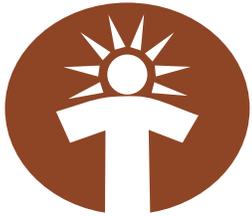


Welcome!

First Congregational Church
of Webster Groves United Church of Christ



Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.

FEBRUARY 28, 2021
SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT
SEMINARY AND CHURCH VOCATIONS SUNDAY
BLACK HISTORY MONTH

*We respond to God's call
by welcoming everyone
regardless of ability, age, ethnicity,
race, gender identity,
sexual orientation or socio-economic
background.*

*To proclaim in word and deed
the love of Christ,
we affirm that all may share
in the full life, ministry, fellowship,
responsibilities and blessing of our
congregation.*

*No matter who you are
or where you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here.*



Order of Worship

PRELUDE

Introduction

History of "Lift Every Voice and Sing"

Sharon Love, *Reader*



James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938)

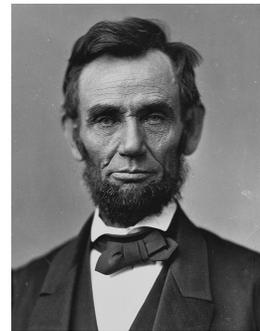


John Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954)

Lift Every Voice and Sing – often called “The Black National Anthem” – was written as a poem by NAACP leader James Weldon Johnson and then set to music by his brother John Rosamond Johnson in 1899. It was first performed in public in the Johnsons’ hometown of Jacksonville, Florida as part of a celebration of Lincoln’s Birthday on February 12, 1900 by a choir of 500 schoolchildren at the segregated Stanton School, where James Weldon Johnson was principal. Stanton School was named after William Stanton, the Secretary of War during the Lincoln Administration. “Lift Every Voice and Sing” As a Representation of Joy: James Weldon Johnson illustrates African American’s feelings about freedom, at the outset. Then he provides a realistic picture of the African American jubilation and pleasure and illustrates how to enjoy the golden moments, singing and acknowledging achievements. Later, he digs deeper into the gloomy history of African Americans and discusses the difficulties and violence faced while in bondage. Although African Americans endured a lot, yet, we did not lose hope. Now, standing at the brink of a new, hopeful, and bright future. Therefore, we thank God, who guided us on the difficult paths. However, what enchants the listener is the undaunted struggle of African Americans and the unflinching faith that helped us face difficulties and struggle for liberty.



Secretary of War, Edwin McMasters Stanton
27th U.S. Secretary of War
(1814 – 1869)



President Abraham Lincoln
16th President of the U.S.
(1809 – 1865)

Prelude

Lift Every Voice and Sing

James Weldon Johnson
John Rosamund Johnson

Accompanying slides assembled by Devin McCowan

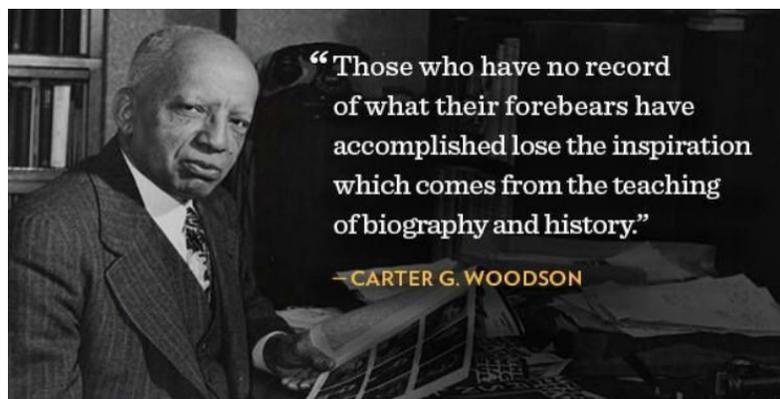
WELCOME

Doug Miller, *Announcer*

Hello and welcome to worship with the First Congregational Church of Webster Groves. We are a member church of the United Church of Christ, located near St. Louis, Missouri. This is our worship for Sunday, February twenty-eighth, 2021. Today is the second Sunday in Lent.

Not only is this the Second Second Sunday in Lent, it is Seminary Sunday as well, and we will hear today from one of our bright Student Pastors and Eden Seminarian, Rev. Elston McCowan. It is also our last Sunday together celebrating Black History Month.

First, a word about Black History Month. This annual observance was first celebrated as Negro History *Week* in 1926, the creation of famed African American historian Dr. Carter G. Woodson. This Negro History Week was began in honor of the birthdays of the great emancipator Abraham Lincoln of famed orator and Black former slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. According to Dr. Cynthia Warrick, the first female President of Stillman College, which is a Historical Black College or University (HBCU) founded one hundred and fifty years ago in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, the goal of Negro History Week was to acknowledge the significant impact and many contributions of African Americans to U.S. history and culture. It was later acknowledged as Black History Month by President Gerald Ford in 1976.



TOLLING OF THE BELL

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

RAISING THE COVENANT (Unison)

Covenant of 1977

We who are called of God into this Christian community covenant together: to seek to know the will of God, to experience the joy and struggle of discipleship, to proclaim in word and deed the love of Christ, and to work for peace and justice among all people. We trust God's promise of grace and forgiveness and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our trials and rejoicing.

HYMN

The God of Abraham Praise

Moses Maimonides

The God of Abraham praise, all praised be God's name
Who was and is and is to be, fore'er the same!
The one eternal God, before what now appears –
The First and Last: beyond all thought, through timeless years!

God's Spirit freely flows, high surging where it will;
God spoke of old in prophets' word; that word speaks still.
Established by God's law, and changeless it shall stand,
Deep written on the human heart, in every land.

PRAYER OF APPROACH (Responsive – Leader; People)

Rev. Merrimon Boyd, *Student Pastor*
Sharon Love, *Reader*

O gracious and merciful God, we come once more before your glorious throne – seeking your tender mercies.

So often we feel so unworthy to be in your presence, yet you have imparted your righteousness upon us so that we may run boldly toward you.

As we continue to embark upon this time of reflection, we ask that you grant us the peace that surpasses all understanding. So that we may walk upright before for you and others.

Bless us with your presence, because we realize that we can do nothing worth doing without your blessings.

As we draw nearer unto the day of celebrating your passion, and remembering your steadfast love for us, we ask that you prepare our hearts and minds. So that we will once again find ourselves pleasing in your sight and feel worthy of your love.

And we will be ever so mindful to give you all the glory, honor, and praise. Amen.

NOT FOR CHILDREN ONLY

Halley Kim, *Pastoral Assistant*

THE WORD SHARED

From the Law

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16
New Revised Standard Version

Rev. David Denoon, *Pastor*

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you and will make you exceedingly numerous." Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

God said to Abraham, As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.

For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”)—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become “the father of many nations,” according to what was said, “So numerous shall your descendants be.” He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. Therefore, his faith “was reckoned to him as righteousness.” Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

Response.

Leader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the people.

People: Thanks be to God.

MESSAGE OF THE DAY

“Nation Building”

Rev. Elston K. McCowan
Student Pastor

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

We Lift Our Joys and Concerns to God

Rev. Denoon

Prayer of the Day

Rev. McCowan

Prayer of Our Savior (Unison)

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen

WE SHARE OUR BLESSINGS WITH OTHERS

Doug Miller

Invitation

We travel this Lenten journey, and indeed all our lives, with all our siblings in this world. Combining gifts of substance and ability, we are able to be of service and support to one another. As we celebrate Church Vocations and the education offered at Chicago, United, and Eden seminaries, let us consider what our gifts shall be.

While the health crisis continues, until it is safe again to pass plates or collect in person, we will be receiving monetary offerings only by mail or online. If you are able financially, and you would like to support First Church or the Midwestern UCC seminaries (or both) with monetary donations, please either send a check to:

First Congregational Church
10 West Lockwood Avenue
Webster Groves, Missouri 63119

Or go to our website—FirstChurchWG.org – and to our “Donate” page. If using a check, please describe the fund to which you would like your gift to go in the memo line. If using the website, please select the fund you would like to contribute to, from the pulldown menu. The Seminary Sunday fund is, “Chicago United Eden.”

Thank you.

Prayer of Dedication (Responsive)

One: Amazing God, your glory shines, your presence permeates, your vision emboldens

All: **You fill our lives, giving us meaning and purpose. You bind us to one another and with all of creation. You move us with you to co-create the joy-filled future of your vision.**

One: Bless our gifts and our very selves, to reflect and act so that they uphold your glory and the well-being of the world.

All: **Amen.**

GOSPEL TRIBUTE

O Freedom

Traditional

Performed by Prince of Peace –

Joyce Haynes-McCowan, Sikudhani McCowan-Udumifu,
Carla M. Wilson, Janie McCowan-Udumifu, Carley B. Carter, Gwen Petty

O freedom! O freedom! O freedom over me!

And before I'd be a slave, I'd be buried in my grave

And go home to my Lord and be free!

No more weepin'! No more weepin'! No more weepin' over me!

And before I'd be a slave, I'd be buried in my grave

And go home to my Lord and be free!

BENEDICTION

Rev. McCowan

POSTLUDE

On Bended Knees

H. T. Burleigh

Dr. Leon Burke III, piano

DISMISSAL

Doug Miller

That is our worship for this week at First Church. We are glad you could worship with us.

Please, join us for our Virtual Coffee Fellowship, Sunday at 11 am on Zoom. The Virtual Coffee Fellowship link is on the homepage of our website.

Please, also plan to be with us this Wednesday at 7 o'clock in the evening, when we gather for our weekly Lenten series, "*Webster Groves and African America.*" This week's topic is, *Reconstruction.*

Our worship next Sunday will be in observance of UCC Women's ***Week*** which is March 7-13. UCC Women's Week is a week of celebration, education and awareness surrounding women's and gender issues. Our new Pastoral Assistant Halley Kim will preach her inaugural sermon at that time and you don't want to miss it.

Next Sunday is also *Amistad* Sunday. *Amistad* Sunday honors, emphasizes, and underscores the historic commitment of the UCC to the work of justice and compassion! Beginning in 1839, the work of "black and white" Congregationalists helped to secure the release of 53 captive Africans who struggled courageously for their freedom aboard *La Amistad*. Please plan to be with us.

As for today...

Our worship has ended. Let our service begin.



10 West Lockwood Avenue
Webster Groves, MO 63119
314-962-0475
www.FirstChurchWG.org

Contact Information

Moderator – Mark Edwards

Pastor – Rev. David A. Denoon
DDenoon@FirstChurchWG.org

Pastoral Assistant – Halley Kim
Halley.Kim@FirstChurchWG.org

Office Administrator – Debbie Tolstoi
Admin@FirstChurchWG.org

Director of Music & Organist – Dr. Leon Burke
Leon.Burke@FirstChurchWG.org

Facilities Manager – Chip Isringhaus
cti1234@FirstChurchWG.org

Custodian – Darrell Lakies

Assistant Custodian – Gus McLean

Director, Center for Counseling & Healing
Rev. Linda E. Smith, BCRN, HTCP/I
lesrhs@sbcglobal.net

Director of MICA – Rev. Cliff Aerie
cliff.aerie@gmail.com

Student Minister – Merrimon Boyd
merrimon.boyd@gmail.com

Student Minister – Elston McCowan
emccowan@eden.edu

Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.

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