

Readings for Singing and Readings Worship Service, April 30, 2023

READINGS BY BLACK FREEDOM MOVEMENT LEADERS

Reader 1: JOHN LEWIS—Freedom Movement leader, U.S. Congressman from Georgia, author of national award winning graphic novel about the freedom movement, it was said of John Lewis when he was a youth, “He preached to the chickens.”

Reader 2: “What can you do to get into good trouble? There is a light inside of you that will turn on when you get into good trouble. You will feel emboldened and freed. You will realize that unjust laws cannot stop you. These laws cannot stop the truth that is in your heart and soul.”

Reader 3: “It is the responsibility, yet the individual choice, of each of us to use the light we have to dispel the work of darkness, because if we do not, then the power of falsehood rises. Through our inaction it becomes stronger, and a more potent force. It can even lead to the dimming of the light of all humanity born on this planet.”

Reader 4: “We need to make books available to children so they can easily learn about the world, and they can follow their imaginations. Children who read maintain their sense of wonder and ask questions—necessary questions—that make us examine why things are the way they are.”

Reader 1: “Freedom is not a state; it is an act. It is not some enchanted garden perched high on a distant plateau where we can finally sit down and rest. Freedom is the continuous action we all must take, and each generation must do its part to create an even more fair, more just society.

Reader 2: The work of love, peace, and justice will always be necessary, until their realism and their imperative takes hold of our imagination, crowds out any dream of hatred or revenge, and fills up our existence with their power.”

Reader 3 “Each and every one of us has the power to turn our enemies around because we are all a spark of the divine. It does not matter whether we are fit or weak, short and scrawny, or big and strong. There is no adversary who can defeat us if we believe in our own inner capacity to overcome. Sometimes we have to gain tools to overcome our adversaries. We might need to study, to get help, to pray, or develop a plan...

Reader 4: But there is no obstacle we as human beings cannot overcome.”

#775

Glory to God

I Want Jesus to Walk with Me

Reader 1: FANNIE LOU HAMER—Freedom movement leader, voting rights organizer, leader of Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, known for her quote, “I’m sick and tired of being sick and tired.”

Reader 2: “You can pray until you faint, but unless you get up and try to do something, God is not going to put it in your lap.”

Reader 3: “Sometimes it seems like to tell the truth today is to run the risk of being killed. But if I fall, I’ll fall five feet four inches forward in the fight for freedom. I’m not backing off.”

Reader 4: “When I liberate myself, I liberate others. If you don’t speak out ain’t nobody going to speak out for you.”

Reader 1: “Nobody’s free until everybody’s free.”

Reader 2: “Never to forget where we came from and always praise the bridges that carried us over.”

Reader 3: “When I liberate others, I liberate myself.”

Reader 4: “There is one thing you have got to learn about our movement. Three people are better than no people.”

Reader 1: I remember, and I will never forget, one day – I was six years old and I was playing beside the road and this plantation owner drove up to me and stopped and asked me “could I pick some cotton.”

Reader 2: I told him I didn’t know and he said, “Yes, you can. I will give you things that you want from the commissary store,”

Reader 3: And he named a huge list that he called off. I picked the 30 pounds of cotton that week, but I found out what actually happened was he was trapping me into beginning the work I was to keep doing and I never did get out of his debt again.”

Reader 4: “I feel sorry for anybody that could let hate wrap them up. Ain’t no such thing as I can hate anybody and hope to see God’s face.”

#728 Glory to God Somebody’s Knockin’ At Your Door

Readings by LGBTQ advocates

Reader 1: Christine Jorgensen was an American trans woman who was the first person to become widely known in the United States for having sex reassignment surgery. She had a successful career as an actress, singer, and recording artist. She was drafted into the U.S. Army during World War II. During her service, she learned about sex reassignment surgery and traveled to Europe, where in Copenhagen, Denmark, she obtained special permission to undergo a series of operations. Upon

her return to the United States, her transition was the subject of a *New York Daily News* front-page story. She became an instant celebrity, known for her directness and polished wit, and used the platform to advocate for transgender people. Of her experience, she said:

Reader 2: “Nature made a mistake, which I have corrected.”

Reader 3: “I was never an absolute male and I shall never be an absolute female. But whatever the value of percentages in the scale of sex determinants, there are no absolutes; even the most masculine or feminine person approximates only eighty percent of the possible total. There is no one hundred percent Adam or Eve.”

Reader 4: “Without faith I'd have stopped existing long ago. But I don't believe God would want me to go on being unhappy, unable to present the best part of myself to the world, when there is the possibility of developing into a whole person.”

Reader 1: In 2013, Tammy Baldwin made history by becoming the first openly gay Senator in the United States. In her speech at the Millennium March for Equality, she spoke to LGBTQ folks, encouraging them to be out and proud. She stated that the only way to normalize non-heterosexual orientations is for the queer community to act like they are normal, because they are.

Reader 2: There will not be a magic day when we wake up and it's now okay to express ourselves publicly. We make that day by doing things publicly until it's simply the way things are.”

Reader 3: “I am Black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet.” Said Audre Lord. “Staying silent and in the closet may feel like a safety blanket, but my silences have not protected me. Your silence will not protect you. Step into the light. The only true safety is making yourself known and demanding acceptance and respect that is your right.”

Reader 4: “Equality means more than passing laws. The struggle is really won in the hearts and minds of the community, where it really counts.” – Barbara Gittings, who led the struggle to prevent the US government from barring LGBTQ applicants from employment.

Reader 1: “The Lord is my Shepherd, and He knows I'm gay—Troy Perry

Reader 2: “”We need, in every community, a group of angelic troublemakers.” – Bayard Rustin, Black LGBTQ advocate, organizer of the March on Washington and Freedom Rides.

Reader 3: “If you help elect more gay people, that gives a green light to all who feel disenfranchised a green light to move forward.” – Harvey Milk

Reader 4: “It is against this God who kills that we are fighting and resisting.”, said Alexya Salvador, the first transgender pastor in Brazil. “It is a particular version of God, one who is vengeful and judgmental, that must be eradicated. I strive for a different view of God, one that is accepting and loving of everyone, regardless of their identities.”

Women's Freedom Quotes

Reader 1: Maya Angelou said. "My mission in life is not merely to survive but to thrive and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style."

Reader 2: "Be messy and complicated and afraid and show up anyway."—Glennon Doyle Melton

Reader 3: "I raise up my voice—not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard. We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back."— Malala Yousafzai, almost assassinated in Pakistan because she, as a fifteen year old girl, wanted to go to school.

Reader 4: "I am thankful for my struggle because, without it, I wouldn't have stumbled across my strength."— Alex Elle

Reader 1: "Above all, be the heroine of your life, not the victim." Nora Ephron

Reader 2: "There is a stubbornness about me that can never bear to be frightened at the will of others. My courage always rises at every attempt to intimidate me."—Jane Austen

Reader 3: "When you look at me, what do you see, a woman who is Black?—or a Black woman?" Dr. Julia Jordan-Zachary, Professor and chair of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Wake Forest University, author of *Black Girl Magic Beyond the Hashtag: Twenty-First-Century Acts of Self-Definition*. "One of my life lessons is—sometimes you have to boldly step into the unknown. Sometimes you have to wrap your hands around your pain. Then you will not just survive, you will thrive. The higher Black women climb, the more we have to suppress our emotions, often to harmful effect..... If I were not a political scientist and more importantly a mother and daughter, I would be a race car driver."

Reader 4: Michelle Obama—"I grew up with a disabled dad in a too-small house with not much money in a starting-to-fail neighborhood, and I also grew up surrounded by love and music in a diverse city in a country where an education can take you far. I had nothing or I had everything. It depends on which way you want to tell it..... I simply do not allow space in my hearts, mind, or soul for darkness. Instead, I choose faith. Faith in myself and the power of hard work. Faith in our God whose overwhelming love sustains us every single day."

#201 Glory to God A Prophet Woman Broke a Jar