

A WORSHIP SERVICE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on March 21. On that day in 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, against the apartheid “pass laws.” Proclaiming the day in 1966, the United Nations General Assembly called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination (resolution 2142 (XXI)). The worship suggestions below are compiled from United Church resources.

Call to Worship

- One: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
- All: And also with you.**
- One: We come bearing treasures—some hidden, some apparent.
- All: We come with our own life histories, our ethnic and linguistic histories,
our spiritual and religious histories.**
- One: We come hungry for racial justice—in all its intersections of gender identity,
class, ability and language, in ways not yet articulated.
- All: We come with a hunger for life budding along the margins
and for right relationships among us.**
- One: People of God come, let us worship together
in the name in which we are all made one.

The Rev. Teresa Burnett-Cole; adapted from a service at the General Council Office on October 5, 2009

Other suggestions from *Celebrate God's Presence*:

5F001 p. 149

5F002 p. 149

Opening Prayer

Creator, Lover, Friend,
Source of life and Ground of our being,
we pray with Christians and others of faith and good will around the world,
on this International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.
We pray that the beauty and diversity of all your children, O God, is valued.
That your image reflected in the varied hues of skin throughout the human race is recognized.
May we rejoice in the diverse images we meet today and every day,
so that the face of Christ in the world is real to us.
May you continue to do “new things” in the world and in us, Holy One,
that we may overturn the stones of racial oppression and injustice
as manifested in many subtle ways around us.
Guide us in your path of love and justice, respect and care for each person,
and for the living out of your realm of love and inclusion for all your people. Amen.

The Rev. Jennifer Janzen-Ball

Other suggestions from *Celebrate God's Presence*:

5A001 p. 151

5G003 p. 152

19G001 p. 125

Prayer of Confession

**O God of the Exodus, of liberation and new life,
We come to you in prayer naming the “old things” to which we cling:
stereotypes based on race;
unearned privileges that are ours because of gender or skin colour;
unwillingness to speak out against racism and all that diminishes other human beings;
internalized racism that keeps us from acknowledging our cultural and ethnic gifts.**

O God, we confess our complicity in racism, whether we participate intentionally or not. We live in societies, institutions and churches built on structures that privilege one group over the others. The word “racism” is difficult for us to hear and to speak. Open our eyes so we may understand that this is not your desire or vision for us.

**We come with contrite hearts,
longing to have new hearts created within us,
seeking the waters of righteousness
that will overturn injustice
and create anew ways of living faithfully together
that honour the dignity of each person.**

We long for right relationships, O God,
for abundance of life within you.

In your grace, heal and transform us and our institutions
that the rainbow of humanity may be fully reflected, gloriously alive in you.

**In all things we pray, through the fully Human One, Jesus the Christ,
Amen.**

The Rev. Jennifer Janzen-Ball

Other suggestions from *Celebrate God's Presence*:
5I001 p. 153
0I014 pp. 144–45

Hymn Suggestions (from *More Voices*)

MV 66 Senzeni Na?
MV 76 If I Have Been the Source of Pain
MV 78 God Weeps
MV 79 Spirit, Open My Heart

Words of Assurance

God goes before us and God's Spirit inspires us.
God understands our frailty and our fear
 yet fires our passion for our faith community
This is our assurance that the work of building God's community
 will continue in a good and holy way.

The Rev. Teresa Burnett-Cole

Other suggestions from *Celebrate God's Presence*:

51004 p. 155

51005 p. 156

From *More Voices*:
MV 90 Don't Be Afraid

Lectionary Readings (for March 21, 2010)

Isaiah 43:16–21

Look, I am doing something new.

Psalm 126 (VU p. 850)

Those who sow in tears, reap with joy.

Philippians 3:4b–14

I count everything as loss but knowing Christ.

John 12:1–8

Mary anoints Jesus with costly ointment.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Concern

From *Celebrate God's Presence*:

Prayer H pp. 262–63

Prayer E pp. 254–55

(This prayer was used by the General Council Executive of
the United Church of Canada during a service of repentance in 1998.)

Affirmation from the Congregation

Covenant of Commitment

By the grace of God, we pledge to support each other in our personal and communal journey to struggle for racial justice. We will read, study, pray and meet together with persons and communities of colour.

We will draw on the Spirit for wisdom and learn skills of analysis, to help us become more vigilant in our discernment of racism, and more emboldened to expose it and resist it.

We promise to support each other in the difficult yet joyous privilege of loving all members of the human family.

This we pledge by faith, in the name and way of Jesus.

The Rev. Anthony Bailey, from *Mandate* May 2008: Empire and Racial Power, p. 12

Note: The term “people of colour” is widely accepted as a way to name racial minority peoples. But this term needs a further power analysis: for example, it could help to perpetuate the idea that White people are colourless, that White people are “normal,” and that White people do not have a race. In reality, all people have racial identities, but people who have been named as “racial minority” also have to wrestle with systemic racial discrimination in the context of White privilege and global racism.

One alternative to “people of colour” is the more inclusive term “racialized.” This term works in two ways: first, as an inclusive and collective self-identification term to include people who identify themselves as racial minority, bi-racial, Aboriginal, or Métis. Second, it stresses the idea that in any culture, those in the majority may be oblivious of their own race, but those who are perceived as belonging to a minority often find racial labels thrust upon them.

Affirmation of Hope

Voices United 656

Hymn Suggestions (from *More Voices*)

- MV 1 Let Us Build a House
- MV 115 Behold, Behold, I Make All Things New
- MV 145 Draw the Circle Wide
- MV 154 Deep in Our Hearts
- MV 169 When Hands Reach Out Beyond Divides

Benediction and Commissioning

God of the wilderness,

be with us as we wander through the desert of our lives.

Keep us from running back to the safety of old assumptions,
and walk with us as we learn to live the life abundant. Amen.

From *Wilderness Voices* © UCPH

Other suggestions from *Celebrate God's Presence*:

5G007 p. 160

5G008 p. 160

5G009 p. 160

17W001 p. 160