



EPISCOPAL CHURCH
IN CONNECTICUT
PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

Independence Day Prayers

A Liturgy Affirming Our Commitment to Racial Justice
and the Black Lives Matter Movement

July 4, 2020
9:00 a.m.

A Word from our Bishops

On this Fourth of July, we affirm our commitment to racial justice for all in our nation, and our support for the Black Lives Matter movement. Here a word on how we understand Black Lives Matter might be helpful. For us as white people, our support of Black Lives Matter begins with the recognition that Black people in the United States suffer and die because of the ongoing sins of racism, white-supremacy, and anti-Black bias. These sins fundamentally deny the fullness of the image of God in Black people and result in death-dealing violence as recently witnessed in the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. Such violence is fundamentally evil and the work of the devil. As followers of Jesus, we are called to stand in the face of evil and do all in our power to bring about God's kingdom of justice and love for all. Our support of Black Lives Matter is because we are followers of Jesus. It is our commitment to a spiritual metanoia, a turning around, that de-centers ourselves as white Americans and turns our focus on recognizing and celebrating Black Americans as created in the image of God and thus deserving of the fullness of life guaranteed by the incarnation of Jesus Christ and promised by our nation. As your bishops, we promise to seek to be about this work of transformation at the personal, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural level. While we encourage you to consider displaying a Black Lives Matter sign in front of your home and/or church building as a statement of your commitment to this work, what is more important for us is to understand fully what this movement is truly about, and the importance of staying away from just performative ally-ship. Our call to action as a predominantly white church that has been closely tied to the history of the United States, and thus complicit with and profiting from white-supremacy, is not just to make verbal commitments. It is to inherently change.

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A Prayer for the Human Family (Book of Common Prayer, page 815)

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Let us pray.

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (BCP p. 815)

Reading from *The Soul of Black Folk* by W. E. B. Du Bois

Valarie Stanley

“The equality in political, industrial and social life which modern men must have in order to live, is not to be confounded with sameness. On the contrary, in our case, it is rather insistence upon the right of diversity; - upon the right of a human being to be a man even if he does not wear the same cut of vest, the same curl of hair or the same color of skin. Human equality does not even entail, as it is sometimes said, absolute equality of opportunity; for certainly the natural inequalities of inherent genius and varying gift make this a dubious phrase. But there is more and more clearly recognized minimum of opportunity and maximum of freedom to be, to move and to think, which the modern world denies to no being which it recognizes as a real man.”

Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 10:17-21

The Very Rev. Lina Howell

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the Lord your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear. He is your praise; he is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things that your own eyes have seen.

Prayers of the People

Presider: Let us pray for the Church and for the world.

God of love, we pray for your church: for all lay and ordained ministers; and for all who seek you in the community of the faithful. Equip us with compassion and love, to carry out your work of reconciliation in the world.

God of love,
Hear our prayers for the church.

God of freedom, we pray for our nation, and all the nations of the world: For peace and unity across barriers of language, color, and creed; for elected and appointed leaders, that they would serve the common good. Inspire all people with courage to speak out against hatred, to actively resist evil. Unite the human family in bonds of love.

God of freedom,
Hear our prayers for the world.

God of justice, we pray for the earth, your creation entrusted to our care: For all parts of your creation that have no voice of their own. Stir up in us a thirst for justice that protects the earth and all its resources, that we may leave to our children's children the legacy of beauty and abundance that you have given us.

God of justice,
Hear our prayers for the earth.

God of mercy, we pray for all in any kind of need or trouble: For those whose lives are closely linked with ours, and those connected to us as part of the human family. For refugees and prisoners; for the sick and suffering, the lonely and despairing; for those facing violence; for all held down by prejudice or injustice. Awaken in us compassion and humility of spirit, as we seek and serve Christ in all persons.

God of mercy,
Hear our prayers for all who are in need.

God of grace, we pray for those who have died, particularly for Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. For the faithful in every generation who have worked for justice; for prophets who called us to racial reconciliation; for martyrs who died because of hatred; and for all the communion of saints. Make us faithful to your call to proclaim your Good News, by word and example, and bring us at last into the glorious company of the saints in light.

God of grace,
Hear our prayers for those who have died.

Presider: Hear our prayers, Holy God. Breathe your Spirit over us and all the earth, that barriers would crumble and divisions cease. Make us more fully your co-healers of the broken world. Unite us with all people in bonds of love, that the whole earth and all its peoples may be at peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Confession

Presider: Let us confess our sins against God and one another.

Almighty God, Source of all that is, Giver of every good gift: You create all people in your image and call us to love one another as you love us. We confess that we have failed to honor you in the great diversity of the human family. We have desired to live in freedom, while building walls between ourselves and others. We have longed to be known and accepted for who we are, while making judgements of others based on the color of skin, or the shape of features, or the varieties of human experience. We have tried to love our neighbors individually while yet benefitting from systems that hold those same neighbors in oppression. Forgive us, Holy God. Give us eyes to see you as you are revealed in all people. Strengthen us for the work of reconciliation rooted in love. Restore us in your image, to be beloved community, united in our

diversity, even as you are one with Christ and the Spirit, Holy and undivided Trinity, now and forever. Amen.

We will observe 8 minutes and 46 seconds of silent prayer in memory of George Floyd killed as a result of police brutality, and all persons of color who have died as a result of racism, white supremacy, and anti-Black violence in the history of our nation.

Presider: Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. Amen

Hymn – LEVAS # 1 Lift Every Voice and Sing

J Rosamond Johnson

Concluding Collects

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Let us pray.

O God, who created all peoples in your image, we thank you for the wonderful diversity of races and cultures in this world. Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship, and show us your presence in those who differ most from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Lord God Almighty, you have made all the peoples of the earth for your glory, to serve you in freedom and in peace: Give to the people of our country a zeal for justice and the strength of forbearance, that we may use our liberty in accordance with your gracious will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Notes on the liturgy:

- Prayers and Confession adapted from Prayer of Racial Reconciliation and Justice by The Episcopal Church's Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music
- Concluding Collect "For the Nation" adapted by The Honorable Byron Rushing
- Music: LEVAS # 1 Lift Every Voice and Sing. Words by James Weldon Johnson (1871 - 1938). Music by J. Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954). Performed by Dr. Sandra Montes, accompanied by Marianne Vogel, Director of Music of Christ Church Cathedral.
- Permission to podcast the music in this service obtained from One License, License #**A-733705**"

About Black Lives Matter

#BlackLivesMatter was founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. Black Lives Matter Foundation, Inc is a global organization in the US, UK, and Canada, whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. By combating and countering acts of violence, creating space for Black imagination and innovation, and centering Black joy, we are winning immediate improvements in our lives.

We are expansive. We are a collective of liberators who believe in an inclusive and spacious movement. We also believe that in order to win and bring as many people with us along the way, we must move beyond the narrow nationalism that is all too prevalent in Black communities. We must ensure we are building a movement that brings all of us to the front.

We affirm the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, undocumented folks, folks with records, women, and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. Our network centers those who have been marginalized within Black liberation movements.

We are working for a world where Black lives are no longer systematically targeted for demise. We affirm our humanity, our contributions to this society, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression.

The call for Black lives to matter is a rallying cry for ALL Black lives striving for liberation.



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