

*"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up, live out the true meaning of its creed:
'We hold these truths to be self-evident,
that all men are created equal.'"*

— Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.



Rollstone Congregational Church

Sunday, June 7, 2020

Gathering Thoughts:

Today we gather as a faith community to speak out against the actions of a society that embraces division and privilege rather than accepting each person for their uniqueness and diversity. This service is about reflection, prayer, and healing. May the love of Christ fill your hearts today and everyday.

Prelude:

Faith of Our Fathers

Lani Smith

Gathering:

One: God knows each of us by name.

All: We are somebody.

One: God loves us whether we are young or old.

All: We are somebody.

One: God cares for us whether we are short or tall.

All: We are somebody.

One: God accepts us as we are.

All: We are somebody.

One: God calls us to be more than we are.

All: We are somebody.

One: God loves you!

All: I am somebody!

One: God places us here to be the church.

All: We are somebody.

One: A beacon of light, a chorus of praise.

All: We are somebody.

Gathering Prayer:

Holy God, we come fully recognizing that all people of whatever race or back-ground belong to you. Prompt us, O Lord, to reach out in love to our brothers and sisters on earth. Help us especially to remember, that as we gather about the cross that reveals your love for everyone, we are all God's children and that Christ died for every soul on earth. In his name, we pray. Amen.

Musical Interlude:

Choral

Flor Peeters

A Reading:

Pieces

Pieces

Our country is in pieces

A life in pieces

We want to live new times, Lord God.

We want to see flourishing signs of hope

that we may put the pieces together

and rebuild a united country.

We cry out for the Spirit of Unity,

so that we may come from the four corners of this land

that the breath of new life may caress all beings.....

Come, Come Spirit of God,

spread over this land that is in the midst of internal strife and conflict

spread over all groups and factions within our society

spread over differing creeds, races, and cultures

spread over.....

May a new wind blow

to fill us with desire and strength

so the pieces may become one body

because you created us as one, and that is how you wanted us to be.

Hymn:

Help Us Accept Each Other

Help us accept each other as Christ accepted us;

teach us as sister, brother, each person to embrace.

Be present, Lord, among us, and bring us to believe

we are ourselves accepted and meant to love and live.

Lord, for today's encounters with all who are in need,

who hunger for acceptance, for justice and for bread,

we need new eyes for seeing, new hands for holding on:

renew us with your Spirit; Lord, free us, make us one!

Prayer for Unity

God of all creation, we pray for your world and your people, full of promise and yet full of the reality of suffering and abuse and pain. We pray for the renewal in ways of thinking and acting among all your children, that we may become partners with you in the healing of the suffering we create with thinking that is parochial and exclusive.

Especially, we pray that the religions and beliefs of the various cultures will bring peace and unity rather than war and division, and that the message of Christ will liberate us from all that divides us from those around us.

Amen.

Reading from the Holy Scriptures:**Galatians 3:26-29 (NIV)**

26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Musical Interlude:**Élévation No. 4****A. Metzner****Reading from the Holy Scriptures:****Hebrews 13:1-3, 6-8 (NIV)**

13 Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. 2 Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. 3 Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

6 So we say with confidence,

“The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.

What can mere mortals do to me?”

7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. 8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Prayer for Strength:

Almighty God, your Son preached justice and social equality — and the coming of the kingdom of God. The apostle Paul reminds us that we are one in Christ, that “There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, male and female.” But we know that is not true in practice, merely a lofty goal. We are divided by race, gender, economics, politics and religion. We give thanks this morning for all who have fought and struggled against discrimination, seeking change and equality for all people; for people like Martin Luther King Jr., who preached and lived the gospel so eloquently. We ask you to grant us courage to act, and not turn away in fear when we see oppression and discrimination. Help us also to preach and live out the gospel each day. Open our eyes to injustice and loosen our tongues to speak out against it. Help us to trust that you always give us the strength we need. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Musical Selection:**Gift of Finest Wheat****Omer Westendorf**

Sharing the Common Meal:

(Invitation)

Partake of the bread and the wine, the ageless symbols of Christ's life given for others.

Eat and drink because of your need and not because of some special goodness and you may possess or privilege you may feel.

Reach out to those near you and receive their friendship, reach up to receive the friendship of God and be this day truly reconciled.

(Communion Prayer)

You emptied yourself completely keeping nothing for Yourself.

Now naked, utterly stripped you give yourself to us as bread which sustains us and as wine that consoles us.

You are the Way and the Hope, You are Love, grow in us, Lord!

Eat the Bread of Life and drink of the Cup of Forgiveness

Pastoral Prayer:

God of grace and truth, we bow our heads in remembrance: With dismay we remember a time when the Christian people of our nation were content to buy and sell human beings, often fellow Christians, like livestock. With thankfulness we remember how you have inspired generations of courageous leaders who sacrificed everything in order to remove the shame of slavery from our land.

We remember the peaceful warriors, like Martin Luther King Jr., through whom you have worked to increase dignity and liberty for all. We turn to you in hope, for the task is not yet complete. Inspire us mightily, that we may continue the work of freedom in the cause of peace. Create in us such a thirst for justice and such a horror of bigotry, that we will strive willingly to comprehend complex issues and to train ourselves and our children in the ways of respect and acceptance. Work in our hard hearts, teaching us to judge people not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. In our daily lives, so sharpen our consciences that we can break the habit of making degrading comments about entire populations because of the actions of a few.

Enlighten the eyes of our hearts, that we may see one another as you see us: beloved children, forgiven sinners, trying to make our way through life as best we can with the resources we have. Prevent us (consciously or unconsciously) from denying anyone the chance to pursue their dream simply because their gender, their race or their ancestry doesn't conform to our expectations. Deliver us from that "hardening of the attitudes" that refuses to listen and learn, and by so refusing condemns us to repeat the sins of the

past. Help us forgive one another, advocate for one another and delight in one another, that through us the world may see all the colors of your creation in a new and holy light. For the sake of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Musical Interlude:

Nimrod from the Enigma Variations

Edward Elgar

Proclaiming our Beliefs:

“We hold these truths to be [sacred and undeniable] self evident,”

“that all men are created equal and independent;”

“that from that equal creation they derive in rights inherent and inalienable,”

“among which are the preservation of life,”

“and liberty”

“and the pursuit of happiness.”

Closing Thoughts:

Closing Hymn:

“We Shall Overcome”

1.

We shall overcome, we shall overcome

We shall overcome some day.

Refrain:

Oh, deep in my heart I do believe,

we shall overcome some day.

2.

We'll walk hand in hand, we'll walk hand in hand

We'll walk hand in hand some day.

Refrain:

3.

We shall all be free, we shall all be free
We shall all be free some day.

Refrain:

4.

We are not afraid, we are not afraid,
We are not afraid some day.

Refrain:

5.

We are not alone, we are not alone
We are not alone some day.

Refrain:

Benediction:

May God's great spirit empower us to teach like Christ, to heal like Christ, to love like Christ, to forgive like Christ and to serve like Christ. May the Lord Jesus Christ go before us, equipping, empowering and supporting us, as we live out our faith each and every day. Amen.

Postlude:

Ein Feste Burg

Johann Christoph Bach

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