



ORDER OF WORSHIP JULY 5, 2020 TRINITY/CHURCH OF THE ISLES

To view the entire service online:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLr2IwIWThmmT7-AXChSRTjnnfH_R7XiGR

Welcome/Announcements

Shelly Wilson https://youtu.be/wZKaC-b_YWg

Greetings, friends, and welcome to the online worship service offered by Trinity United Church of Christ, St. Petersburg and Church of the Isles, Indian Rocks Beach, Florida. I am Shelly Wilson, the pastor, and so happy to welcome you, no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey! As we continue the practice of worshipping close in heart but physically apart, we reach out in love and healing energies to all who are joining us today. Please check out our websites and drop us an email if you would like to know more about our churches or if you have a need or a prayer concern.

Starting Sunday night, **July 12 at 4:00 PM**, I will be leading us in a weekly study of the podcast "1619" created by the New York Times magazine for the 400th anniversary of the beginning of slavery in this country. We will meet virtually **each Sunday at 4:00 PM** for an hour. Email me (wilsonshellya@yahoo.com) if you would like to be included in this study. It is the beginning of our racial justice study course that will continue throughout the summer and fall, using various resources to inform our discussion.

Often on the Sunday that falls closest to July 4, some churches have a service of celebration of Independence Day. This service is a mix of gratitude for our nation and of sorrow for its brokenness. This year is an especially poignant one with the pandemic, economic suffering, growing awareness of systemic racial injustices, as well as the rancor, confusion, and division within our government. With so much to grieve, it is also vitally important for us to remain hopeful and aware of reasons for gratitude. May we take a moment to remember those whose vision helped to begin our nation, those whose lives and labor were poured out to build and sustain it, those who have died in pursuit of the dream of equality and



freedom, and those who continue to work with courage, seeking life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for ALL God's children. It is a day of mourning and a day of rejoicing. Aren't they all? Welcome to worship.

Prelude: "Create in Me A Clean Heart, O God"-Terry Talbot, Performed by The Acappella Company <https://youtu.be/noUeQQ64Q1I>

Create in me a clean heart oh God Let me be like you in all my ways
Give me your strength, teach me your song Shelter me in the shadow of your wings
For we are your righteousness
**This meditative song is based upon Psalm 51*

Call to Worship and Prayers Susan Gilbert <https://youtu.be/DEqyzMRyezA>

The Scriptures remind us, that even in the hardest times, there are reasons for hope. In Luke, we read these words:

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Let us pray:

Merciful God:

With gratitude we breathe into a new day. Awareness of our blessings gets us through.
We spend time alone, and in all the ways we can, we gather with others, faces flickering on a screen or words vibrating in and out on the phone.

We long for tender mercies and small connections because this world can be hard.
We come longing for light because our lives often are crowded with shadows and fears.
We come seeking relief and if not, at least the patience to bear whatever comes, renewed by the peace of sleep and hope that comes with each new day.

For our dear ones we pray: for Shirley and for Nancy, recovering from surgery; for Don and for Vivian, recently hospitalized; for the families and friends of Billie and of John, recently passed from our congregations; for Oscar and for Steve and so many, many others, sick with COVID 19, for their loved ones and friends; for all healthcare providers and essential workers and researchers; for all persons in this world who are consumed by worry, job loss, grief, and fear; and for our nation we pray, that we will reject racism and choose to walk with one another in equity and love.

May your light dawn in our hearts and grant us peace and healing, we pray. Amen.



Hymn “This is My Song”

Lloyd Stone, tune: Finlandia https://youtu.be/6OxSYe8_e4Y

This is my song O God of all the nations A song of peace for lands afar and mine
This is my home the country where my heart is Here are my hopes my dreams my holy shrine
But other hearts in other lands are beating With hopes and dreams as true and high as mine

My country's skies are bluer than the ocean And sunlight beams on cloverleaf and pine
But other lands have sunlight too and clover And skies are everywhere as blue as mine
O hear my song Thou God of all nations A song of peace for their land and for mine

Time for Children 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

(or give online via Pay Pal— www.churchoftheisles.org; www.trinityuccstpete.org)

Trinity UCC

Att. Marty Seyler

3155 Featherwood Court

Clearwater, FL 33759

Music “O Beautiful, Our Spacious Skies”

Katharine L. Bates, tune: Samuel Ward https://youtu.be/B74ZiYYC_Mg

Katharine Lee Bates in 1893 wrote the words to the original poem after traveling to the top of Pike’s Peak, Colorado. One hundred years later, verses 2-4 by Miriam Therese Winter were added to include all of the Americas. The words below appear in the New Century Hymnal. The video version is presented by a portion of the US Army Field Band, the Jazz Ambassadors.

O beautiful, our spacious skies, our amber waves of grain;
Our purple mountains as they rise above the fruitful plain.
America! America! God’s gracious gifts abound,
and more and more we’re grateful for life’s bounty all around.

Indigenous and immigrant, our daughters and our sons:
O may we never rest content till all are truly one.
America! America! God grant that we may be



A sisterhood and brotherhood from sea to shining sea.

How beautiful, sincere lament, the wisdom born of tears,
the courage called for to repent the bloodshed through the years.

America! America! God grant that we may be
a nation blessed with none oppressed, true land of liberty.

How beautiful, two continents, and islands in the sea
that dream of peace, nonviolence, all people living free.

Americas! Americas! God grant that we may be a hemisphere where people here all live in harmony.

Reading “Kids Who Die”

By Langston Hughes <https://youtu.be/6Mct8UB4XhY>

**Video created by Frank Chii and Terrance Green and narrated by Danny Glover.*
This stunning and important poem was written in 1938. It feels deeply contemporary.

This is for the kids who die,
Black and white,
For kids will die certainly.
The old and rich will live on awhile,
As always,
Eating blood and gold,
Letting kids die.

Kids will die in the swamps of Mississippi
Organizing sharecroppers
Kids will die in the streets of Chicago
Organizing workers
Kids will die in the orange groves of California
Telling others to get together
Whites and Filipinos,
Negroes and Mexicans,
All kinds of kids will die
Who don't believe in lies, and bribes, and contentment
And a lousy peace.

Of course, the wise and the learned
Who pen editorials in the papers,
And the gentlemen with Dr. in front of their names
White and black,
Who make surveys and write books



Will live on weaving words to smother the kids who die,
And the sleazy courts,
And the bribe-reaching police,
And the blood-loving generals,
And the money-loving preachers
Will all raise their hands against the kids who die,
Beating them with laws and clubs and bayonets and bullets
To frighten the people—
For the kids who die are like iron in the blood of the people—
And the old and rich don't want the people
To taste the iron of the kids who die,
Don't want the people to get wise to their own power,
To believe an Angelo Herndon, or even get together

Listen, kids who die—
Maybe, now, there will be no monument for you
Except in our hearts
Maybe your bodies'll be lost in a swamp
Or a prison grave, or the potter's field,
Or the rivers where you're drowned like Leibknecht
But the day will come—
You are sure yourselves that it is coming—
When the marching feet of the masses
Will raise for you a living monument of love,
And joy, and laughter,
And black hands and white hands clasped as one,
And a song that reaches the sky—
The song of the life triumphant
Through the kids who die.

Scripture Isaiah 58: 6-12

Jackie Shewmaker https://youtu.be/CDZq6Aq_H_U

Do you wonder what sort of worship is pleasing? says the Lord, What kind of fast is acceptable to me?

Is not *this* the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

⁸Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,



and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator^[a] shall go before you,
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
9 Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.
If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
10 if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.
11 The LORD will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.
12 Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

Sermon: “Finding Our Way to Freedom”

Shelly Wilson <https://youtu.be/oD9PnR5GCII>

There are always at least two sides to every celebratory story, and usually many more than that. The United States of America's Independence Day has a million nuances, probably--multitudes of individual stories, compromises, dreams, journeys from other lands, political processes, wars, greed, truth, and lies all are part of the story. I confess, I have taken it too much for granted, maybe some of you, too, honestly, for the country and for the freedom and the privilege I've enjoyed, there has been not enough awareness of what it cost in blood, sweat, and tears, of the lives laid down, the dreams that created it, the lives stolen, too, those kidnapped, and enslaved to make it so. Beyond the grilling out and the flag-flying and the fireworks, I have been jerked awake to realize that now more than ever, we must gather up what is left and do the right things, push for change.

Maybe this year with everything around us in question, our nation driven down by the pandemic and the ineffectual handling of it, as well as by the hidden sicknesses of racial injustice, healthcare and economic and educational disparities, and the shattered moral rudders that leave the nation floundering, we have the chance to consider Independence Day from a renewed and broadened perspective. It is inspiring to recall the leaders of the past, those poets and protesters and prophets, soldiers and statesmen and women, dads and moms and children and martyrs, who through the worst days and the longest nights, and in spite of violence, threats, poverty, and war, sat in, walked, voted, made speeches, preached, taught, suffered, and gave their lives, thousands of them. It is inspiring and challenging and encouraging



to learn the rest of the story from others' experiences, to take the wisdom so hard won and with it, to make a new day where all may find hope for the future and a new life in the present.

This past Thursday, June 25, our denomination, the United Church of Christ celebrated its 63rd anniversary. Every two years the entire national church along with international partners all gather for a meeting together. In 2021, this meeting is going to be a virtual one for the first time in our history. At its meeting in 1965, the UCC welcomed a keynote speaker who said these words in his address to our predecessors gathered in a hall in Chicago, "Although the Church has been called to combat social evils, it has often remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained glass windows. How often the Church has been an echo rather than a voice, a taillight behind the Supreme Court and other secular agencies, rather than a headlight guiding men and women progressively and decisively to higher levels of understanding. During a nation rife with racial animosity, the church has too often been content to mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities." Martin Luther King, Jr. was that fiery messenger to our church, reminding us of who we were, of who we are. And on July 4, 2005, at General Synod 25, when Andrew Young, life-long UCC member, follower of King, and former mayor of Atlanta, was our keynote speaker, the United Church of Christ became the first mainline Protestant denomination to affirm equal marriage rights for all, some 10 years before it became the law of the land.

Behind and under such courageous actions were, and are, spiritual mandates. In these verses Jackie has read for us from the prophet Isaiah, it is written that God wants no empty prayers, but chooses the loosening of the bonds of injustice, the undoing of the yokes of oppression, feeding the hungry by sharing, bringing the homeless poor into the house, being there for our own people, as well as for the world. Prophets are our forebears and their messages to us the challenge and the invitations are the same.

But it is interesting to ponder, what of us this Independence Day? Do we need *metanoia*, a Greek term used in Scripture that depicts a profound change of mind, and the learning of a new language to speak of *independence*, with a consciousness of *interdependence* in a global society? Are we going to need to do that in order to halt both pandemics of COVID and of racism? The Lakota's believe that it is uncivilized and inappropriate for individuals to be concerned only for their own welfare, but that it is the inner connectedness of the community that gives us our identity and our true humanity. It is our awareness of our place in the created order, together with all other beings, which centers and quite literally, grounds us. You can clearly see how that understanding would have an impact on every part of life as we know it now—if interdependence is a soul value for us, then of course we wear a mask to protect others and ourselves, of course black lives matter, of course the Earth and her beings are our siblings, of course, no child is in a cage, no family ripped apart, no one hungry or homeless—because we are interwoven with one another. Sometimes it is hard to hear the prophet's words calling us and to look full on at our nation, at its history and the legacy we are living, but I believe we begin to truly love and help to heal it when our hearts open to know what is true. It is in being able to recognize that ambivalence and questioning are not disloyal or unpatriotic. They are central to the spiritual practice of truth-seeking for ourselves as citizens and for the nation.

Unitarian Universalist minister Victoria Safford some years ago told a story about her kindergarten-aged daughter "A child I know, when asked this week whether she would answer the call of her elementary school principal to wear red, white and blue clothes on Thursday, was in a quandary. She



put down the crayon with which she was painstakingly trying to squeeze the words *Peace is Possible* onto the white bars between the red bars on the small American flag she had made and said, 'Well, it is a pretty good country... so it's hard to know what to wear.' Not exactly mindless nationalism, but provocative, nonetheless."

Victoria's daughter at her tender age is already a nonconformist, an honorable citizen of our nation, it seems to me. We DO live in a pretty good country, sharing space on the planet with hundreds of other pretty good countries, and we are honoring this one, ours, this weekend, as we pay tribute to those whose lives have been poured out in public service and honorable sacrifice for it. But when we seek to do it mindfully, honestly, and by learning the real and entire history, we may expect to be filled with an incongruent mash-up of sentiments--a sincere love for country mixed up with anger and a restless awareness of painful realities all around and within us. I love our country, and at the same time, on Independence Day weekend, I feel ambivalent-- inside and outside, like Victoria's daughter, just not sure what to wear.

But in these times, it is clearer than ever before that our destinies are woven together, and that we must begin from a very conscious place, an honest starting point of interdependence. But Rebecca Todd Peters reminds us in her book, *Solidarity Ethics*, that our justice focus must not be limited to helping to meet the immediate needs of others, as necessary as that is, but must also have mutuality as its ultimate goal. Peters notes, "Because a first-world ethic of solidarity begins from a position of privilege rather than a position of marginalization, analyzing and understanding privilege must be its starting point." Understanding privilege begins with a critical look at ways my lifestyle is complicit in all that prevents independence and interdependence from being realized for all. Learning about others' realities, developing friendships, examining systems, and working within for change--such courageous examination of our own lives and building relationships with others whose experiences are very different and who have so much to teach us, means that then true justice happens. And when mutuality and true justice happen, the world is gifted in new ways by persons whose contributions were previously denied, pushed down, and hidden.

Throughout our United States history are woven stories of the hidden, pushed down, and denied gifts of those who were not treated equally. So many stories miraculously have been discovered and told over time. They are signs of hope, that somehow, that justice and goodness are weaving their healing among us, all through our history, even when we don't see it at first. Consider the story of two Katharines, dedicated United Church of Christ women, well, Congregationalists actually, because they lived well before the Congregationalists and Christians and Evangelical and Reformed churches united to form the UCC. Both were professors at Wellesley College--Katharine B., daughter of a Congregationalist minister, was chair of the Department of English and Katharine C. was the Chair of Economics. They loved each other for 25 years until Katharine C. died from breast cancer after a painful long three years in which her beloved partner faithfully cared for her until she died. Katherine B. wrote what is reputed to be the first detailed medical account of the process of breast cancer death in her amazing work, *My Soul is Among Lions* and she also wrote a slim volume of love poems called *Yellow Clover*, written for Katharine C. Neither work received much notice during her lifetime. However, there is one thing that Katharine B. wrote that we all know and that still brings light to us after all these years. For all around us, the movement of Spirit is inviting all the gifts of all the people to be voiced, to be embraced, to be brought into the light. For one other thing Katharine B. wrote was scribbled down on a scrap of paper she'd



stuffed in her pocket after an exultant trip to the top of Pike's Peak, "O beautiful , for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain, for purple mountain majesties, above the fruited plain. America, America, God shed his grace on thee, and crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea."

Victoria's daughter said, "It's a pretty good country," and then looked at her mom, "for confirmation of that claim, for some assurance that this guess might in fact be true, and this I gave her. (She knows I have my doubts, but needs to be reminded, just as I do, that doubts go hand in hand with hopes and dreams so passionate, so powerful...) And then she said, deeply serious, without seeking my collaboration or permission, 'I think I'm gonna wear turquoise, pink and beige for now.' And so she did, and I don't know if she knows what risk may be entailed there, what wrath she may incur among her playground comrades or her teachers or her principal, or how her own chosen symbols of ambivalence might be misunderstood. I don't know what confidence she may inspire, in this country to which she has not even learned, at her young age, to pledge allegiance yet. For now she is a turquoise patriot; she's proud and scared and questioning; her allegiance is to her own conscience; and her trust is still, for now, with the adults, in whose clumsy hands her entire future is contained."

May we dare to be patriots of the turquoise variety, fiercely loving our country, but with hearts wide open, determined to know deeply in order to be transformed by the truth of what has been and is true for others. And then, by the renewal of our minds and hearts, may we work together to create and live into a new day of *interdependence* for all. Amen.

Benediction <https://youtu.be/zhrpJFAodI>

May we truly be free, dear free beloved Light! May we all be free, free from the chains of addictions and violence, free from fear and disease and weapons, free from being oppressors and oppressed. May we all be free—free to dance and to play. Free to love who we love. Free to live kindly on the land and have a home and food and medicine and health and meaningful work and good education and honorable rest and clothing and shelter and access. May we all be free to seek peace, and may peace begin with us. Amen.

Hymn "Lift Every Voice and Sing"

By James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson, <https://youtu.be/uyZkRgQ4ZnQ> often called the Black National Anthem. Performed by the Winston-Salem State University Choir, Alumni Choir and Friends, arranged by the choral conductor, Dr. Roland M. Carter. The Orchestra conductor is Maestra D'Walla Simmons-Burke, and the pianist is Dr. Myron Brown, First Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, NC

Lift every voice and sing
Till earth and heaven ring
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
let our rejoicing rise,
high as the list'ning skies, let it resound loud as the rolling sea



sing a song full of 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 chast'ning rod,
felt in the day that hope unborn had died;
yet with a steady beat,
have not our weary feet,
come to the place for which our parents 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.