

Liturgy For Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Black History Month
In Honor of the Voice and Legacy of The Rev. Dr. Charles Martin¹

God of justice, we praise you for those who have gone before us who have witnessed to your love for all people and reminded us that all are created in your image, equal in your eyes and worthy of the wholeness that you desire for everyone.

We thank you Lord, for your love for us just as we are, even as you call us to grow in ways that help us to best share your love with others.

God of justice, keep us true,
faith revealed in all we do.
Give us strength to disagree,
stand against the wrong we see
'midst a broken world of sin,
be God's kin'dom breaking in;
loosing bonds that limit growth,
claiming God's appointed worth.

Tune: Gaudeamus Pariter
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God of possibility, you have created us as a multi-colored quilt, each one unique and adding beauty and value to the whole.

You call us in your scriptures to welcome the stranger, to release the bonds of injustice, to let the oppressed go free, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Yet it is so easy to put our own needs above those of others, to let assumptions and prejudice rule our relationships, and to fear those who are different from us.

Our church through the years has readily reached out to those in need; yet in its history it also supported the institution of slavery and remained silent at injustice; it has resisted standing up for those who have been marginalized in our society, and participated in segregating persons of color, supporting policies that limit their access to education, housing, medical care, employment, voting, and wealth. Forgive us, Lord, we pray. Bring healing to ourselves and to our church.

Schedules, time clocks, budgets, goals—
masters of our bartered souls.
Once our tools to meet God's call,

¹ 2023 Northern Province Synod 2nd Partial Report, Church and Society Committee, "Rev. Dr. Charles Martin's 1917 Eastern District Synod Resolution," https://www.moravian.org/northern/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2023/07/2_Church-and-Society.pdf, pages 3-5.

now enslave us, binding all.
 Free us, Lord, to see above
 human limits to our love.
 Let creative power run still,
 focused in your sovereign will.

May we learn more about the impact and ongoing presence of racism in our nations and in the world. May we also claim the challenge given by Moravian leader, The Rev. Dr. Charles Martin, who in 1917 courageously led 10,000 people of African descent in The Silent Protest Parade in New York City. Later, through a Synod memorial, he called for an end to the indifference of the Moravian Church to segregation and the lynching and suffering of Black persons.²

We confess and lament that though the 1917 Eastern District Synod passed The Rev. Dr. Charles Martin's memorial, the church failed in its response. We pray for courage to face, challenge, and change political, social, economic, and ecclesiastical systems that perpetuate a culture of white supremacy and racism.

Shuttle, arsenal, success,
 status keys to happiness,
 soon become our gods instead,
 trusting bank accounts and lead.
 Only God can conquer sin,
 help us break with self within;
 then God's work becomes our goal,
 joy in helping each be whole.

May we see and respond not only to the needs around us, but more clearly recognize and confront the pillars of our social systems that keep people in need and in their "place," and take steps to work for change.

May we continue to take a stand against racial injustice and violence in our day, as did The Rev. Dr. Charles Martin, The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the many who came before and have followed them, including those whose names are lost to us who raised their voices out of the suffering of slavery and its legacies.

God of courage, open our eyes to see a brother, a sister, a sibling, in each person we meet.

May we value the gifts each person brings, respect the differences we have, and celebrate our common ground.

² Moravian Church in America, Eastern District. "Journal of the First Synod of the Eastern District of the American Province of the Moravian Church or Unitas Fratrum." 1917, pp. 59-60. Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. [Thanks to The Rev. Dr. Frank Crouch for his research on this topic and to Tom McCullough of the Moravian Archives for calling attention to this resolution.]

We celebrate and honor the lives and legacies of The Rev. Dr. Charles Martin and The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. May we follow on the shoulders of those who have worked tirelessly for justice, never losing sight of your inbreaking beloved community, “where all are loved, all share in abundant life, all are equal, and no group of people is superior to another.”³

Jesus said, “I came that that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

Lord, give us the strength and courage to do your will, to do justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly with God.

May we support each other in witnessing to your desire for peace, love, justice, and wholeness for all of your creation.

Hallelujah!

Amen!

Hymn Notes

The hymn used in this liturgy, *God of Justice, Keep Us True* is used by permission of the composer, Rev. Judith Ganz.

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The Racial Justice Team expresses its appreciation to Rev. Judith Ganz and Rev. Dr. Frank Crouch for this liturgy.

³ Moravian Church Northern Province Racial Justice Team’s Mission Statement: *The RJT is committed to the work of racial justice and healing while ushering in the beloved community, where all are loved, all share in abundant life, all are equal, and no group of people is superior to another.*