Created in God’s Image

Worship for the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

## Hymn

## “Let Us Build a House” (*More Voices* 1)

## Call to Worship

We are all created in God’s image, and God has brought us all together.

**We come from east, west, north, and south.**

What do you bring with you?

**We bring diversity and splendour,**

**creativity and life experiences,**

**joy and pain.**

What else?

**We bring art and poetry,**

**music and dance,**

**food and culture.**

Indeed, in you, the Spirit of God is alive and vibrant.

**So, we come with thanksgiving and praise.**

Come, let us worship God together.

## Opening Prayer

God, you are the creator of the universe with awesome majesty, incredible wisdom, and unfathomable mystery. You have also created us in all our diversity, gifts, uniqueness, and colours. Even as we rejoice in the hundreds of breeds of dogs and thousands of varieties of apples, we celebrate the full expressions of humanity in all of our diverse gifts. Through one another, we see your spark of vitality, creativity, and the depth of your love. Help us to embrace your love for each of us, that we, too, may love without prejudice, without discrimination, and without fear. Amen.

## Prayer of Confession

O God, we live in a world divided by economic class, gender, creed, culture, and colour. Some of us live lives of untold privileges while some of us live lives of humiliating mistrust, indignity, and economic poverty all because of our skin colour. Forgive us, O God, for we do not always know what we are doing. (*silence*)

O God, you dwell in all peoples, and sometimes, we forget that what we do to the least of our brothers and sisters, we also do unto you. Forgive us for the times when we did not recognize you in those who are different. Forgive us, O God, when we do not see you in our neighbours. (*silence*)

God of love, we have created systems and structures that provide benefits and opportunities for some people, but use the same structures to exclude others. Forgive us, O God, when we silently appreciate the benefits for ourselves while supporting the continuing oppression of others. (*silence*)

God of forgiveness, we do not see how much pain we inflict on others because of racism. We also do not understand the pain it causes on our souls. Forgive us, renew us, and free us to see your sacred presence in us and others. May we all embrace our shared identity as children of the most high God. Amen.

(*silent prayer*)

## Words of Assurance

God’s way is love and forgiveness.

**We seek to follow that path.**

God’s being is in us.

**We seek to honour God.**

God creates anew.

**We shall live a new life in God.**

God is good,

**all the time.**

All the time,

**God is good.**

## Sharing Peace

The peace of Christ be with you all.

**And also with you.**

Let us share this peace with one another.

## Hymn

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

(*If possible, have the organist play the hymn from* Songs for a Gospel People (*no. 69*)*. It has a different arrangement*.)

## A Story

(*Use the story as is or incorporate it into the sermon. Combine the story-telling/sermon with a reading of Psalm 100 or Psalm 133*.)

Coming out as lesbian while having been raised in a fundamentalist church was a difficult journey. It was not until I was 33, after much study and prayer, that I was able to do so. Seven months after coming out, I attended a Kinship conference for LGBTQ people where I was delighted to meet people who shared my story. I arrived home from that conference elated; I had a whole bunch of new friends and a fabulous T-shirt that sported an upside down pink triangle!

The first Sunday at home, I was getting dressed in order to go out grocery shopping. I excitedly grabbed for my new pink triangle T-shirt and then hesitated. Would I be treated the same wearing this in public—a T-shirt that identified me as a lesbian? Would I be safe? I felt a sense of fear come over me. Then my eyes started to fill with tears as a new awareness dawned on me: I could choose to identify myself as part of a group that is marginalized within society—event hated by many—or I could choose to not identify myself and therefore blend in with those around me. But for people whose skin colour is not white, whose race and ethnicity differ from the dominant culture around them, they have no choice.

I sat down on the bed with tears pouring down my face as I recognized the privilege I had lived with and the total lack of privilege that racialized people have had to face every day of their lives. I could *choose* to blend in while so many others who were visibly different had to face ignorance, discrimination, and the threat of hatred and violence every day of their lives.

I had experienced a paradigm shift in the way I saw the world around me—one that I would never forget.

(*Name withheld*)

## Healing Ritual

(*Insert a small blank sheet of paper in each bulletin and distribute pencils at the start of the service*.)

Recall a time when you were a victim of racism or when you witnessed an act of racism. How did it make you feel? Please write or draw that feeling. When you are finished, bring it up to God. It will be burned as a sign that in God’s love, we are healed.

(*Background music is played while people take time to go through this ritual*.)

(*Participants bring up their papers and light them from a candle; then they place the paper inside a fireproof urn*.)

## Prayer

O God,

we have carried pain and sorrow of racism in our hearts for too long.

We long for a world that is free, one that honours all people as your children.

God of justice and compassion, may your will be done.

May your way of justice bring down the barriers of racism.

May righteousness flow like a mighty stream.

May we learn to appreciate one another’s uniqueness and gifts,

and rejoice in the fullness of your Creation.

May your healing and hope surround us

as we walk humbly with one another in this sacred journey toward healing.

Amen.

## Hymn

“I Have Called You by Your Name” (*More Voices* 161)

## Offertory Prayer

You have enriched us with a myriad of blessings: love, peace, justice, and community. Out of gratitude, we offer our hearts through these gifts. May our offerings bring healing to those in pain, companionship to those who are ignored, justice to those who live in oppression, and jubilation to those who are downtrodden. Amen.

## Hymn

“Go, Make a Diff’rence” (*More Voices* 209)

## Commissioning and Blessing of One Another

One: We now go into the world as a vehicle of God’s eternal spirit to share the gospel, to work toward the Kingdom, and to bring healing and joy to one another. Let us begin this ministry by blessing one another. I invite you to turn to your neighbours. Please be mindful of anyone who is standing by himself or herself. Please look each other in the eyes. Please listen and repeat in unison.

One: Jesus said, (*People repeat* “Jesus said”; *then continue repeating each line*.)

“You are the light of the world.”

Shine your light

with love and joy

justice and peace

in all you do

and in all people.

May God bless you.

Amen.

*Written by* ***Won Hur****, January 2015.*