



**MORE LIGHT**  
PRESBYTERIANS

## **More Light Sunday** **June 7, 2020**

### Gathering

#### Music

*There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit*  
*Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God, Almighty!*

Philip Morgan, piano  
Daniel Morales, piano

#### Recognizing and Honoring Ancestors Welcome

Rev. Shanea Leonard  
Rev. Dr. Derrick McQueen  
Rev. Alex Patchin McNeill

Visual: Cypress Fog, Erin Hanson

#### Hymn

*For the Beauty of the Earth*

Philip Morgan, Organ

### Confession

Written by Rev. Denise Anderson and Rev. Shanea Leonard

Ashley: Holy One, whose Spirit is poured out upon all flesh, whose children you empower to prophesy, whose youth see visions and whose elders dream dreams, we cry out to you with a loud "Hosanna!" Where else shall we go, O Savior? You alone have the words of eternal life.

Jess: You came that we might have life more abundantly, but that abundance eludes too many of us, O God. To have any hope of realizing your abundance we must begin by telling these hard truths about ourselves:

Ashley: Our news cycles are filled with despair. Our hearts ache as we wade through a global pandemic, reaching grim milestone after grim milestone. But even as we navigate a new threat, old ones still linger. Communities of color bear the uneven weight of a new disease, yet we see that racialized violence and the systemic injustice undergirding it have by no means given way to the demands of a pandemic.

Jess: We speak some of the most recent names of those brutalized in the name of empire and murdered by police: Tony McDade, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and David McAtee. We add them to the litany already in our macabre collection: Aiyana and Emmett, Eric and Sandra, Jordan and Rekia, Trayvon, Atatiana and Tamir, and the myriad others in far too long a list.

Ashley: We also call the names of our trans and nonbinary siblings, some of who are white

but so many who are People of Color, particularly black trans folk: Dustin Parker, Alexa Negron Luciano, Yampi Mendez Arocho, Monica Diamond, Lexi, Johanna Metzger, Serena Angelique Velazquez, Layla Pelaez, Penélope Díaz Ramírez, Nina Pop, Helle Jae O'Regan and Tony McDade, and Iyanna Dior.

This great cloud has witnessed persistent injustice and our perseverance in the face of it. Yet, how can they rest when so many keep joining their ranks?

Jess: Yet, how can they rest when so many keep joining their ranks?

We are slow to confront our complicity and investment in the evils of white supremacy and dominance. We live in a world in which Indigenous, Black, Brown and Queer brothers, sisters, and siblings are expected and compelled to offer forgiveness at a discount.

When the cheeks are turned, they are met with another hand to the face — or knee to the throat. Forgiveness is too infrequently met with repentance. This, O God, we name as sin. It is our sin. Many of us lament and strive against that sin. Help and empower us to continue that work with diligence and faith. Too many of us still waver and are unconvinced that there is a problem. Remove our hearts of stone and replace them with hearts of flesh that are softened toward our siblings. Help us to reckon not only with our personal failings, but also with our institutional history and the ways the church has helped to create and uphold systems of inequity.

Ashley: By your Spirit, help us to corporately live into our creeds and confessions and provide sanctuary for all God's children. When we say that "God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged" and that "the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination," help us to truly mean it.

Jess: We humble ourselves and cry out to you in the hope that you will hear us and heal us. We lift up all of the communities where racialized violence has occurred and unrest has been stirred. Holy God, we recall the words of our ancestor Dr. King, who reminded us that "a riot is the language of the unheard." Open our hearts, minds, and understanding to your movement in the margins, so that when your people speak, they are indeed heard, and when they tell the truth about your deeds of power, they are heard.

In this way, let the fires of uprising give way to the fires of your Spirit, where your people hear the Good News of your kin-dom, hear it with joy, and make haste to participate in it.

Silence

Assurance of Grace

Written by Rev. Shawna Bowman

Ashley: Hear this Good and abiding news, God does not leave us where God finds us.

This is the promise made to us by the God who created us in God's own image:

Jess: The space between God's abundance and these hard truths is where grace meets us.

And it is this grace that compels us to answer the call to go where the spirit leads

Ashley: Let us release our attachment to our current world order and walk bravely into the world you've intended for us, even and especially when it costs us something.

We are found here in this place, we are forgiven, we are beloved. Thanks be to God.

Prayer for Illumination

Rev. Shawna Bowman

One: Nothing changes until we listen.

Until we listen to each other,

until we listen to the parts of ourselves we are afraid to listen to

until we listen especially when we don't understand

when we feel defensive,

when we want to turn away

because in those moments, the Spirit has something to say to us.

### Presentation of The Word

First Reading - Genesis 1:1 - 2:8

*"The Creation," by James Weldon Johnson*

Multimedia presentation:

Reading: Rev. Ashley DeTar Birt

Visual Art: Rev. Shawna Bowman

Audio Art: Paul Vasile

Second reading - Psalm 8

Rev. Daniel Morales

### Proclamation of the Word

Sermon

Rev. Laura Mariko Cheifetz

### Response to the Word

Hymn

*God of the Sparrow*

Philip Morgan, Organ

Communion

written by Rev. Jess Cook

Invitation

Shanea: On that Thursday night while they shared this meal they were in a place of community with death hanging over their heads and today we sit in a place of community with death all around us. Death of Black folks at the hands of crooked police officers. Deaths of our kindred b/c of this looming virus. 49 victims of Pulse, and remembering the death of so many of our ancestors who have given their lives so that so many can find freedom. We sit in the community today as we mourn and celebrate. So I welcome you to the Table.

Alex: Let's now have a moment of silence as we commemorate the weight of these deaths

Silence

Alex: God be with you.

**All: And also with you.**

Alex: Lift up your hearts.

**All: We lift them up to God.**

Alex: Let us give thanks to God.

**All: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Mieke: God of abundance, we give you thanks that in the beginning you created all that is, seen and unseen. Dawn and dusk, mountains and valleys, plants and animals, men, women, and non-binary people were created in your image, all created in love.

And you said: this is good.

You instilled in us a spark of your divinity, a sense of curiosity and wonder and a desire to be in community with one another and with the world around us. You gave us relationships as a reminder of your continued love and care for us.

You have loved us through the wilderness, even when the wilderness is of our own making.

You have loved us when the world has hated us.

You have loved us when we haven't been able to love ourselves,

You have shown us how to love and forgive even those who offered neither love nor forgiveness in return.

Through it all, you have called us.

Even when the world's noise

You called us still, often making a way out of no way.  
And you loved us through it all.

**All: In all we do, remind us that we are called, and we are yours.**

Alex: We thank you, for Jesus Christ, whose life and ministry showed us that the  
overwhelming brutality the world does not have the last word.  
Through his life and death Jesus showed us a new way of being.

Always on the side of the oppressed, Jesus called out leaders who used their  
religion or social status as justification for atrocity after atrocity,  
Christ's message was good news to those who had ears to hear it,  
and scandal to those who did not.  
Through it all, Christ showed us that your vision is not defined by the willful  
blindness of the world.

In his refusal to succumb to a death-dealing status quo,  
Christ defeated death's power over us,  
Showing us that you are always  
Preparing the way toward freedom.

**All: We remember his life, how it led to his death, and we bear witness to  
resurrection all around us.**

Mieke: We thank you for the Holy Spirit, weaving us into your body in the world.  
The Spirit instills in us the same stubborn commitment  
to offer love and hope in a world hell-bent on despair.  
The Spirit enlivens us to work for a world where  
We are all known and loved,  
Where the sick are healed, the hungry are fed,  
The oppressed are free.

We thank you for the gift of the Spirit  
That refuses to be held back by even our own stubbornness,  
And for your love that refuses to give up on us.  
As we grow weary, remind us  
that hope cannot exist without suffering,  
courage cannot exist without fear,  
and that we cannot fully exist without each other.  
Keep us ever aware that we are all part of the Body of Christ in the world,  
Each of us essential to the whole.  
Even more, remind us that in all of our messy imperfections,  
We have each other,  
And that we are yours.

**All: Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer (everyone unmuted)

**Our Father** (feel free to say parent/mother/creator – whichever word invokes loving, familial language for you)

**who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.**

**Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread,**

**And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;**

**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

Alex: On the last night of his life, Jesus gathered with the people he was closest to and shared a meal.

Amidst the chaos of the world, the room where Jesus and the disciples sat was calm, filled with the smells of good food and laughter shared among chosen family. It was in this setting, among the scrappy group of folks who'd said yes to the invitation to follow him, that Jesus leaned into the vulnerable space and asked to be remembered.

Taking the bread, Jesus blessed and broke it and gave it to them saying: Take, eat. Whenever you do this, remember me. Remember my body - my flesh and my bones, and remember my actions – what I stood for and what I refused to accept. He also took the cup and, pouring it, he said: Take, drink. Remember my blood, shed unjustly because I refused to give in to a death-dealing status quo. Whenever you do this, remember me.

Friends, this is the bread of life, and the cup of salvation.

**Thanks be to God.**

Prayer after Communion

Rev. Shanea Leonard

Offering

Music during offering: *Spirit I Have Heard You Calling*

Words and music by Thew Elliot

Performed by members of the First United Methodist Church Choir, Birmingham, AL

Patrick Evans, Choir Director and video editor

Photography by John Alford

Sending

Postlude

*I'm Gonna Live so God Can Use Me*

Philip Morgan, Organ