*A Liturgy in Remembrance of Civil Rights Leaders and Hope for Those Who Suffer Injustice*

**Call to Worship** (Isaiah 25:1,4,8)

L: Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name,

for in perfect faithfulness, you have done wonderful things, things planned long ago.

**C: You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in their distress,**

**a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat.**

**ALL: The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people’s disgrace from all the earth. The Lord has spoken!**

Hymn #573 (MBW\*): **In the Morning When I Rise**

**Litany**

For the faith of those who have gone before us and for our encouragement by their perseverance.

Now Lord we give thanks for some of our exemplary Black Leaders who have listened to your call. Brave men and women who, in spite of difficulties at every turn, stood up for peace, justice, and equality for all of God’s children.

**We give you thanks, O Lord!**

We thank you for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the quintessential leader of the African American who tirelessly advocated for full economic, political and social equality in America. He became the symbol not only of the civil rights movement, but of all of America. A symbol of the land of freedom where people of all races, creeds, and nationalities could live together as a beloved community.

**Lord, we give you thanks for the life and work of Dr. King.**

We give thanks for Rosa Parks, who like her spiritual soulmates, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and numerous other black women—who by their humble stations in life—represented the “weak things of the world” which God has chosen to “confound the things that are mighty.” By refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white man, she became the spark that ignited blacks in their struggles. A struggle that continued over 400 years and is still ongoing today.

**Lord, we give thanks for the indomitable spirit of Rosa Parks. Her courage, even as she faced jail time, led to the desegregation of buses in Montgomery, Alabama. Rosa Parks kindled a flame which led to a new era in civil rights.**

We give thanks for Langston Hughes, one of the most prominent black artists in the Negro Renaissance of the nineteen twenties and thirties. Hughes believed in using black culture as a weapon against racism and discrimination. He used the daily experiences of ordinary black people as material for his writings in order to influence and bring about change for the black race. “There is a song that says *the time isn’t long*, that song is right; something has got to change in America—and change soon. We must help that change to come.”

**Lord, we thank you for Langston Hughes, the Poet Laureate of the Negro Race who used his poetry to protest the treatment and conditions of blacks in America.**

We give thanks for Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman to be elected to Congress. Her confidence and courage to seek the nomination from the Democratic Party as the first African American woman for the president of the United States. Even though she lost the nomination, she continued to be a political activist and feminist. She worked without ceasing to end the practices of a male-dominated, racist and anti-feminist society.

**Thank you, Lord, for the work of Shirley Chisholm. She was not afraid to speak out even as they tried to keep her silent. They told her to go back to teaching and leave politics to the men. She did not listen! She raised the ceiling on the expectation of women as the “standard-bearers” for political parties.**

We thank you for the contributions and service of General Colin Powell who served as chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff and national security adviser to the president of the United States. He was one of the most influential policy makers in the world. As head of the Pentagon, and the chief military adviser to the president, he shaped and influenced policies that affect blacks and non-blacks on military and civilian matters.

**We give you thanks for the work and service of General Colin Powell**.

O God, who created all peoples in your image, we thank you for the diversity of races and cultures in this world. Show us your presence in those who are different from us, enrich our lives with their fellowship until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children.

Hymn (TUNE and TEXT: African American Spiritual): **He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands**

*He’s got the whole world in His hands,*

*He’s got the whole world in His hands,*

*He’s got the whole world in His hands,*

*He’s got the whole world in His hands.*

*He’s got you and me, brother, in His hands,*

*He’s got you and me, sister, in His hands,*

*He’s got everybody here, in His hands,*

*He’s got the whole world in His hands.*

Suggested Scripture: Psalm 139:13-18

**Intercessions**

O God, we also acknowledge before you that the history of your black children in this nation has been one of suffering, adversity and injustice which continues to this present time.

**We cry out to you today in lament:**

For the sins of slavery, lynching, Jim Crow laws, and state-sanctioned segregation which continues to impact the disease of racism over the whole nation.

**Hear us O God.**

For the deep-seated systemic racism and inequities which are still woven into the fabric of our institutions and nearly every sector of black lives, including education, housing, employment, voting rights, and the justice system.

**We cry out to you O Lord in weariness:**

For racial disparities in the healthcare system which continue to have devastating effects on Black communities, especially now Lord, as the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on people of color.

**Hear us O God.**

Today we remember those in the past year who like many before them became victims of racial profiling, senseless violence and the brutality of some in law enforcement. Lord, just as we held up the names of Black leaders who have contributed so much, we now raise up the names of a few of those killed in memory of all of the thousands who have lost their lives in the past simply because of the color of their skin. We remember George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery.

**We cry out to you, Lord God, with broken hearts for the suffering of your people.**

The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

**And those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us recognize Christ in each other.**

And by the help of our God let us all hold fast to love and justice, place our trust and hope in God and know the power of the liberating spirit of Jesus Christ.

**We will hold fast to love and justice. We will work for a world that is more just, more loving, more caring and where we live in right relations. We will bear the light of God’s hope in our lives. We will shine the light of God’s love in the world.** **We will do justice; we will show constant love and we will walk humbly with our God.**

**Send us from this place with purpose and in your power, blessed, transformed, and bent toward the arc of justice for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

Hymn #690 (MBW\*): **The Right Hand of God**

Sources

\*MBW: Moravian Book of Worship, 1995

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