

United Church of Christ, First Congregational, Norwich, New York
February 14, 2021 - Racial Justice Sunday

A TIME OF GATHERING AS WE PREPARE TO WORSHIP GOD

PRELUDE *My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*
Bob Oehme, organ

Gilbert M. Martin
Tune: THE SOLID ROCK by William Bradbury, 1863

WELCOME (Pastor John)

ANNOUNCEMENTS (Linda Oehme)

PRAYER OF THE DAY (Elizabeth Barber-Breese)

Holy God, you choose for us goodness and wholeness.
You look on us with love and stretch out your hand.
Give us ears to hear what you command so that,
ready to do as you desire, we may see your guidance
and protection and come to love our neighbors as ourselves;
in the name of the One who heals by dying, Jesus our Savior. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY (Pastor John)

We delight in God the creator of us all
We delight in God's love
Flowing unconditionally and impartially to all
God's children:

To Black and White, to rich and poor,
To well and sick, informed and ignorant,
To law-abiding and the transgressors,
To strong and weak, to respected and outcast.

We delight in Jesus Christ,
The visible image of the invisible God
For love of the human race
He accepted weakness, pain,
Rejection and death in full solidarity with us.

Through his dying he gave birth to a new humanity:
Free from sin,
Free to follow,
Free to love and to be spent
In love for God and for one another,
Free to build the new order
Of God's promise:
The Kingdom of love, justice, and peace.

We delight in the Holy Spirit
Who teaches, guides and empowers us
To be co-workers with God,
Who transforms us
Into the likeness of Christ
In whom all things shall be made one. Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP (Elizabeth Barber-Breese)

O Lord, our God, we cry to you and you restore our health.

**Our healer washes us in the waters of baptism,
cleanses us from all that enslaves,
and gives us peace.**

O Lord, our God, we will give you thanks forever.

HYMN *Lift Every Voice and Sing* (#593)

James Weldon Johnson, 1921
Tune: Lift Every Voice, J. Rosamond Johnson, 1921

CHILDREN'S TIME (Linda Oehme)

The Lord's Prayer

CONGREGATIONAL GREETING OF PEACE

ONE: May the peace of Christ be with you.

ALL: **And also with you.**

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

SCRIPTURE (Miranda Hunter)

2 Kings 5:1-14

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy. ² Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. ³ She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." ⁴ So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. ⁵ And the king of Aram said, "Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."

He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. ⁶ He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy."⁷ ⁷ When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

⁸ But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel." ⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. ¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean." ¹¹ But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! ¹² Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. ¹³ But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?" ¹⁴ So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

SCRIPTURE (Elizabeth Barber-Breese)

Mark 1:40-45

⁴⁰ A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean." ⁴¹ Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. ⁴³ After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, ⁴⁴ saying to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." ⁴⁵ But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

SERMON (Pastor John)

INTERLUDE *Let It Breathe on Me*

Mary Williams, voice

Words and music by Magnolia Lewis-Butts, 1941

A HYMN AS A SPOKEN PRAYER *God, You Have Set Us*

Jane Parker Huber, 1984, revised 1993

God, you have set us in this time and place,
Called us as stewards of your love and grace.
O keep us faithful, set our souls afire,
And by your Spirit, all our work in spire.

We dedicate this work of human hand;
Built for your glory, may it firmly stand.
Let truth be preached and justice rightly done.
In Christ our Savior make us truly one.

Let doors and hearts provide a welcome here,
Let walls and voices ring with songs of cheer.
Let windows speak of beauty and of light.
Let smile and gesture show your love aright.

Call youth and age into these halls for praise.
Then send us out for service all our days,
Your word of peace and challenge here made real
Spurs us to act with energy and zeal.

So may the world become our neighborhood,
Each wishing each the right, the true, the good,
Word, font, and table calling us to be
Bound up in Christ, in Christ set boldly free.

BLESSING

May God's blessings attend you this and every day.
You are not alone.
Go in peace.

POSTLUDE *God of the Ages*
Bob Oehme, organ

National Hymn by George Warren
Arranged by Mary McDonald

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