

Black History Month Worship Resources

Music

Resources for Predominantly White Churches Doing Racial Justice Work

<https://congregational song.org/questions-for-the-director-resources-for-white-churches-doing-racial-justice-work/>

Source: *Sing! The Centre for Congregational Song*

Evangelical Lutheran Worship

325 I Want Jesus to Walk with Me
401 Gracious Spirit, Heed our Pleading
439 Soon and Very Soon
479 We Come to the Hungry Feast
614 There is a Balm in Gilead
633 We've Come this Far by Faith
770 Give Me Jesus
773 Precious Lord, Take My Hand
801 Change My Heart, O god
841 Lift Every Voice and Sing

All Creation Sings

903 Freedom is Coming
925 Beautiful Things
942 Every Time I Feel the Spirit
949 Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning
950 Oh, When the Saints Go Marching In
951 Deep River
968 Feed Us with Hunger for Justice
1072 Abba, Abba Hear Us
1080 Total Praise
1096 Joyful is the Dark

Artist: The Porters Gate

Father, Let Your Kingdom Come
We Labor Unto Glory
O Sacred Neck, Now Wounded
We Will Make No Peace with Oppression
Instrument of Peace
Your Labor is Not in Vain
Jesus, Bread of Life
Teach Us Your Ways

Prayers

Confession and Forgiveness

Gracious God, we thank you for making one human family of all the peoples of the earth and for creating all the wonderful diversity of cultures.

Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship and show us your presence in those who differ most from us.

From the bondage of racism that denies the humanity of every human being and the prejudices within us that deny the dignity of those who are oppressed, Lord set us free:

Lord, have mercy.

From racism that blinds oppressors to the destruction caused by the spirit and practice of racial injustice, Christ set us free:

Christ, have mercy.

From the racism that will not recognize the work of your Spirit in other cultures: Lord set us free:

Lord, have mercy.

Forgive those of us who have been silent and apathetic in the face of racial intolerance and bigotry, both overt and subtle, public and private.

And take away the arrogance and hatred that infect our hearts.

Break down the walls that separate us.

And help us to find that unity that is the fruit of righteousness and will enable us to become your beloved community.

Empower us to speak boldly for justice and truth and help us to deal with one another without hatred or bitterness, working together with mutual forbearance and respect.

And work through our struggles and confusion to accomplish your purposes.

O God of unconditional love,
you who show no partiality in respect to people or nations,
we have heard your good news of great joy for all the people.
We hear that good news, and in hearing, believe.
We know that your sanctuary is a house of worship for all people,
with no regard for the color of our skin.
As we worship you, knit us into a people,
a seamless garment of many colors.
May we celebrate our unity, made whole in our diversity.
Forgive us for our inability to let our "old selves" die to the world.

We acknowledge that we participate in structures that are inherently racist,
and yet we so often do nothing to remedy it.

Show us we fail when we judge others according to the color of their flesh.

God, who is rich in mercy, loves us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of +Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith.

Amen.

*Source: ELCA Commitment to End Racism Sunday
Adapted from the United Church of Christ's "Prayers for Racial Justice Sunday"
(www.ucc.org/worship/ways) and from the United Church of Canada
(www.united-church.ca/bfw/resources.shtm)*

Prayers on Racism and Prejudice

O God, you form all humanity to bear your divine image, and you intend for everyone to live together in harmonious dignity. We pray for all people, whether ourselves or others, who suffer the cruelties of racial or ethnic prejudice. Grant your Spirit of power to all who are oppressed. Give healing to victims of violence, protection to the vulnerable and abused, better housing and worthy employment to the mistreated, courage to the fearful, a remedy for rage, strength to parents and caregivers, and hope to children and youth. Purge the privileged of their sense of superiority, and lead church and society to foster communities of equity and diversity; through Jesus Christ, our loving Savior.

Amen.

O God, in your divine mystery you embrace difference in unity, and you call your people to live in peace with all. We pray for an end to racial and ethnic prejudice. Free us from the dread of difference. Free the church from constricting traditions. Free our society from centuries of violence against the other. Break down the walls that separate your people by color, culture, or religion. Call us to repentance for our sins of racism and prejudice, known and unknown. Transform discrimination into a passion for justice. Guide us to nurture a society that embodies reconciliation and cooperation among all, for the sake of the one who embodies your love, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Good and gracious God, you invite us to recognize and reverence your divine image and likeness in our neighbor. Enable us to see the reality of racism and free us to challenge and uproot it from our society, our world, and ourselves.

Amen.

Source: All Creation Sings 2020

We Extend Our Arms to One Another

Leader: Consider inviting participants to extend their arms to God and one another.

The grace of God be with the oppressed, the poor, the marginalized, and the groaning creation. We open our arms, for it is right and good to extend our arms to one another.

*Source: Claudio Carvalhaes 2020
Liturgies from Below, 462 Acts of Worship: Praying with People at the Ends of the World*

But We Are...Kyrie Eleison

We praise mammon with shouts of joy
But we are mute for justice
Kyrie eleison

We see the color of currency
But we are blind of the pain of the poor
Kyrie eleison

We hear the gospel of prosperity
But we are deaf to the groans of the earth
Kyrie eleison

Source: Claudio Carvalhaes 2020

Liturgies from Below, 462 Acts of Worship: Praying with People at the Ends of the World

Communion Prayer

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, you have brought us this far along the way. In times of bitterness you did not abandon us, but guided us into the path of love and light. In every age you sent prophets to make known your loving will for all humanity. The cry of the poor has become your own cry; our hunger and thirst for justice is your own desire.

In the fullness of time, you sent your chosen servant to preach good news to the afflicted, to break bread with the outcast and despised, and to ransom those in bondage to prejudice and sin.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Remembering, therefore, his death and resurrection, we await the day when Jesus shall return to free all the earth from the bonds of slavery and death. Come, Lord Jesus! And let the church say, Amen.

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Amen.

Send your Holy Spirit, our advocate, to fill the hearts of all who share this bread and cup with courage and wisdom to pursue love and justice in all the world. Come, Spirit of freedom! And let the church say, Amen.

Amen.

Join our prayers and praise with your prophets and martyrs of every age, that, rejoicing in the hope of the resurrection, we might live in the freedom and hope of your Son.

Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is yours, almighty Father, now and forever.

Amen.

Source: Evangelical Lutheran Worship

Creed

We believe in Jesus Christ,
Our saviour and liberator,
the expression of God's redeeming and restoring love,
the mark of humanness,
source of courage, power, and love,
God of God,
light of light,
ground of our humanity.

We believe that God resides in slums,
lives in broken homes and hearts,
suffers our loneliness, rejection, and powerlessness.
But through death and resurrection
God gives life, pride, and dignity,
provides the content of our vision,
offers the context of our struggle,
promises liberation
to the oppressor and the oppressed,
hope to those in despair, vision to the blind.

We believe in the activity of the Holy Spirit
who revives our decaying soul,
resurrects our defeated spirits,
renews our hope of wholeness
and reminds us of our responsibility
in ushering in God's new order here and now.

Source: Yong Ting Jin, In God's Image 1986

Litanies and Laments

Racial Justice Litany

Land Acknowledgment

We begin by acknowledging the Lands on which we are located, and their stewards • (*Include any and all indigenous peoples and lands here*) And we also acknowledge that we are all treaty people, and are therefore all bound to a mutual relationship, both with each other, and with the land on which we live.

Dialogue

Voice 1 - O Canada, our home on native land

The things we have said

Voice 2 - The things we have done

Voice 1 - You black loyalists can live in Birchtown near Shelburne... as long as you don't expect supplies

Voice 2 - And then white settlers will riot against you and destroy your livelihood, and give you an unrefusable offer to transport to you to Sierra Leone, where you have never been

Voice 1 - And you indigenous people of Membertou can live on the shores where you have always lived

Voice 2 - Until we want to use that shore land to build our railroads and our industries and dump our waste into your sacred waters

Voice 1 - You blacks in Halifax can live in Africville... as long as you don't expect roads or plumbing

Voice 2 - But we reserve the right to build a waste treatment plant next to you, and then insist "It's not safe for you anymore" and so disperse your community so we can construct a shipping terminal on that "empty land"

Voice 1 - And you Lubicon peoples can live on your traditional lands

Voice 2 - Until we discover a way to extract oil from the shale sands beneath your feet

Voice 1 - And you Canadian-born people of Japanese ancestry, you can live in the Steveston area of Vancouver

Voice 2 - Until war with Japan comes, and we confiscate your property, and move you into internment camps, and then, when the war is over, force you to choose between moving east of the Rockies to start over yet again, or moving to a war-ravaged Japan which you have never even visited, let alone lived

[Pause for reflection, or perhaps a song of lament may be sung]

Voice 2 - O Canada, our home on native land

The things we have said

Voice 1 - The things we continue to say

Voice 2 - We say, "Racism is a terrible thing"

Voice 1 - And in the same breath we say, "Unless they deserve it"

Voice 2 - We say, "At least we're not as bad as 'fill in the blank'"

Voice 1 - And then we "liberate" women who freely choose hijabs by telling them what they can and cannot wear

Voice 2 - We say, "It doesn't happen here"

Voice 1 - But then we say "White church" in reference to architecture

And we say "Black church" in reference to membership

Voice 2 - Where we say, "I'm not racist"

Voice 1 - But follow it up with, "I just have opinions about those people"

Voice 2 - Where we say, "Why don't they get a job so we don't have to pay their way any more"

Voice 1 - But when they apply to work, we tell them, "We're not hiring people like you"

Voice 2 - Where we print, "Welcome to Canada" on our border signs and immigration forms

Voice 1 - But then say, "Go back where you came from" when they arrive

Voice 2 - Where we proudly proclaim, "We are a nation of immigrants"

Voice 1 - But then say, "You're not a real Canadian" to the faces of any who do not look, or eat, or dress, or pray like us

[Short pause]

Voice 2 - O God of wonderful diversity

Voice 1 - We confess our lack of welcome

Voice 2 - We confess our double standards

Voice 1 - We confess our intentional and perpetual divisions

Voice 2 - Heal us

Voice 1 - Free us

Voice 2 - Motivate us

Voice 1 - Change us

Voice 2 - By the coming of the one who walks among us as stranger

Voice 1 - In the name of the one who calls us to a wonderful diversity

Voice 2 - Amen

Voice 1 - Amen

Source: Rev. Rick Pryce

A Litany For Those Who Aren't Ready For Healing

Let us not rush to the language of healing, before understanding the fullness of the injury and the depth of the wound.

Let us not rush to offer a band-aid, when the gaping wound requires surgery and complete reconstruction.

Let us not offer false equivalencies, thereby diminishing the particular pain being felt in a particular circumstance in a particular historical moment.

Let us not speak of reconciliation without speaking of reparations and restoration, or how we can repair the breach and how we can restore the loss.

Let us not rush past the loss of this mother's child, this father's child ... someone's beloved son.

Let us not value property over people; let us not protect material objects while human lives hang in the balance.

Let us not value a false peace over a righteous justice.

Let us not be afraid to sit with the ugliness, the messiness, and the pain that is life in community together.

Let us not offer clichés to the grieving, those whose hearts are being torn asunder.

Instead ...

Let us mourn black and brown men and women, those killed extrajudicially much too often.

Let us lament the loss of a teenager, dead at the hands of a police officer who described him as a demon.

Let us weep at a criminal justice system, which is neither blind nor just.

Let us call for the mourning men and the wailing women, those willing to rend their garments of privilege and ease, and sit in the ashes of this nation's original sin.

Let us be silent when we don't know what to say.

Let us be humble and listen to the pain, rage and grief pouring from the lips of our neighbors and friends.

Let us decrease, so that our brothers and sisters who live on the underside of history may increase.

Let us pray with our eyes open and our feet firmly planted on the ground.

Let us listen to the shattering glass and let us smell the purifying fires, for it is the language of the unheard.

God, in your mercy ...

Show me my own complicity in injustice.

Convict me for my indifference.

Forgive me when I have remained silent.

Equip me with a zeal for righteousness.

ALL: Never let me grow accustomed or acclimated to unrighteousness.

Source: Dr. Yolanda Pierce 2014

Lamenting Racism

This lament and prayer may be used in preparation for the work of faithful listening in discussions around racism and racial reconciliation, and at other appropriate times. The naming of communities, situations, and experiences may be adapted for the context or occasion.

People of color may opt for silence during parts of this lament to contemplate the community's words.

A leader introduces a gathering lament in these or similar words.

The sin of racism hurts communities of color, fractures human relationships, and denies God's good creation. Lament is a way for us to recognize the harm caused by racism.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:35-39). God's grace in Christ frees us for the difficult work of recognizing and lamenting racism.

We are all part of one body in Christ, called to act with equity, fairness, and justice. God's saving love creates grace-filled spaces within us and within our relationships. God's saving love calls and leads us toward rooting out the racism that continues to infect the body.

A leader invites those gathered into lament and prayer in these or similar words.

Within the whole human family, people of color have experienced both interpersonal aggression and structural oppression instead of abundant life. We recognize and lament the harm racism has caused to African Descent communities; American Indian and Alaska Native communities; Indigenous Peoples within Canada; Arab and Middle Eastern communities; Asian and Pacific Islander communities; and Latinx communities. We cry out to you,
hear our lament, O God.

We have assigned the notion of race to human beings created in God's own divine image. We have judged God's beautiful diversity by our flawed and artificial standards. We cry out to you,
hear our lament, O God.

We have used language and images in ways that equate black and dark with dirt and sin, and that fail to welcome the treasures of darkness in God's good creation. We cry out to you,
hear our lament, O God.

We have accepted practices in our churches and in our society that privilege whiteness over diversity and equity. We have been complicit in how racism continues to exclude and harm people of color. We cry out to you,
hear our lament, O God.

When one part of the body of Christ hurts, the whole body hurts. As we listen to people who are harmed by racism, we call to you,
open our hearts, O God.

As we reflect on our daily interactions with people and communities of color, we call to you,
open our hearts, O God.

As we reconsider what we have been taught about race and racism, we call to you,
open our hearts, O God.

As we contemplate what we have done and what we have left undone, we call to you,
open our hearts, O God.

As we labor to create a loving and safe community for our siblings of color, we call to you,
open our hearts, O God.

Holy and merciful God, as your people we recommit ourselves to loving one another as you have loved us. Prepare us for this time of listening and discovery. We pray in the name of the one who has made us one, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Source: All Creation Sings 2020

Sending

A Benediction for Standing Firm

God sees you and calls you by name. God calls you to stand firm in the face of oppression and injustice, to stand. May you stand firm then as the Holy Spirit enlivens you hope, as Jesus Christ renews your faith, as God enfolds you in love.

Source: Claudio Carvalhaes 2020

Liturgies from Below, 462 Acts of Worship: Praying with People at the Ends of the World

Benediction for Stepping Out into the Empire

And now, even as you step out in the Empire,
Be not of this structure, but be:
The light that liberates
The salt that savors
The hands that heal

The water that washes,
Until all have access to God's great and beautiful creation.
Amen.

*Source: Claudio Carvalhaes 2020
Liturgies from Below, 462 Acts of Worship: Praying with People at the Ends of the World*

The Living, Disturbing God

Let us go in peace with the living, disturbing God:
To disrupt those who are comfortable,
Comfort those who mourn,
And walk alongside those who suffer.

Now receive the blessing of God all-loving:
God our Mother who holds us in our pain,
God our brother, Jesus the Christ, who gives us courage to resist,
And God the Spirit who binds us together in all that is free.
Amen.

Source: Claudio Carvalhaes 2020, Liturgies from Below, 462 Acts of Worship: Praying with People at the Ends of the World