

Rangeley Congregational Church
Order of Worship – February 7, 2021

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Communion Sunday

Francis Harper, 19th century

We are all bound up together in one great bundle of humanity and society cannot trample on the weakest and feeblest of its members, without receiving the curse in its own soul.

Ruth King, 20th century

“When we can sit in the face of insanity or dislike and be free from the need to make it different, then we are free.”

Carl Jung, 20th century

Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.

RINGING OF THE BELL

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE: Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child
African-American Spiritual / Arr. Burleigh

CALL TO WORSHIP

Liturgist: *From the writings of Maya Angelou:*

“I’ve learned that whenever I decide something with an open heart, I usually make the right decision.”

Officiant: : Have you not known?

Liturgist: Our God is the everlasting God, Creator of the ends of the earth.

Officiant: Have you not heard?

Liturgist: God does not faint or grow weary.

Officiant: Have you not known?

Liturgist: God’s understanding is unsearchable.

Officiant: Have you not heard?

Liturgist: God gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless.

Officiant: Have you not known?

Liturgist: Those who wait for God will renew their strength they shall mount up with wings like eagles.

Officiant: We come to hear.

Liturgist: We come to know.

Officiant: Thanks be to God.

INVOCATION

Liturgist: *From the writings of Maya Angelou:*

We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.

**Gracious God,
hear our songs.
Gather us in as one people,
that we may worship you as one body.
Heal our broken hearts and bind up our wound.
that we may come into your presence
healthy and whole.
As we seek your wisdom.
Help us to discern your greatness,
as we honor the power and glory of your love.
Amen.**

May Your Light, O God, always lead us to your Love.

In your Gracious name, we pray. AMEN.

OPENING HYMN: He's Got the Whole World in His Hands
African-American Spiritual

PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE

Liturgist: *From the writings of Maya Angelou:*

Never make someone a priority when all you are to them is an option.

PASTOR'S PRAYER

Liturgist: *We are reminded in Maya Angelou's words:*

Hate. It has caused a lot of problems in the world, but has not solved one yet.

...time for silent prayer...

WORDS OF ASSURANCE ~ Officiant

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 40:21-31

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?

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;

who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

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.

To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One.

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.

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"?

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.

He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless.

Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted;

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.

Mark 1:29-39

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once.

He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons.

And the whole city was gathered around the door.

And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.

And Simon and his companions hunted for him.

When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you."

He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do."

And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Officiant:

Francis Harper: Let the Light Enter by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

The Dying Words of Goethe

"Light! more light! the shadows deepen,
And my life is ebbing low,
Throw the windows widely open:
Light! more light! before I go.

"Softly let the balmy sunshine
Play around my dying bed,
E'er the dimly lighted valley
I with lonely feet must tread.

"Light! more light! for Death is weaving
Shadows 'round my waning sight,
And I fain would gaze upon him
Through a stream of earthly light."

Not for greater gifts of genius;
Not for thoughts more grandly bright,
All the dying poet whispers
Is a prayer for light, more light.

Heeds he not the gathered laurels,
Fading slowly from his sight;

All the poet's aspirations
Centre in that prayer for light.

Gracious Savior, when life's day-dreams
Melt and vanish from the sight,
May our dim and longing vision
Then be blessed with light, more light.

SERMON

HYMN OF RESPONSE Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness
Tune: NETTLETON

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

(As you name a joy or concern later in the prayer, please finish by saying "This is my prayer." The church family responds by saying "This is our prayer.")

We pray for: Janet House, Becky and Dave Walker, Patrick Egan, Sam Meehan's Mom and her husband Nicole & LeRoy Hileman, Erin Smith, Tony McNaughton, Linda Caspar's niece Aubree Yanchick and her family, Scott and Janet Wilson and Janet's father John Owens, Marcia Baker's niece, Kris Nozal, Dave Walker's brothers, Tom & Peter Walker, Haelyn Vorous, the Daileys' son Rob, and our Members in Discernment Becky Walker and Scott Hatfield.

Our law enforcement personnel, medical personnel and first responders, and our military personnel worldwide, and all those who serve our country We pray for the people around us this day for those who are upon our hearts and minds because of a need that they have...

Liturgist: A precious thought from Maya Angelou:

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Liturgist: You lift up those
we step over
in our race to success;
you soak our aching feet
in the waters of life;
you massage hearts
bruised by others.
We praise you,
Rebuilder of crumbling souls

Officiant: You pick those not chosen
on the playgrounds of life;
you cover open sores

with your grace;
you wander our streets,
inviting those
who huddle in doorways
to feast at your Table.
We follow you,
Bread of Heaven.

Liturgist: You gather those
who are cast aside
by a throwaway society,
and call them by name;
you melt hearts hardened by cynicism
with the warmth of your hope;
you energize us
so we can sprint into the kingdom.
We welcome you,
Delightful Spirit.

Officiant: God in Community, Holy in One,
we come to you as your people,
praying as Jesus has taught us, saying,
(*Our Lord's Prayer*)

OUR LORD'S PRAYER

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, debts, trespasses) as we forgive those who (sin, our debtors, trespass) against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

CLOSING HYMN: Guide My Feet While I Run This Race
African-American Spiritual / Arr. J F Johnson

COMMUNION

Officiant: From the writings of Maya Angelou:

"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Officiant: May God be with you.

Liturgist: May God be also with you.

Officiant: People of God, open your hearts.

Liturgist: We open our hearts to God and to each other.

Officiant: Let us give thanks to the Living God.

Liturgist: With joy and with praise, we offer our thanks
to the One who offers abundant life.

PREPARATORY AND INVITATIONAL PRAYERS

SHARING THE ELEMENTS

CLOSING PRAYER

SENDING

Words to send us out to the streets from Maya Angelou:

Seek patience and passion in equal amounts. Patience alone will not build the temple.

Passion alone will destroy its walls.

God sends us forth into the world,
so we will go to walk miles in the shoes of others.
Jesus calls us to serve everyone we meet,
so we will become all things to all people.
The Holy Spirit encourages us to let go of our gospel-given rights,
so we may breathe new life into the faint.

BENEDICTION

A bit about Frances Ellen Watkins Harper from the Poetry Foundation website:

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper 1825–1911

Born in Baltimore, poet, fiction writer, journalist, and activist Frances Ellen Watkins Harper was the only child of free African American parents. She was raised by her aunt and uncle after her mother died when Frances was three years old. She attended the Academy for Negro Youth, a school run by her uncle, until the age of 13, and then found domestic work in a Quaker household, where she had access to a wide range of literature. After teaching for two years in Ohio and Pennsylvania, she embarked on a career as a traveling speaker on the abolitionist circuit. She helped slaves escape through the Underground Railroad and wrote frequently for anti-slavery newspapers, earning her a reputation as the mother of African American journalism.

A prolific writer, Harper published many collections of poetry, including *Autumn Leaves* (also published as *Forest Leaves*) (1845); *Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects* (1854), which was reprinted 20 times; *Sketches of Southern Life* (1872), which chronicles Reconstruction; *Poems* (1857); *The Martyr of Alabama and Other Poems* (1892); *The Sparrow's Fall and Other Poems* (1894); and *Atlanta Offering* (1895). Harper also published several novels, including *Iola Leroy* (1892), and essay collections. Her short story "The Two Offers" was the first short story published by an African American. Her poetry has been collected in *Complete Poems of Frances E.W. Harper* (1988, ed. Maryemma Graham), and her prose in *A Brighter Coming Day* (1990, ed. Frances Smith Foster).

She married Fenton Harper in 1860. He brought to the marriage three children of his own, and together they had a daughter. When her husband died in 1864, Harper continued to support her family through speaking engagements. During

Reconstruction she was an activist for civil rights, women's rights, and educational opportunities for all. She was superintendent of the Colored Section of the Philadelphia and Pennsylvania Women's Christian Temperance Union, co-founder and vice president of the National Association of Colored Women, and a member of the American Women's Suffrage Association. Harper was also the director of the American Association of Colored Youth.

She was active in both African Methodist Episcopalian and Unitarian churches, and was buried in Philadelphia's Eden Cemetery, next to her daughter Mary.

POSTLUDE: Muskrat Ramble
Edward "Kid" Ory (1886-1973)

Special thanks to Linda Caspar for being our Liturgist, Kelsey Meehan will lead the singing, Dave Walker for the PowerPoint slideshow presentation and Sam Meehan for setting up the Zoom live stream so we can worship together.

Deacon of the Month: Evelyn Franson (207) 864-2583