

This short act of worship has been produced by Deacon Jacqueline Esama-John for you to use at home and beyond and if you are unable to worship in a church building.

It's October and it's Black History Month! Black history is an important topic and I never cease to wonder at how determined and resilient we are as a human race- fighting for Justice, fostering Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Since 1987, it has been a tradition in the UK to celebrate Black History Month- an opportunity to highlight and learn about Black History and heritage and the way that people of African Caribbean descent have shaped the UK's story. Our circuit has fully embraced the notion of EDI and is using Black History Month to enable congregations to build a feasible and sustainable racial justice. I trust that you have received your own copy of the booklet "Belonging to Healthy Multi-Ethnic Congregations" written by my colleague Revd. Dr Valentin Dedji which we have been encouraged to read and which has been a great resource in putting together this order of service. I pray that our hearts and minds and voices might be stirred and that we will affirm that we are all made in God's image.

Apostle Paul reminds us in one of our readings today, that the cross is the instrument by which Christians are bound together regardless of race or background or what have you. I would like to invite you as an act of solidarity, to have a cross at hand to pray with during our prayers of intercession.

Call to Worship

Inviting God, help us to see that every person has a place in your presence. Forgive us when we try to limit our friendships to people who look like us, act like us, believe like us. Through your Holy and transforming Spirit, move us from exclusion to inclusion, from formulators of fences to builders of bridges, from indifference to all-encompassing love. In the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Sonia Hicks, President, British Methodist Conference 2021/2022

Prayers of Adoration and Thanksgiving

Creator God, Maker of all, we offer you our worship, praise, and thanksgiving. To you belong all power and glory. You are the source of all goodness. We thank you loving Father for all the good gifts and graces that you endow us with. You send the sunshine and the rain, the seas and dry land as well as the rhythm of the seasons. Help us to behold your graciousness and loving kindness, that rejoicing in your whole creation, we may learn to serve you with gladness and a grateful heart. May we cherish and respect this planet and its peoples, and love humanity as you love us unconditionally. We pray these prayers in Jesus mighty name. **Amen**

(A Wee worship book-adapted)

Hymn: Let us build a house where all can dwell (Singing the Faith 409)

Sing/Read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here
<https://youtu.be/nbyZQnPw-wk>

Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine, and wheat:

a banquet hall on holy ground
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that free us:
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place
(Marty Haugen (b.1950) © 1994 GIA Publications Inc, Chicago, IL 60638

Prayer of confession

Let us confess our sins.

Silence

**Loving God, we have sinned against you
in what we have thought, said, and done.**

**We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.**

**We are truly sorry and turn away from what is wrong. Forgive
us for the sake of your son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

Silence

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

This is his gracious word.

Your sins are forgiven.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

(The Methodist Worship Book p. 29)

1st Reading Ephesians 2: 11-22 - New International Version

Jew and Gentile Reconciled Through Christ

¹¹ Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)— ¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also

members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

2nd Reading John 4: 1-26 - New International Version

Jesus Talks with a Samaritan Woman

⁴ Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— ² although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. ³ So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

⁴ Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" ⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

¹⁶ He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

¹⁷ "I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no

husband. ¹⁸The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

¹⁹“Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

²¹“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²²You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

²⁵The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

²⁶Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

Reflection

My great pleasure of leading this service today is for me a case of solidarity as a black African woman, born and raised in Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone and which was founded as a settlement for freed slaves. Through all that we have seen and experienced, in whatever place or capacity we find ourselves we know that we are redeemed in the love of Christ. We believe that we are sacred and beloved children of God, and nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

And I give thanks to God for the global Church’s recognition that racism is a sin. I give thanks to God for the vision and witness of the Enfield Methodist Circuit, for the work we are doing on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) and indeed the wider Methodist connexion as EDI comes under the bigger umbrella of “Justice, Dignity and solidarity” which was adopted in this year’s Methodist conference.

Humanity has been challenged by different things at different times. Society has had to deal with crisis after crisis regarding race and identity, be it with Jewish people, with Gypsies, with Irish travellers the Roma community and so and so forth. Difference has made people the target of disrespect, denigration and prejudice and black people have been through an awful lot. Black people have endured slavery, cruelty,

racism, human trafficking. The list goes on. They know the fragile state of our human condition and some never ever knew the lustre of life.

The journey is not yet complete as we continue to experience racism every day and even public spheres such as the torrent of racial abuse hurled at the three black England footballers a few months ago during the Euro final match when England lost the match on penalties. Not to talk about the senseless murder of George Floyd in the streets of the United States of America in broad daylight. Something that brought global outrage.

John Wesley commented that we may not always agree with one another, but we should always love and work with one another. In a recent webinar hosted by the Methodist Church, the Revd Dr Roger Walton, former President of the Methodist conference, gave a rundown of the commitments to the “Methodist way of life” and raised the question among other things about what it means to follow Jesus. What do we do to show we follow Jesus? He asked: I think what we do to show we follow Jesus should look something like Nelson Mandela’s forgiveness of his oppressors. I think it should look something like Patrick Hutchinson, the black fitness instructor carrying an injured white man, a suspected far-right protestor during a Black Lives Matter protest in London, featured in Valentin’s booklet on page 18. There are so many examples that we could think about.

It was Archbishop Desmond Tutu who came up with the philosophy of “ubuntu” - the notion that “I am because you are”. The notion of oneness that includes the essential human virtues of community, of compassion and love. As a country and indeed in the global sphere, we should endeavour to respect the dignity of humanity and love and support each other.

And so, our celebration of Black History month gives us an opportunity to celebrate the achievement of key black figures in the UK and to share in the commitment to global justice and reconciliation. It gives us an opportunity to centre ourselves on God in Jesus and to give thanks for all that is past, for all that is now and for all that will be. To live as though we belong to the kingdom of God means that we work together to bring justice and peace and well-being.

In the two readings today, which could be found in the booklet (pages 20 and 35 respectively), there is an invitation to embrace “the other” as Christ’s giving of himself on the cross. Valentin gave us some exploration of these Bible passages. He uses the example of the Samaritan woman as to what scapegoating, and stereotyping look like and how damaging these can be. He describes the Samaritan woman as someone “who seems to have attracted all the prejudices that could possibly be thrown at a person!” The writer of the gospel tells

us that this woman who has no name has had a rather difficult life. She is seen as an outcast. She had had five husbands and the man she is currently living with is not her husband. Even though many commentators say that she is sinful, Jesus did not label her as such. In fact, it was the woman who showed prejudice through her questions. “You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (v9) In reply, Jesus talks about the “living water” he can give (v10) Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (v14)

The message of John 4 is very clear. Jesus is the breaker-down of all sorts of barriers - faith, gender, race etc. Jesus is constantly embracing those that were different from himself. In his day, a Jewish man would not start a conversation with an unknown woman and even worse a Jewish teacher would never have a conversation in public with a woman. But here is Jesus speaking openly with a “sinful” Samaritan woman, even declaring his identity to her, that he is the Messiah. And he affirms that salvation is from the Jews (v22) but is not limited to them. And because of the testimony of this woman, the Samaritans affirm that Jesus is the saviour of the world. There is clearly a gift of new and transformed life.

And so it is that there is a gift of new and transformed life with the Gentiles too in Ephesians Bible passage. And again,

Valentin’s illustrations are a real food for thought. There was always tension between the Jewish and Gentile converts to Christianity. It seemed as if they came from two different worlds and their differences seemed irreconcilable. For the Jewish converts, the law of Moses with all its rules and regulations about food and diet, about circumcision or observing the Sabbath was the basis for Godly living. The Gentiles on the other hand saw the world in a very different light which was often based on their own experience of religion.

The Apostle Paul wrestled with the issue, but his solution was a very neat one; for him, Gentiles do not have to submit to circumcision to become true members of the new people of God. The common ground for the Church was Christ himself and what he achieved by his life, death, and resurrection. Paul reminds us of the importance of the cross and what it became in Jesus - the instrument that will raise Jesus back from the earth and in the heaven again. It is a sign of love and faith and sacrifice, the vehicle by which he will be able to draw all the world into his outstretched arms. And it is not surprising that the world in secular and sacred context has been filled over the last two thousand years with images and songs and sculptures and poems describing the old rugged cross.

Jesus Christ came and proclaimed peace and has reconciled

both groups. Jesus has broken down the wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3: 28) And so again there is this sense of “embracing the other”, of the uniting of all people. In verses 19-22, Paul gives us more images to illustrate that unity - seeing the united believers as part of one household or one family in one dwelling place with Christ as the Cornerstone. So together let us embrace the concept of EDI, celebrate Black History and respect the dignity of humanity. **Amen**

Prayers of Intercessions. (Praying with our crosses)

The response is:

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy

Silence

We pray for the world church, gathering in person and online. We pray for all who minister your word. Renew us with Resurrection hope that Christ’s light may continue to shine your world.

Silence

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy

We call to mind the political leaders of the world and pray that you will govern their hearts and minds that they may act justly, honestly and with compassion. We pray for all the issues that the world is facing - Covid, wars, famine. Brexit, floods, fire, famine, unemployment etc.

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy

Silence

Healing God, we call to mind all those for whom this day will be long and painful. For those in hospital or ill at home, those struggling with despair or depression and for all who care for them. Comfort and heal all who suffer, give them courage and hope in their troubles, and bring them the joy of your salvation.

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy

Silence

Gracious God, we call to mind those who are anxious and drowning in fear today. For all those who have been the victim of institutional and structural racism. We pray for Justice and peace. That all may experience God’s presence. We pray that all will embrace the notion of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy

Silence

We call to mind those who have died a brutal death for various reasons - be it because of the colour of their skin, be it because of domestic violence, of the thirst for power, sexual predators etc. The soul of the righteous are in the hands of God. May their souls rest in perfect peace and may their memory be a blessing. We pray for peace and comfort for all bereaved families and friends. May they know your peace and comfort.

Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy

Silence

We continue to give thanks with a grateful heart for all your provision in whatever way we have received from you. Blessed be your name for ever and ever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, 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.

Hymn: The Splendour of the King (How great is our God) (Singing the Faith 15)

Sing/Read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here

The splendour of the King,
clothed in majesty;

let all the earth rejoice, all the earth rejoice.

He wraps himself in light

and darkness tries to hide,

and trembles at his voice, and trembles at his voice.

*How great is our God, sing with me,
how great is our God and all will see
how great, how great is our God?*

And age to age He stands,
and time is in His hands;
beginning and the end, beginning and the end.
The Godhead, Three in One,
Father, Spirit, Son,
the Lion and the Lamb,
the Lion, and the Lamb,

How great is our God...

Name above all names, worthy of all praise;
my heart will sing: how great is our God.
Name above all names, worthy of all praise;
my heart will sing: how great is our God.

How great is our God...

Chris Tomlin (b.1972) ©2004 worhsiptogether.com Songs/Sixsteps Music,
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Benediction:

Eternal light shine in our hearts. Eternal Goodness, deliver us
from Evil. Eternal Power, be our support. Eternal wisdom,

scatter the darkness of our ignorance. Eternal Pity, have mercy
on us: through Jesus Christ. Amen.

And the blessing of God the Father, God, the Son and God the
Holy Spirit, Rest, remain and abide with each one of you. Now
and forevermore. Amen.

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