

Freedom Rising Sunday - Liturgical Resources

Pittsburgh Presbytery has designated the Sunday before the celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day to be an annual celebration of "Freedom Rising Sunday" – a time for congregations in our Presbytery to unite in prayer, worship, witness and giving to support Freedom Rising and our shared call to address the worsening plight of the African American male. The Freedom Rising Steering Team of Pittsburgh Presbytery has created some liturgical resources that might

assist your congregation in developing a worship service addressing the themes underpinning the ministry of Freedom Rising. Use as much or as little of these resources as you'd like. A portion of the Prayer of Confession and the entire Prayer of Illumination are from *The Book of Common Worship*.



Please join in the celebration of Pittsburgh Presbytery's first Freedom Rising Sunday on January 17, 2021.

Background

Freedom Rising originated in Pittsburgh Presbytery, who adopted an overture at the February 2016 meeting that to engage the denomination in a collective ministry to address the worsening plight of the African American male. This overture was adopted unanimously by the 222 General Assembly of the PCUSA (2016), who voted to "take specific action, not just in word, but also in deed, to address and improve the worsening plight of the African American male in any of the five specified cities as a pilot initiative pointing toward future and further nationwide intervention. Following are the five cities where the plight of the African American male is especially egregious and are the ones designated for specific action:

- Baltimore, Maryland
- Charlotte, North Carolina
- Cleveland, Ohio
- New York, New York
- Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

In September 2018, Pittsburgh Presbytery, through the Freedom Rising Steering Committee, awarded three grants to ministries and organizations in Pittsburgh who are engaging in the important work of building African American male leaders for the church and for the world. Grants were awarded to:

- Foundation of Hope's Diversion Program
- Saving and Raising Our African American Boys: Boys to Men Scholar's Program
- Saving Our Sons and Daughters Drop In Center

Pittsburgh Presbytery will walk alongside these programs, covenanting to support their work prayerfully as well as financially. We invite you to join in this ministry too!

Lectionary Texts

1 Samuel 3:1-10, 11-20, Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 and John 1:43-51

Suggested Hymns:

The Hymns below were taken from the Glory to God, (Blue) Presbyterian Hymnal, The African American Hymnal, and the Lift Every Voice and Sing Hymnal. Hymn numbers are not listed because these hymns appear in many of these hymnals – and several others. If you would like information on or access to any of the hymns listed below, please contact Ralph Lowe.

Lift Every Voice and Sing
Freedom Is Coming
All Who Love and Serve Your City
In An Age of Twisted Values
We Are one in Christ Jesus
Where Charity and Love Prevail
God of Grace and God of Glory
Let Us Build A House
We are one in the Spirit
In Christ There Is No East or West
We Are All one In Mission
Lord I Want to Be A Christian
Guide My Feet
Come! Live in the Light!
Goodness is Stronger than Evil
Help Us Accept Each Other
O God of Every Nation
Today We All Are Called to Be Disciples
O God, We Bear the Imprint
Called As Partners in Christ's Service
May the God of Hope Go with Us
Together We Serve
We Are the Body of Christ
For Everyone Born
I'm Gonna Eat at the Welcome Table
Live Into Hope
Heaven Shall Not Wait
We Shall Overcome

I Need You To Survive
His Eye is on the Sparrow
Precious Lord
I'm Free

Time of Preparation

Yes, Jesus, I want to be on your right side or your left side, not for any selfish reason. I want to be on your right or your best side, not in terms of some political kingdom or ambition, but I just want to be there in love and in justice and in truth and in commitment to others, so we can make of this old world a new world. Amen. – *Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

Call to Worship

We are the Body of Christ –let us gather to worship the Living God!

We are the Body of Christ – let us see the world and one another through the loving eyes of Christ!

We are the Body of Christ – let the Holy Spirit use our gifts in service of justice for all of God's people!

We are the Body of Christ – made in God's image, united across difference, uniquely gifted, collectively called. May we praise our God in Spirit and Truth, bearing witness to God's gracious love poured out for us in Christ Jesus, who makes us one.

Call to Confession

We gather today to worship the Triune God, who showers us with grace upon grace. Today we also celebrate Freedom Rising Sunday – dedicating ourselves in prayer and mission to work together as a people of faith to address the worsening plight of the African American male in Pittsburgh and in our nation. To do so requires that we look both at the world around us and at our hearts within us, and acknowledge the layers of sin that have generated and regenerated racism, inequality, oppression, injustice and despair. These centuries' old sins plague our culture still today – sometimes through egregious hate crimes, and sometimes more subtly through the postures of our heart. If we desire to make a change – in our own lives or in the world – we first have to turn to God. As individuals and as a community we must confess our sins, ask for God's forgiveness and seek God's help, that we might orient our lives toward God's faithful love. And so let us take this first step together, confessing our sins – first in unison and then in silence. Let us pray:

Prayer of Confession (unison)

God of justice and love, you made all of humanity in your image and claimed us as your own, yet we have failed to acknowledge our oneness in you. We are your Body, united in Christ, yet we build walls between ourselves and those who are different from us. We cling to your love for us, but then we turn and embrace systems that foster inequality. We give thanks for

all you have done for us, but then we hide behind our privilege and fail to acknowledge the rampant discrimination that still plagues our hearts and world. Forgive us, we pray.

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart, that the barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease, and that, with our divisions healed, we might live in justice and peace; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Who is in a position to condemn? No one but Jesus. And scripture assures us that Christ came into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world, through him, might be saved. Friends believe the good news of the Gospel!
In Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Praise God!

Prayer of Illumination

You give us prophets, holy God, to cry out for justice and mercy. Open our ears to hear them, and to follow the truth they speak, lest we support injustice to secure our own well-being. Give prophets the fire of your Word but love as well. Though they speak for you, may they know that they stand with us before you, and have no Messiah other than your Son, Jesus Christ, the Lord of all.

Prayers of Intercession

God of love and justice,
We pray today for your Spirit to move in our lives, our church, our city and our world. Hear us as we pray for change. We seek an end to racism and injustice, praying that all of your people might thrive, living into the wholeness that you desire for all of your children.

We pray that you will break the bonds of oppression in any form; that you will speak through prophets in our day and time; that you will strengthen and guide us to be builders of your kingdom here on earth.

We pray for African American boys and men in our city and throughout our nation. We acknowledge the tremendous injustice they face because of the racism rampant throughout our land. We pray that you will protect our brothers from all harm – from violence and brutality, from racial profiling, from the harm that is done when access to healthcare or education or housing or jobs is limited because of disparities within our culture. We pray that you will nurture the gifts that you have planted within each of your beloved sons to your glory.

We celebrate the ministry to which you have called us, and for your Spirit propelling Freedom Rising this far. We thank you for those whose vision created the initial overture. We thank you for Rev. Freedom Blackwell and his eloquent advocacy for this overture. We thank you for the

presence of your Spirit at General Assembly, leading to the unanimous adoption of this overture. We thank you for all who have supported this ministry with time, talent and treasure.

We pray for your blessing upon the ministry of Freedom Rising here in Pittsburgh, as our partnership with three local programs takes root. We pray for Saving Our Sons and Daughters Drop In Center, Foundation of Hope's Diversion Program, and for Saving and Raising Our African American Boys: Boys to Men Scholar's Program. We pray that you will anoint the leaders of these ministries with your vision; we pray that you will draw to these programs youth in need of guidance and hope; we pray that you will supply all that these programs need to thrive – money, talent, partners, resources.

We pray that you will guide each one of us to be ministers of reconciliation in this broken world. We pray that you will show us how we might partner with this mission, how we might advocate for justice, nurture our brothers, care for our community, and eradicate racism in any form.

We pray for your justice to roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. May your will be done – in our hearts, in our lives, in our churches, in our neighborhoods, in our city, and in your world.

We ask all of this in the name of your son Jesus, who taught us to pray together, saying...Our Father...

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication

Generous God, you have blessed us that we might be a blessing. Receive the gifts that we offer today and anoint them that all that we offer might be used to your glory. And as we offer our gifts in support of Freedom Rising, we pray that your Spirit will unite us as one Body, dedicated to the fight against racism and the nurture of our African American brothers so that all of your children may know your hope, your justice and your love. In Christ's Name we pray. Amen.