

## A Reflection upon the Occasion of Black History Month

Greetings St. Lukers! Marjy and I want to share a couple of thoughts on the journey being undertaken by seven members of our parish in the second St. Luke's Sacred Ground Circle. January has been an eventful month for the Circle. First, we were uplifted and strengthened by your prayers and presence at the commissioning of this ministry in the two services on Sunday, January 14. Noting the variety of gifts and service that God bestows and inspires in each of us, Nick prayed that the word of Christ would dwell in the Circle members richly, to which you all responded, "Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus." We are growing in faith and knowledge together on this ministry, supported by the prayers and love of our St. Luke's family.

And, speaking of love, it was heartwarming to see the response from St. Luke's to the special offering taken up that Sunday to support the St. Luke's Sacred Ground scholarship fund. This year, we are looking to provide scholarships to students of color from three area high schools who are planning to pursue studies in music. This is in recognition of the fact that we in St. Luke's have been using spiritual music in our worship services for nearly a century, never having had the chance to compensate the authors of that music for their creative work. So we are paying it forward, so to speak, with these scholarships. Through your generosity, we raised nearly \$1000 in addition to \$1500 to be provided from by the Vestry in the budget, and will be taking up another special collection on the Sunday closest to Juneteenth to add to that total. We are truly grateful for this outpouring of love of neighbor shown by our St. Luke's family. Members of the two Sacred Ground circles are now preparing materials to allow students from West Potomac High School, Mt Vernon High School and the Duke Ellington School for the Performing Arts to apply for this scholarship support.

Having reached the half-way point in the Sacred Ground curriculum with this Circle, we also have begun to take stock of what we have learned and have started to express our thoughts and reactions through the preparation of prayers that we invite you to hold in your hearts as our work continues. We have first created a lament to respond to our country's experience with racism. One frequently encounters laments in the Bible, particularly in the Psalms. They are an expression of a sorrowful situation that causes pain and suffering and a connection with individual & corporate sins on our part. They express deep sorrow for the sins & travails of our people, confess our failings and emphasize our desire to change. They cry out for God's intervention and mercy, and that God would bring healing, hope and restoration. Finally, they close with statements of trust in God, recalling God's past deeds and offering praise and thanksgiving for who God is and what God has done.

Our Lament, after reflecting theologically on racism is below. We invite you to pray this with us as the journey continues.

**Invocation:** How Long O Lord are we condemned to the brokenness of racism?

**Worship:** You are the one who sees us as we are and will guide us to address the brokenness.

**Description:** Racism surrounds us, it is within us and without us. We have created a system that perpetuates racism.

**Connection:** This is painful and intolerable to both the oppressed and the oppressor.

**Repentance:** We acknowledge our complicity and are deeply sorrowful for the pain we are causing.

**Confession:** We want to disrupt the cycle of racism and dismantle the systems that perpetuate it, rolling the social ills back. We recognize that this must start with us.

**Petition:** We ask that you enable us to listen with the ears of our heart and mind to the cries of our brothers and sisters who are oppressed. Give us the wisdom to discern how to move forward and the fortitude to move forward with confidence.

**Trust:** We trust that you will be walking with us on this journey.

**Praise:** We praise you for the wonderful diversity of your Creation and for the empowerment that makes all things possible in you. *Amen*