

The International Decade for People of African Descent: A 2020 Prayer Cycle: Part 1 (February—April 2020)

Introduction to the Decade

The General Assembly of the United Nations has declared 2015–2024 to be the **International Decade for People of African Descent**. In proclaiming this Decade, the international community is recognizing “that people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected.”

As people of faith, we know every part of humanity is a reflection, an embodiment of the wisdom and power of God. Yet all of our collective humanity has been diminished and ruptured through the enslavement of African peoples and the colonization and exploitation of those same peoples’ land.

One of the ways the church is engaging with the Decade is by doing targeted work towards combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerances faced by people of African descent. We know that prayer has the power to transform and amplify our actions. We therefore invite people to pray during this midway point in the Decade for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of people of African descent.

For more information on how The United Church of Canada is engaging in this decade, visit the [Anti-Racism webpage](#) or watch [the introductory video](#) created in conjunction with our full communion partner the United Church of Christ (USA).

How to Use This Prayer Cycle

This Prayer Cycle will be released throughout 2020 in four parts; all parts will be made available for download in the [worship section](#) of the United Church website and on the [Anti-Racism webpage](#).

Consider sharing your prayers on social media (use the hashtags #AfricanDescent, #UCCan, #UCC). A daily schedule of intercessions is suggested in this resource for Part 1.

- **February:** Recognizing people of African descent
- **March:** Lamenting human rights abuses faced by those of African descent
- **April:** Naming injustices faced by those of African descent

February

For each day, add specific names of African-descendant people related to each intercession. If you are sharing prayers on social media, include the hashtags #AfricanDescent, #UCCan, #UCC.

We recognize that people of African descent have contributed to the development and advancement of society through culture, science, and the arts; these contributions are often hidden, undervalued, and underappreciated. And so we give thanks for and celebrate African descendants who have made an undeniable difference in the betterment of society. We give thanks for:

1. Rap masters, as well as the early DJs and MCs that have spoken for generations
2. Environmentalists who have been attentive to the cries of the earth¹
3. Athletes who have challenged our understanding of the human body
4. Doctors who have crossed borders and provided life-saving aid
5. Trendsetters and visionaries
6. Reggae music and its cultural significance to Jamaica and the world²
7. Rock 'n' roll icons who pioneered new styles and forms of music
8. Classical musicians who work in predominately White spaces
9. Folk artists who keep and celebrate customs and traditions
10. The session musicians who provide the musical foundation for popular music
11. Women and girls who are leading in STEM research³
12. Visual artists who express what words cannot
13. Broadcasters and TV producers⁴
14. Religious leaders and moral teachers⁵
15. Inventors and innovators⁶
16. Caregivers who nurture and support
17. Teachers and educators⁷
18. Political figures and world leaders who have advocated for positive change
19. Human rights advocates
20. Activists and movement leaders⁸
21. Linguists and teachers of heart languages⁹
22. Peacebuilders and peacekeepers
23. Civil servants
24. Builders, contractors, and construction workers
25. Healers of the body, mind, and spirit
26. Midwives, doulas, and all those who help to birth new life
27. Accountants, economists and financial advisors
28. Correctional officers who protect the dignity of people
29. Worship and spiritual leaders

¹ Wetlands Day

² Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation Day

³ Women and Girls in Science Day

⁴ Radio Day

⁵ Valentine's Day

⁶ Flag Day

⁷ Family Day

⁸ Social Justice Day

⁹ Mother Language Day

March

For each day, please name specific human rights violations related to each intercession. If you are sharing prayers on social media, include the hashtags #AfricanDescent, #UCCan, #UCC.

We recognize that the human rights of people of African descent need to be protected and promoted. We lament that the human rights of African descendant people have been abused by:

1. Micro-aggressions and denial of anti-Black racism¹⁰
2. Teaching false histories of African-descendant people
3. Hunters and poachers who destroy natural habitats¹¹
4. Juvenile arrests and over-sentencing
5. Eliminating the right to vote and access to voting polls
6. Food insecurity
7. Stereotyping and name-calling
8. Pay inequality for women of colour¹²
9. Economic obstacles, forced poverty, and a lack of social security¹³
10. Late detection and limited access to testing for STDs¹⁴
11. Over-sexualizing and eroticizing of women of colour
12. Racial profiling
13. Prejudice and overt bias
14. Over-suspension and the streamlining of youth into basic and applied educational programs
15. Subtle and subversive discrimination
16. Overt fear tactics
17. Violent behavior and anti-Black hate crimes
18. Denial of racism
19. The over-policing of Black bodies
20. Physical exploitation of Black bodies for entertainment
21. Denial of Intersectionality¹⁵
22. Unequal access to clean drinking water¹⁶
23. Denial of systemic and institutional racism¹⁷
24. Unequal access to health care and medication¹⁸
25. Dehumanizing and characterizing of Black people¹⁹
26. Death from preventable/manageable diseases
27. Harmful stereotyping
28. Environmental pollution
29. Eliminating the right to fair and just legal action
30. Separation of Black families
31. Black trans people who are often violently targeted

¹⁰ Zero Discrimination Day

¹¹ World Wildlife Day

¹² International Women's Day

¹³ Commonwealth Day

¹⁴ Women and Girls' HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

¹⁵ Down Syndrome Day and International Day for the Elimination of Racism

¹⁶ Water Day

¹⁷ Meteorological Day

¹⁸ Tuberculosis Day

¹⁹ Day for the Remembrance of Slavery Victims and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

April

If you are sharing prayers on social media, include the hashtags #AfricanDescent, #UCCan, #UCC.

We are aware of the systemic injustices that people of African descent fight against, and so we pray for actions to be taken to ensure access to justice by/through:

1. Eliminating racial profiling
2. Punishing/denigrating anti-Black treatment²⁰
3. Equality through equity
4. Eliminating institutionalized stereotypes²¹
5. Access to justice for people who are victims of racism
6. Advocacy for equal treatment of Black athletes²²
7. Acknowledging the untold suffering resulting from genocides²³
8. Ensuring access to competent tribunals against acts of racial discrimination
9. Equitable pay for people of colour²⁴
10. Ensuring the right to a fair trial and the assumption of innocence
11. Legal action on the dissemination of ideas that support racial superiority or hatred
12. Adequate reparation for damages suffered as a result of racism
13. Legal action for acts of hate and terror against people of African descent
14. Legal action against racist propaganda and racist activities
15. Educating people of African descent about their legal rights
16. Education on anti-Black racism and its many manifestations
17. Preventing and punishing all human rights violations
18. Acknowledging the untold suffering resulting from slavery
19. Applying sanctions against officials who act on the basis of racial profiling
20. Acknowledging the impact of generational trauma²⁵
21. Honouring the creative work and intellectual property of people of African descent
22. Ensuring access to clean and safe water²⁶
23. Honouring the memory of enslaved artists whose creative work was stolen²⁷
24. Honouring the skills of enslaved laborers
25. Honouring parents forced to leave their families
26. Honouring intellectual property of enslaved people
27. Acknowledging the untold suffering resulted from Apartheid
28. Acknowledging untold deaths from inhuman working conditions²⁸
29. Honouring the rich legacy of art and culture from the African Diaspora²⁹
30. Honouring the influence of African descendants on popular art and music³⁰

²⁰ Autism Awareness Day

²¹ Mine Awareness Day

²² Sport for development and peace Day

²³ World Health/Remembrance of the Victims of the Rwanda Genocide

²⁴ Equal Pay Day

²⁵ Chinese Language Day

²⁶ Earth Day

²⁷ English Language Day/Book and Copyright

²⁸ Health and Safety Day

²⁹ Dance Day

³⁰ Jazz Day