



Order of Worship

First Sunday in Lent February 21, 2021

Church of the Isles, Indian Rocks Beach/ Trinity UCC , St. Petersburg, FL

To view the entire service, click on:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLr2IwlWThmmSUOarB1JKW6b5CwuGZh_13

PRELUDE “Summer Dance”

Andrew & Gregory Snedeker <https://youtu.be/ksb6-PJm1mQ>

WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS,

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE



Shelly Wilson https://youtu.be/lpi_YW0eJk0

CALL TO WORSHIP

(by Rev. Dr. Velda Love, Minister for Racial Justice, UCC *the word "ashe" pronounced ah-shay is a West African philosophical concept through which the Yoruba of Nigeria conceive the power to make things happen and produce change.*)

<https://youtu.be/E0EnAR3JMc>

In a beginning before humans were formed and nature knew God's great presence, the Spirit moved over the universe. Ashe!

"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for God has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers."
Psalm 24:1-2

In quiet peace God created humans, colorful, balanced, and creatively diverse and the beauty of God's love filled the earth. Ashe!

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, with all your mind; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. *Matthew 22: 37-39*

In honor of Black History Month we remember names because of the ancestors who made a way out of no way with God before them, beside them, and lovingly guiding succeeding generations:

- Nana Yaa Asantewa of Ashanti, Taharqa, ruler of Napatan Kush, Queen Nzingha,
- West African military ruler, Mansa Musa I, Emperor of the West African Islamic Empire

Ashe!



- Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, Gabriele Prosser, Nate Turner and Denmark Vesey
- Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth and Jerena Lee
- WEB DuBois, Thurgood Marshall, and Martin Luther King, Jr
- Ida B. Wells, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Ella Baker

These and more represent the great cloud of witnesses.

Their spirits linger with us creating new generations of warriors, preachers, prophets, teachers, activists, organizers, mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters of the African Diaspora.

Ashe!

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count,

from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed with palm branches in their hands. *Rev. 7:9*

Let everything that has breath, praise the Lord!

Ashe and Amen

OPENING SONG “Lift Every Voice and Sing”

(James Weldon Johnson) <https://youtu.be/o8pGp7N9bG8>

We are Stanford Talisman, a group of singers on Stanford’s campus who since our origins have sung music stemming from Black liberation struggles across the world. Our alumni and current group came together



to create a virtual choir of Lift Every Voice and Sing, the Black National Anthem in America

Lift every voice and sing Till earth and heaven ring Ring with the harmonies of Liberty
Let our rejoicing rise High as the listening skies Let it resound loud as the rolling sea

Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us Facing the rising sun of our new day begun Let us march on till victory is won

Stony the road we trod Bitter the chastening rod Felt in the days when hope unborn had died Yet with a steady beat Have not our weary feet Come to the place for which our fathers sighed? We have come over a way that with tears has been watered

We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered Out from the gloomy past Till now we stand at last Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast

God of our weary years God of our silent tears Thou who has brought us thus far on the way Thou who has by Thy might Led us into the light Keep us forever in the path, we pray Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee Shadowed beneath Thy hand

May we forever stand True to our God True to our native land

CHILDREN'S STORY

Mindy Picardo



OFFERING Financial support for our churches is essential, now more than ever. Thank you for your faithful giving that keeps our ministries going! Please mail in your offerings to your church:

Church of the Isles
Att. Barb Templin
200 24th Ave.
Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33785
33759
www.churchoftheisles.org

Trinity UCC
Att. Marty Seyler
3155 Featherwood Court
Clearwater, FL
or give online via Pay Pal—
www.trinityuccstpete.org

MUSIC “They’ll Know We are Christians by Our Love”

Winston Culler

SCRIPTURE READING Genesis 32:22-31
Holly Sorensen

² The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³ He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. ²⁴ Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. ²⁵ When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob’s hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. ²⁶ Then he said, “Let me go, for the day is breaking.” But Jacob said, “I will not let you go, unless you bless me.” ²⁷ So he said



to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." ²⁸ Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." ²⁹ Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. ³⁰ So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." ³¹ The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.

SERMON "Moral Interrogatives"

Shelly Wilson <https://youtu.be/d3ZELVY5fEY>

We have just finished watching another impeachment trial and it got me thinking about other legal proceedings we have witnessed here and in other nations, legal proceedings with a variety of mandates to hold perpetrators accountable, to set policy for the future, to get at some sort of truth about what had occurred. I think of South Africa's President Nelson Mandela who helped create one of the seminal accomplishments of his nation--the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. You may recall that, under the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission brought together the apartheid perpetrators and their victims in televised "trials," in which all sides had the opportunity to speak aloud what they had done, and what had been done to them, to bring to light the truth. Indeed, that was the primary mandate of the Commission, to bring to light the truth—a purpose very



unlike that of the Nuremberg Trials after WW II in which the mandate was punishment. When we dare to seek truth for the purposes of justice and reconciliation, then we are, as Bishop Tutu put it, engaged in the work of "removing walls and exposing the hurt, the truth. It is a risky undertaking," he wrote, "but in the end, only an honest confrontation with reality brings real healing. *Superficial* reconciliation can only bring *superficial* healing." The true pursuit of shalom/peace—or wholeness necessarily includes the tearing down of injustice, and then building back what is created by truth, realized in love. And it is the truth spoken in the light and confronted in love, that becomes the glue of reconciliation.

Knowing the truth will make us free, but first, Flannery O'Connor said, "the truth will make us odd." But first, Gloria Steinem said, "the truth will tick us off." But first, Nelson Mandela also said, choosing the truth begins at home, in one's own life. He wrote, "The first thing is to be honest with yourself. You can never have an impact on society if you have not changed yourself. Great peacemakers are all people of integrity, of honesty, but humility."

So, we are here in Lent, invited, as we are every year, to start there—with an honest reflection on our own souls and then, on our world. As we are starting to have a reasonable hope of re-emerging from Covid and into a semblance of the world, when that finally happens, who do you and I want to be, this new year? For what will we stand strong? What challenges will push us to make the walls of injustice and racism and greed and shameless lies and self-interest coming tumbling down? How will we wrestle with our own insides and work to create something new, something real?

In the narrative from Genesis, Jacob wrestles through a dark and stormy night of the soul. Many artists have painted the scene and often Jacob, is depicted as a handsome buff guy with great abs, trying to take



down an equally ripped angel who has the unfair, added advantage of huge raptor wings. But this story really is about Jacob's estrangement from himself, and the brokenness of his relationships. Walls, high walls of graft and subterfuge have separated him from those most important to him. He wrestles with his realities—and we wrestle, too, in our lives—sometimes we struggle with who we are, with choices we've made, with moral imperatives to live ethical, just lives congruent with our beliefs, compassionately engaged with our significant others and with the world around us, asking ourselves, "What is my responsibility as a fellow sojourner with others? How are my economic and ethical choices, my lifestyle and beliefs, love and compassion offered or withheld, affecting other people, other sentient beings, and Earth herself?" When we wrestle with the truth, looking at ourselves this Lent, as well as acknowledging the realities of others' experiences, then we will come out on the other side, sometimes convinced, sometimes confused, but always, changed, because that is what Lent does, it changes us. Opens our soul's eyes to new truth. In Jacob's case, and often in ours, the most profound times of honest realization come at a price—in the light of dawn, we may find ourselves compelled to new vision or action, limping into an awareness that we cannot unlearn. Jacob gets a new name--and his new name symbolizes his striving with and for, the truth about who he has been and who he will be, going forward.

It is Jacob's personal story, but I believe it is ours, too. Maybe we too have wrestled deep into the night, struggling more with moral interrogatives than with moral imperatives—for as we wrestle with the hows and whys of injustice and violence and poverty and pain in this world, don't we often end up with more questions than answers? Why do we build the walls, separate, keep out? How may I do more, listen more compassionately, pay closer attention, tear down the walls on behalf of



others? What more may I do to be more enlightened and centered? To make even my own small difference?

And conversely, we also may ask what will we *share* of our gifted or our injured selves? How have we hidden or denied our own vulnerabilities behind the walls as it is often so risky to come out from behind them? What do you or I long for the “other” to know about your life experience? What is it like, living your reality in your skin, being thin or heavy, living in the United States of America as a person of color, living young or old, striving with physical disability or mental illness? What do you want a straight person to know about your experience of being gay, what are the joys, what is the pain? What do you hope to communicate as a gender non-conforming person kept out, but learning to be out and proud?

May we dare to bring our otherness to the light, and to provide the safe soul space to speak and to hear the truth of one another’s experiences, embracing our diversity! For when we do this, then we wrestle with truth and we may discover together a lasting compassion and begin a lasting and just change.

What if we do not shrink from the questions, determined to love and to learn and to act profoundly, working to make a positive difference? It is important that we fearlessly continue to spend much spiritual energy wrestling into the light various dark truths and injustices—because the verdict, the recompense, may be out of our hands, but bringing to light what is seems like worthy and expansive work in these days.

We must continue to wrestle with our better angels—confront in ourselves the hard questions about our own souls, and about the world’s greatest pain—about hate crimes and economic deprivation and hunger and housing and human trafficking and systemic racism, and educational inequities, and and on and on... And of course, it is easier not to... easier



to become insular in our thinking as we have had to do necessarily with our physical selves for our own safety—easier to numb out, change the channel, turn the page, cut off the newsfeed, drive past because it disturbs our serenity and costs us time and money to wrestle with our insides and identity and our society...it is easier to get exhausted and numb to it all, and be too tired to wrestle with it—and anyway, as we know from Jacob’s story and our own, wrestling can hurt and change you. It can make you limp.

But I believe we can do no better work than to do truth-telling and truth-hearing with one another! Do we love and trust one another enough to speak our truths aloud? And can we hear one another with what Steven and Ondrea Levine called, “the soft belly...” the soft and open heart of compassion, so that we make ourselves vulnerable as both the truth-tellers and the truth containers?

It is very hard and exciting work, this work of the Spirit that calls us, as it did Jacob, Jesus, and all the saints and the prophets like those we have honored in this service. Sometimes it will keep you up at night, call us to do great things or tiny things, cost us our lives, perhaps. But when you and I choose to wrestle with the moral interrogatives of our day, wrestle with our new and reborn calling in this gradually hopeful year, we will stretch our souls and minds and bodies even more to find the next right thing. We will emerge, changed as we are, from the wrestling...injured some--maybe a lot, but also, emerging with a blessing. May we be challenged to both truth and to reconciliation in this Lenten season, asking and living good questions. Amen.

BENEDICTION



CLOSING MUSIC “Heaven Must be a Beautiful Place”

<https://youtu.be/-3VxRDtHvT0>

Black History Tribute in Memory of Historical Icons Who Fought for Human Rights! They are all watching over us all as we continue to get in "Good Trouble - Necessary Trouble". 'Heaven Must Be A Beautiful Place' by The East Coast Inspirational Singers Featuring Brightnie Wylie. Written by Terrance Talley.

Prayer concerns

- Shirley Fi., recovering from heart surgery.
- Kurt F., recovering from knee surgery.
- Wanda B., recovering from falls and hospitalization.
- Skip, Nancy, & Adam E., Covid.
- Joan A., Sharon D-A.'s mom, recovering from surgery.
- Pat S., death of her husband, Bob.
- Mel L., rehab, recovering from surgery.
- Shirley H., health concerns.
- Members of Grace Connection Church, Covid.
- Guy & Melody H., ongoing health concerns.
- Charlotte H., hospice care.
- Marla's sister, Ruth, recovering from surgery.
- David P., esophageal cancer - undergoing chemo.
- Don K., treatments for cancer.
- Doug R., treatments for cancer
- Steve, Susan's nephew, cancer recurrence.
- Larry, Marty K.'s brother, cancer recurrence.



- All those grieving losses of loved ones from COVID, other illnesses, accidents, and violence.
- Students, parents, teachers, and administrators.
- Healthcare and other essential workers.
- Those living with mental illness, domestic violence, and addiction challenges.
- Those who have lost loved ones, possessions, homes, and hope.
- Those exhausted and endangered by systemic violence and racism.
- The nations of the world.
- Those affected by food insecurity, war, and oppression.
- The Earth, effects of global climate change.

Celebrating every day, the contributions of Black people in all areas of life, particularly during February, Black History Month.

Announcements

Trinity Outreach Team is inviting everyone to collect and set aside 40 items for distribution to the Good Sam Food Pantry during Lent. These can include canned meats, pasta, sauce, cereal, canned fruit, soups, mac and cheese, canned veggies, canned pasta, and non-perishable items for homeless folks. Also, toiletries are appropriate. Thank you and the Pantry clients appreciate everything we do.



COTI Book Group – Books for February, March and April

Until further notice our COTI Book Group will continue to meet via Zoom at 4:00pm on the fourth Thursday of the month. If you would like to join in the discussion, please contact Marty Synnott to receive an invitation. Hardcover copies of these books are in the COTI library and are also available for Kindle and Audible. **All** are welcome to take part in these (always) interesting discussions.

Thursday, February 25 – *The Book of Longings* by Sue Monk Kidd

"Sue Monk Kidd takes an audacious approach to history and brings her acclaimed narrative gifts to imagine the story of a young woman named Ana. Raised in a wealthy family with ties to the ruler of Galilee, she is rebellious and ambitious, with a brilliant mind and a daring spirit. She engages in furtive scholarly pursuits and writes narratives about neglected and silenced women. Ana is expected to marry an older widower, a prospect that horrifies her. An encounter with 18-year-old Jesus changes everything."

Thursday, March 25 – *The Splendid and the Vile* by Erik Larson

"In *The Splendid and the Vile*, Erik Larson shows, in cinematic detail, how Churchill taught the British people "the art of being fearless." It is a story of political brinkmanship, but it's also an intimate domestic drama, set against the backdrop of Churchill's prime-ministerial country home, Chequers; his wartime retreat, Ditchley, where he and his entourage go when the moon is brightest and the bombing threat is highest; and, of course, 10 Downing Street in London."

Thursday, April 23 – *The Rope* by Alex Tresniowsky

"...a page-turning, remarkable true-crime thriller recounting the 1910 murder of ten-year-old Marie Smith, the dawn of modern criminal detection and the launch of the NAACP."



martysynnott@yahoo.com; 727-249-3011

Pinellas Hope – *Tuesday March 9, 10:30-12.* We need buyer(s), driver(s), choppers, peelers, stirrers, bakers (cookies or bars individually wrapped), fruit. Please contact Marty if you are available to help out. martysynnott@yahoo.com; 727-249-3011

LENTEN BIBLE STUDY/SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION via Zoom, the Sundays of Lent (Feb. 21-March 28) at 4:00 PM. Our study is called

Promises, Promises.

From the writers of the popular online Daily Devotional, *Promises, Promises* includes a biblical text, reflection, and prayer for each day of Lent until Easter Sunday. Let me know if you want to attend by emailing me: wilsonshellya@yahoo.com