

* BENEDICTION

Rev. Wormack-Keels

POSTLUDE

I Love to Tell the Story

Charles W. Ore

Please be seated for the Postlude.

Thank you for attending worship this morning. We hope that you have found welcome, peace and grace here, and invite you to return often. If you would like more information or have any questions about First Church, please ask anyone wearing a nametag. We'd be delighted to assist you. Please join us for Fellowship Hour in the Parish Hall immediately following the service.

† WE WELCOME GUEST PREACHER the Rev. Dr. Renee Wormack-Keels to the First Church pulpit this morning. We also welcome Ms. Valarie Pratt-Poitier, E.W., who is participating in our litany.

† ACOLYTES: Ruby Holt and Naomi Holt

† MUSIC: Todd Cunningham, Victor John, Sebastian Knowles, Amy Hamlin Brooks, Catherine Hope-Cunningham, Cathy Redenbarger, Lissa Wade, *Summer Chamber Choir*: G. Dene Barnard, *guest organist*

† THE FLOWERS THIS MORNING are given to the glory of God and in honor of the youth of First Church by Laurie Maynell.

† GREETING AT THE EXITS TODAY:

Broad Street – Rev. Wormack-Keels / Rev. Ahrens
Ninth Street – Mr. Williams
Education Wing – Rev. Corzine

† NOTES ON TODAY'S LITANY

* Inspired by the work of CeCee Mills and Tim Waltonen, of the Virginia Synod African American Outreach Team for the "Sankofa Dialogue/Litany," 2019.

1. Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, 1785
2. Langston Hughes, "American Heartbreak," 1951
3. Inspired by Maya Angelou, "And Still We Rise," 1978

A LITANY FOR 400 YEARS OF AFRICANS IN AMERICA*

By the Rev. Dr. Tim Ahrens

L: God has created all people. Let us give God the glory for creating us all!

C: God be praised for the gift of one human race, in all its complexions, customs, and cultures!

L: From the beginning, the Church of Jesus Christ has been a blessed mixture of peoples—women men, children, Jews and Gentiles, slave and free;

C: We celebrate the cradle of Christianity in Africa – in Egypt and Ethiopia. Before American Christians were a twinkle in the Eye of God, African Christians were rising and spreading the love of Jesus Christ.

L: In shame, Christians and others were shackled and brought to America as slaves. They came as believers in Christ.

C: Not all "found Jesus" in America. And those who were baptized into Christ here rose to shine His light to generations of believers! The faith of millions transformed the Church and our nation. Thanks be to God!

L: On this 400th Anniversary of Africans arriving in America as slaves, we celebrate all people of African Descent across the globe and in our land.

C: We celebrate the beautiful and powerful presence of all people of African Descent in our congregation, in Columbus, in Ohio and in our nation.

L: We confess, lament, and grieve the pervasive injustice and harm done to people of African Descent in our nation. We weep for the centuries of the Atlantic slave trade which resulted in millions of victims in our nation alone.

C: We remember the words of our third President and slave-owner, Thomas Jefferson who wrote of the sin of slavery: "The Almighty has no attribute which can take sides with us in this practice of slavery."¹

L: We lament the tragic legacy of slavery continued in segregated communities, schools, churches, South and North – a legacy which leaves a tear in the fabric of every community and a terrible scar on the body of Christ and our nation.

C: We remember the words of African American poet, Langston Hughes, "I am the American heartbreak; the Rock on which Freedom Stumps its toe; the great mistake that Jamestown made long ago."²

L: Out of the American heartbreak, God is still speaking and God keeps a people vital, with resistance leaders, significant local and national cultural influences, beautiful music that changes our essence, spirituality that touches our souls, art beyond imagination, commitment to education, prophetic and social conscience, transformative writing and leadership in law, government, science and industry.

C: Thanks be to God, as we "lift every voice and sing."

L: The history of people of African Descent is rich, complex, varied and close to home.

C: Thanks be to God for the rich, complex and varied blessings which have touched each of us.

L: Out of history's shame and deep-rooted pain

C: Still We Rise!

L: Out of slavery's whip; and tears dreadful stain,

C: Still We Rise!

L: Out of the ashes of the past, out of memories that last,

C: Still We Rise!

L: With God before us, behind us, within us, beside us,

C: We Will Rise! We Will Rise! We Will Rise! Amen.³

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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Welcome Statement

You are welcomed, affirmed, and loved here; our faith informs us that you are a child of a loving God. Your characteristics and gifts will enrich our congregation. In this community, you will be celebrated, embraced, and honored, no matter how you identify or how your identity may evolve. Wherever you are on your faith journey, we invite you to join us in our diverse yet united experience.

First Church is a Faith Community

- Called together by God, the Creator and Sustainer of life, to worship, pray and serve;
- Led by Jesus Christ, our Teacher and Savior, to learn the faith and welcome all God's children;
- Empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness to God's love and justice between ourselves, and throughout the world.

Open and Affirming Statement

We, the members of First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, welcome and affirm all. We believe we are all created in God's image and called to love our neighbors as Jesus loves us. We believe we are many members, but one body in Christ, called to unite all people in God's love. We are a community seeking God's presence and love in our lives. We seek to unite persons of all ages, races, nationalities, ethnicities, sexual orientations, sexes, gender identities and expressions, family structures, mental, intellectual and physical conditions, economic circumstances, political, theological and faith backgrounds. Together in our diversity, and being empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit, we will "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God." (Micah 6:8)

—Adopted September 8, 2002 by the congregation.

Revisions adopted January 27, 2019 by the congregation.



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