

ST. JOHN UNITED CHURCH
A UNITED METHODIST/PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA) COMMUNITY
WILDE LAKE INTERFAITH CENTER • COLUMBIA, MARYLAND
UNITED IN LOVE – UNITED FOR SERVICE

February 19, 2023

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH // IN-PERSON & ONLINE SERVICE

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Liturgist: Nancy Gabie

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WE GATHER IN GOD’S NAME

PRELUDE

Patricia Hammer
Accompanist

WORDS OF WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

OPENING SONG

“Oh, Freedom!”

(Golden Gospel Singers; video)

Oh, freedom, Oh, freedom,
Oh freedom over me.
And before I'd be a slave
I'd be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.

No more weepin (don't you know), no more weepin,
no more weepin over me.
And before I'd be a slave
I'd be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.

Oh freedom,
Oh, freedom, Oh, freedom,
Oh freedom over me.
And before I'd be a slave
I'd be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.

And before I'd be a slave
I'd be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Let us trust in God and do good,
So we can live safely without fear.
Let us trust in God and God will act.
God will vindicate the oppressed and will shine forth in justice.
Our steps are steadied by God who secures our path.
Though we stumble, we won't fall, for God is holding our hand.
Let us not envy those who do evil.
Let us release our anger, and leave resentment behind.
God illuminates the path of justice,
So that we might follow in faith.

God is our refuge in the time of trouble;
Our helper, our rescuer, our savior.
God loves justice and will never forsake the faithful.
We will commit our way to God.

LITANY OF CONFESSION AND CALL TO RESISTANCE

Led by Guy Moody, Susan Moody, Patsy Nwagbaraocha, Debra Snow

Let us confess our complicity in the tools of segregation and racial injustice and declare our resistance.

In 1910 Baltimore became the 1st city to adopt “an ordinance to prohibit African Americans from buying homes on blocks where whites were a majority and vice versa.” Wrong-race residents were evicted.

We confess our country’s deliberate racial segregation of neighborhoods.

In 1917 the mayor of Baltimore organized an official “Committee of Segregation,” led by the city’s chief legal officer. The committee organized and supported neighborhood associations that would adopt racially restrictive covenants.

We confess to a history of racial exclusion in our country. We acknowledge where we have benefited from such exclusion. We will resist.

In its 1936 manual, the FHA recommended that deeds to properties for which it issued mortgage insurance should include an explicit prohibition of resale to African Americans.

We denounce any policies, past and present, that have profited white people over people of color. We who have benefited from such policies confess our complicity. We will resist.

In a 1973 study HUD found a systematic pattern of overassessment in low-income African American neighborhoods, with corresponding underassessment in white middle-class neighborhoods. In Baltimore, the property tax burden in the white middle-class community of Guilford, near Johns Hopkins University, was 1/9th that of African American East Baltimore.

We denounce unjust taxation policies. We will stand to resist when we see such injustices.

In 1974 construction of I-170, “the highway to nowhere”, began. It destroyed 971 homes, 62 businesses, and one school in a vibrant black community. Although only 1.4 miles were built, it’s impact on the community was devastating and is still felt today.

In Howard County, the construction of I-95 divided the African-American community of Guilford.

We denounce the deliberate destruction of black communities and will support efforts to restore them. We will stand for equity and justice.

In 2007 a suit by the City of Baltimore presented evidence that Wells Fargo established a unit staffed exclusively by African Americans who were instructed to visit black churches to market subprime loans.

We denounce any way we may have invested in and profited from unfair lending practices. We will resist.

In 2015, Maryland’s governor cancelled a proposed rail link to Baltimore’s west-side black neighborhood, saying the funds were needed for highway improvements.

We confess that we have prioritized roads to white suburbs over public transportation to black neighborhoods. We will resist.

The 14th amendment, ratified in 1868 states that:

“No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

We confess that our country has not lived up to this. We will resist efforts to deny these rights and protections.

History quoted from:

The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America, by Richard Rothstein; “Baltimore’s ‘Highway to Nowhere’ destroyed Black neighborhoods. The Inflation Reduction Act could help tear it down” 10-10-22, fastcompany.com

SCRIPTURE READING

Esther 4:13 – 14

ANTHEM

“I Want Jesus to Walk with Me”

SJU Chancel Choir

Jay Althouse

I want Jesus to walk with me
Lead me onward and set me free
I want Jesus to talk with me
Be my captain and set me free

When I'm weak and feeling all alone
I want Him by my side
When I'm tired and far away from home
Jesus, be my guide

SECOND READING

Galatians 3:23 – 29

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Debra Snow

MESSAGE

“THE COLOR OF LAW IN OUR LIVES”

Guy Moody, Charlotte Collins, Susan Moody, Patsy Nwagbaraocha

OFFERTORY SONG OF REFLECTION

“Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Round”

(SCAN-HARBOR Performing Arts Academy's Elite Ensemble; video)

Marching up to freedom land

Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round,
turn me 'round, turn me 'round,
Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round
I'm gonna keep on a walkin', keep on a-talkin',
Marching up to freedom land.

Ain't gonna let segregation turn me 'round,
turn me 'round, turn me 'round, ...

Ain't gonna let Jim Crow/Jane Crow turn me 'round,
turn me 'round, turn me 'round, ...

Ain't gonna let racism turn me 'round,
turn me 'round, turn me 'round, ...

Ain't gonna let injustice turn me 'round,
turn me 'round, turn me 'round, ...

Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round,
turn me 'round, turn me 'round, ...

CALL TO GENEROSITY

from UMC Discipleship Ministries

Stand (as you are able) and put your hands in front of you, palms open to the sky. Remember that everything the Lord and the world needs is right in front of you – the spirit and will to live, thrive, and survive - resilience; the power to make a difference – resisting evil; the grace and mercy and blessing of our generous God. I invite you now to consider how you will make a difference in the world, strengthened by and partnering with God and this congregation. Let us bring our call and our doubts before the Lord as we pray:

Lord, we come now to offer our talents, our hearts, our love — our everything. You continue to make a way when there doesn't seem to be one. You ask that we lay everything on the altar and be made whole. Lord, we do. Bless, keep, mold, shape, heal us in every way. Amen.

BENEDICTION

Adapted from UMC Discipleship Ministries

Today is all we have. We will rejoice, we will be renewed and we will learn from the past, cherish today, and welcome the future because you have given us a powerful and sacred history. We will teach and learn, speak and listen, and grow strong every day of every month. In so doing, we will resist injustice and hate. Amen.

CLOSING SONG

“We Shall Overcome”

We shall overcome,
we shall overcome
We shall overcome someday.

Refrain:

*Oh deep in my heart, I do believe
That we shall overcome someday*

We'll walk hand in hand ...
Refrain

We shall live in peace ...
Refrain

The truth shall make us free ...
Refrain

POSTLUDE

“Lift Every Voice and Sing”

Patricia Hammer
accompanist

Readings are NRSV unless otherwise noted. CEB=Common English Bible; CEV=Contemporary English Version; KJV=King James Version; MSG=The Message; NIV=New International Version; NLT=New Living Translation; TIB=The Inclusive Bible

Esther 4:13 – 14

Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. ¹⁴ For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.”

Galatians 3:23 – 29

²³ Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed.

²⁴ Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith.

²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian,

²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.

²⁷ As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

