## Liturgy for Black History Month

Submitted by: The Rev. Wilson Gonese, Burgeo Pastoral Charge, Burgeo, Newfoundland and Labrador

### Words of Welcome

You whom I have taken from the end of the earth,

and called from its furthest regions,

and to whom I have said you are my children,

I have chosen you and have not forgotten you.

Behold my people whom I uphold,

my chosen ones in whom my soul delights.

I have put my spirit upon you.

You will bring justice to the world.

You will bring forth justice for truth.

You will not fail or be discouraged

till you have brought justice in the earth.

I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness

and will hold your hand; I will keep you

and give you as a covenant to the people,

as a light to the world, to open blind eyes,

to bring out prisoners from prison.

I am the Lord, that is my name,

and my glory I will not give to another.

Behold the former things have come to pass,

and new things I declare. (based on Isaiah 41 and 42)

### Opening Hymn

“O God of every nation” (*Voices United* 677)

### Unison Prayer

**God of love, peace, and unity,**

**we thank you for welcoming us all just as we are;**

**for making us equal as your children**

**from all corners of the earth;**

**and for giving us your blessings as your children;**

**and for making us belong.**

**We pray that you help us realize that we are**

**all made in your image, and we need to bring peace**

**to all your creation as one people who belong to you.**

**We ask all this through Christ our brother. Amen.**

### Scripture Readings

Ezekiel 34:11–15 or 1 Peter 2:4–10

### Short Reflection

**Theme:** “We all belong because we are home.”

We are all called by God to belong to God’s kingdom. God doesn’t show any favouritism or segregation. The reading from Ezekiel 34:11–15 shows that God gathers all people from every corner of the world to come home. It doesn’t matter who you are—your colour, creed, or status. God wants to gather all people no matter where we are. Even those who were scattered in diaspora, they are all called to come back home where they belong. We are called to restoration and reconciliation where we will have the right as heirs and children of God.

Paul in his letter to the Ephesians writes:

So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Ephesians 2:11–13)

There is no one who should look down upon us because we belong to the church of Christ. For God, we are one people redeemed through Christ and called to fulfill God’s mission in the world:

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12)

We need to be reminded, as in the words of Peter:

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the might acts of [God] who called you out of darkness into [God’s] marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

(1 Peter 2:9–10)

My dear friends we all belong to the United Church and to God; we are all here because this is our home and we belong. Amen.

### Litany

Loving God, we thank you for calling us to you,

from all corners of the world, to come home to belong.

We appreciate your love that embraces all of us.

We thank you that we are all one in you.

We thank you for your faithfulness and justice.

When we were aliens and foreigners you welcomed us.

We thank you for calling us to your ministry,

to live and do your work with the mind of Christ.

Remind us that we are here to fulfill your calling to serve.

Help all we do be done for love.

During this year’s Black History Month,

we want to draw closer to you

as we make a commitment

to go into the world as agents of your

justice, peace, and reconciliation.

Gracious God, we need your help

to do your work and fulfill this task you have given us.

We are proud to be part of the church that is serving you.

In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

### Prayers for the People

Faithful God, we thank you that we are known by you.

And you have called us to go into the world to do you work.

 **Lead us we pray.**

You called us to love and be loved as we do justice in your field.

 **Help us we pray.**

We come in humility asking that you will give us courage and wisdom

to become ambassadors of your peace and reconciliation.

 **Hear us we pray.**

You made us like you and called us to be unique.

As you look at us you see the same people you created in your image.

 **Help us we pray.**

Help us, Lord, that we may be able to stand up against any injustice.

 **Hear us we pray.**

**We are glad to be your people as we all come together with one voice,**

**answering and making a commitment that we will not keep quiet if there is**

**injustice, but we will stand up and do you work of love, peace, and reconciliation.**

**As you have called us to be one, we recommit ourselves to this calling.**

**We pray all this through Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Amen.**

### Offertory Music

“Your work, O God, needs many hands” (*Voices United* 537)

### Offertory Prayer

Gracious and loving God, the giver of all things,

we thank you that we are able to come to you

in joy and celebration.

We offer ourselves and all that we have to you

knowing that all of what we have

comes from you.

Bless these offerings that they

may be used to enlarge your kingdom.

In Christ’s name, we pray. Amen.

### Closing Music

“God of grace and God of glory” (*Voices United* 686)

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make [the Lord’s] face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you.

The Lord lift up [the Lord’s] countenance upon you,

and give you peace. (based on Numbers 6:24–26)

### Sending Forth

Go forth as in the name of Christ.

Fulfill your task as ambassadors,

and lead the world to justice and peace.

**Thanks be to God.**