Online Worship – February 7, 2021
“Vignettes of Black History in Canada”

Prelude   *Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen* – played by Jan Stapleton
Call to Worship
We come today seeking security in an uncertain world.
We come today to find refreshment for our sagging spirits.
We come today to re-connect with our community of faith.
We come to be reassured that God is with us, even now.
So come, people of God, let us worship together.

Hymn  Wade in the Water

Wade in the water
Wade in the water children
Wade in the water
God’s gonna trouble the water.
Who’s that young girl dressed in red
Wade in the water
Must be the children that Moses led
God’s gonna trouble the water.

Wade in the water
Wade in the water children
Wade in the water
God’s gonna trouble the water.
Who’s that young girl dressed in white
Wade in the water
Must be the children of the Israelite
God’s gonna trouble the water.

Wade in the water
Wade in the water children
Wade in the water
God’s gonna trouble the water.
Who’s that young girl dressed in blue
Wade in the water
Must be the children that’s coming through
God’s gonna trouble the water.

**Wade in the water**
**Wade in the water children**
**Wade in the water**
**God’s gonna trouble the water.**

You don’t believe I’ve been redeemed
Wade in the water
Just so the whole lake goes looking for me
God’s gonna trouble the water.

**Wade in the water**
**Wade in the water children**
**Wade in the water**
**God’s gonna trouble the water.**

**Opening Prayer**
Creator God, you who have called forth each star by name, we are in your presence this hour. We come before you acknowledging and celebrating the journeys of our Black brothers and sisters far and wide. We come knowing that these journeys have been met with much strife and pain, and although there have been triumphs along the way, the pain and brokenness of oppression lingers yet. But we come celebrating a people whom you have infused with a boundless faith, and whose hope in you has manifested into renewable strength and fortitude. And so we come, Creator God. Guide our worship this hour. May we not grow weary but soar on eagle’s wings as one people, bound together in your love.
Amen.

**Scripture Reading: Isaiah 40:21-31**

21 Have you not known? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?
22 It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in;
23 who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

24 Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

25 To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One.
26 Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these?
He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing.

27 Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God”? 28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.
29 He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless.
30 Even youths will faint and be weary, 
and the young will fall exhausted; 
31 but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, 
they shall mount up with wings like eagles, 
they shall run and not be weary, 
they shall walk and not faint.

Message    “Three Vignettes of Canadian Black History” 
by The Rev. Adam Kilner, minister at Dunlop United Church in Sarnia, Ontario. 

And a video: “Secret Alberta: The Former Life of Amber Valley” 
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxXJubB2cPQ&feature=youtu.be
Black people have been present in the land we call Canada since long before confederation. Multi-linguist Mathieu da Costa, of partial African ancestry, is the first known Black person to arrive on this land. Da Costa is understood to have spoken Dutch, English, French, Portuguese, Mi’kmaq, and pidgin Basque. Because of his ability to learn new languages, he traveled with João Fernandes Lavrador, exploring Greenland and the north Atlantic coast of Canada as early as 1499. Additionally, da Costa would voyage with Pierre Dugua de Mons and Samuel de Champlain.

The story that is dawning on the minds of more and more Canadians in recent years is that slavery connected to European colonialism existed in Canada for about 205 years. It began with the arrival of Olivier Le Jeune, an African boy from Madagascar, about 7 years old, in New France (modern-day Quebec). There is
little known about Le Jeune, but he was educated by a Jesuit priest, Father Le Jeune, and upon baptism took the name Olivier after the colony’s head clerk Olivier Letardif. He would later take the priest’s surname. By the time Le Jeune died in May 1654, it is thought that his status had changed from slave to free domestic servant.

Marie-Joseph Angélique was an enslaved woman living in what is now called “Old Montreal” in New France (modern-day Quebec). She was convicted of setting fire to her slaveholder’s house and causing much of Old Montreal to burn in a chain reaction of events.

It has long been assumed that Angélique was guilty of the crime, but in more recent years historians have questioned her trial, suggesting that her conviction was based more on her reputation than on credible evidence. Angélique seems to have been viewed at the time as a rebellious “runaway slave”. Her story exposes the challenges that Blacks who longed to be free faced in the early days of Canada.

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We end with a video about Amber Valley, which is located north of Edmonton in Alberta. What can we conclude from what one person interviewed in the video calls “a tragic and triumphant story”?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxXJubB2cPQ&feature=youtu.be
Prayers of the People and the Lord’s Prayer

God of Our Lives, we come as people longing to do what is right and just. Grant us wisdom and clarity as we find ways to enter into, or to maintain relationships with our Black brothers and sisters this month. Give us the opportunity to get to know each other through service and dialogue. Soothe us from the awkward conversations that we will pursue in the name of togetherness and understanding.

God of the World, be with all peoples throughout the nations as they struggle with concepts that are both familiar and unfamiliar to us. We raise to you our migrant siblings who have been exploited and sold into modern-day slavery. We raise to you their loved ones—spouses, parents, and children—who wait for them to return, but who may wait in vain. We raise those who are weary from war, starving from famine, broken from sexual exploitation and violence. May they know you as the One who will renew their strength. God of the World, whisper our love to them, and grant us ways to aid them in their difficult time.

We pray today for all those who need to feel the touch of love in their lives - the hungry who need to feel the love of a belly filled with good food; the homeless who need to know the love of a space of their own; the sick who need to feel the love of a healing hand; the confused who need to feel the love of guidance; the oppressed who need to feel the love of liberation; the abused who need to feel the love of escape. So many needs and places that are starving for the touch of love, Holy Presence.

And we pray for ourselves, because we so need to feel loved, too. Hear us now, as in a time of silence we offer the prayers of our hearts... (silence)... God of the Universe, we bring ourselves to your feet. We are each facing different hardships at the moment, alone yet together, in worship. You are keenly aware of who we are, and what we are facing. Activate your hope within us so that we may rely on the strength and comfort you offer. We ask all this in Jesus’ name, as we pray the words he taught us to say....

“Our Father, who art in heaven.....”
Offertory Reminder
We, the United Church of Canada, have made a commitment to becoming an anti-racist denomination. Another way of saying this is that we are committed to developing healthy relationships with individuals and communities, especially those experiencing marginalization, because this was a focus of Jesus’ redemptive work.

Thank you for being invested in this transformative work, and thank-you for being dedicated to living out this incredible vision for our community and the world. Your time, talents, and gifts make a huge difference, and we are forever grateful to see what God is doing in you and in our community.

Prayer:
God, bless these gifts
   May they be put to good use
   Here at our newly-amalgamated Erin United Church
   And around the world.
Amen.

Hymn  I’m Gonna Live so God Can Use Me

I'm gonna live so God can use me
Anywhere, Lord, anytime.
I'm gonna live so God can use me
Anywhere, Lord, anytime.

I'm gonna work so God can use me...
Anywhere, Lord, anytime.
I'm gonna work so God can use me...
Anywhere, Lord, anytime.

I'm gonna pray so God can use me...
Anywhere, Lord, anytime.
I'm gonna pray so God can use me...
Anywhere, Lord, anytime.

I'm gonna sing so God can use me...
Anywhere, Lord, anytime.
I'm gonna sing so God can use me...
Anywhere, Lord, anytime.

**Blessing**
The amazing grace of our teacher, Jesus Christ
The extravagant love of God
And the intimate friendship of the Holy Spirit be with you, now and always.

Amen.

**Sung Benediction: “Go Now in Peace”**
Go now in peace. Never be afraid. God will go with you each hour of every day. Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true. Know God will guide you in all you do. Go now in love and show you believe. Reach out to others so all the world can see. God will be there within, around, above. Go now in peace, in faith, and in love. Amen, amen, amen.