustains us day by day. These and all the prayers of our heart we gather into the prayer shared around the world and across the ages: Our Father [or Mother or Creator] who art in heaven....

Announcements, Joys and Concerns As in the Cooperator

Our 'That's Life' page on our web site is looking a little lonely – no opportunities to have it filled with photos of our community and congregation. If you have an appropriate photo you would like to share on the web site, please send it along with names/description/tag line or quote to WesleyUnitedStAndrews@gmail.com or text it to Jennie 506 921 0351 or fb message to [Wesley-and-St-James-United-St-AndrewsOak-HillScotch-Ridge](https://www.facebook.com/Wesley-and-St-James-United-St-AndrewsOak-HillScotch-Ridge)

Words of Parting and Blessing [by Janet Morley]

May the God who dances in creation, who embraces us with human love, who shakes our lives like thunder, bless us and drive us out with power to fill the world with her justice, Amen.

Music for Going Forth Stand by Me [Playing for Change]

<https://youtu.be/Us-TVg40ExM>