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# Marking the Legacy of Slavery in Canada and the British Commonwealth

# Theme: All Are Made in the Image of God

—*By the Rev. Paul Douglas Walfall,* First United Church, Fort Saskatchewan, AB

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### Acknowledging the Traditional Territory

See [Acknowledging the Territory in Worship](https://www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/prayer-action-and-community) on The United Church of Canada website (search “acknowledge territory”).

### Announcements

## Welcome to This House of Prayer and Praise

On August 28, 1833, the Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies received royal assent and became law throughout the British Empire. The Act came into force on August 1, 1834. Prior to this in Upper Canada, now Ontario, in 1793, Governor John Graves Simcoe passed the Anti-slavery Act. This law freed enslaved people aged 25 and over and made it illegal to bring enslaved people into Upper Canada.

The year 2020 will mark the 186th anniversary of total abolition of slavery in Canada. We pause to acknowledge this moment in history. We remember as we worship and commit ourselves to continue to work for a world where righteousness and justice will be found everywhere.

### Candle of Love

God is love, and where God is there is love. There is no fear in love, perfect love casts out fear;
Let us celebrate the wonderful love that God has for all God’s creation.

*Light candle.*

### Centring Song

“Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love” (*Voices United* 593)

### Call to Worship

With what shall we come before our God?
**God has already told us what is good.**
Shall we come with gifts and offerings?
**God wants us to do justice.**
What does the Lord require of us?
**God wants us to love kindness.**
What does the Lord require of us?
**God wants us to walk humbly with God.**
Come then, let us worship God.

### Hymn

“Come Touch Our Hearts” (*More Voices* 12)

### Opening Prayer

Hear us Holy One
You created all human beings in your image and likeness. You have stamped each human person with a unique specialness, and all persons bear your image.
Through that image you call on us to reflect your goodness, justice, and love to all the world. Remind us that when we speak out for justice, mercy, and compassion we are displaying the attributes we find in you.
As we come to offer to you what we believe you are worth, show us how to display you in everything we do. Show us how to respect your image in all human beings. Help us to defend your image that is found in all human beings.
Amen.

### Candle of Remembering

Let us light a candle to remember those who have been affected the transatlantic enslavement of African peoples and all who even today are affected by slavery and its legacy.

*Light candle.*

### Hymn

“I Love You, God, Who Heard My Cry” (VU 617)
or
“Goodness Is Stronger than Evil” (<https://hymnary.org/text/goodness_is_stronger_than_evil>)

## Litany of Remembering and Confession

Let us pause to remember those who have been enslaved. We recall that for over 400 years, more than 15 million people were the victims of the tragic transatlantic slave trade. During this time human beings made in the image of God were bought and sold, treated as property, and considered to be less than human.

**Have mercy on us, O God. Help us to regard all persons as made in your image. Create in us a clean heart, and put a new and right spirit within us.**

### Hymn

“I Love You, God, Who Heard My Cry” (VU 617)
or
“Goodness Is Stronger than Evil”

Let us pause to remember the families that were broken by enslavement. We recall the parents who never saw their children. We recall the family ties that were broken because of forced separation, the tears that were shed, the bitterness caused, and the hurts that continue.

**Help us O God, to regard others with love and kindness. Create in us a clean heart, and put a new and right spirit within us.**

### Hymn

“I Love You, God, Who Heard My Cry” (VU 617)
or
“Goodness Is Stronger than Evil”

Let us pause to remember the ways we continue in our world to treat others based on the financial profit we can derive from them: the persons who work in poor conditions and who are underpaid, the children who are forced to work and receive less than minimum wage, the migrant workers who are exploited.

**Help us, O God, to live in right relations with others. Create in us a clean heart, and put a new and right spirit within us.**

### Hymn

“I Love You, God, Who Heard My Cry” (VU 617)
or
“Goodness Is Stronger than Evil”

Slavery still exists today. We remember the women who have been sold into slavery for prostitution. We remember the children who are sold into slavery left vulnerable by poverty. We remember persons who are enslaved because of their addictions.

**Forgive us, O God, when we forget that we are each other’s neighbours. Create in us a clean heart, and put a new and right spirit within us.**

**Amen.**

### Hymn

“I Love You, God, Who Heard My Cry” (VU 617)
or
“Goodness Is Stronger than Evil”

## Ministry of the Word

### Hymn

“Amazing Grace” (VU 266)
or
“Lift Every Voice and Sing” (<https://hymnary.org/tune/lift_every_voice_johnson>)

### Scripture Reading

Genesis 1:26–28
Galatians 5:1, 13–26

### Message

Visit the UN Decade for People of African Descent webpage, [www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/](https://www.un.org/en/events/africandescentdecade/), for reflection ideas.

## Our Response

### Offertory

Your gifts to us are diverse and many. In gratitude for all you have given to us we offer these gifts of money. Yet not only our monies—we also offer to you our time and our abilities. Use these gifts to make your love known throughout the world. We dedicate ourselves and all that we are to your work. This we pray in your name.
Amen.

### Candle of Hope

We light a candle of hope. Hope because God is still at work in our world. We believe that love is stronger than all the ills of the world. The legacies of slavery still exist in our world, and persons of African descent are still the recipients of racism; these are some of the realities in our world. We are called to let the light of God’s love shine in the world.

*Light candle.*

### Call to Commitment

As we light this candle, let us also commit ourselves to bear the light of the hope of our lives. In so doing, let us commit ourselves to work for a world that is more just, more loving, and more caring, and where we live in right relations.

*Share tangible steps your community of faith is taking to combat racism and work toward a more just world. Or, encourage people to reflect on what steps they can take personally this week, this month, and this year toward living into right relationships.*

### The Lord’s Prayer (Caribbean Tune)

### Hymn

“Though Ancient Walls” (VU 691)

### Benediction

In a world where we have, in the past, enslaved and dehumanized others,
**we go to treat each person with dignity and respect.**In a world where profit is valued more than human life,
**we go to proclaim the priceless worth of each person.**In a world where the ugliness of racism and White supremacy is found,
**we go to show that love conquers all social ills.**Go forth into the world in peace;
be of good courage;
hold fast that which is good;
render to no one evil for evil;
strengthen the fainthearted;
support the weak;
help the afflicted;
honour everyone;
love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit;
and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be amongst you and remain with you always.
**Amen.**