

Call to Worship                      Amos 5

We are called to seek good and not evil,  
that we may live; and so that the Lord,  
the God of hosts, will be with us.

**We are called to hate evil and love good,  
and establish justice.**

Let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

**We seek to be a people that embodies God's justice.**

**By the power of God at work within us, may it be so.**

\*Hymn    307    God of Grace and God of Glory

Prayer of the Day

**Almighty God,**

**You sent Jesus to proclaim your kingdom  
and to teach with authority.**

**Anoint us with your Spirit,  
that we too may bring good news to the poor,  
bind up the brokenhearted, and proclaim liberty to the captive;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Old Testament Reading                      1 Samuel 3:1-10

Time With Our Young Disciples

Gospel Reading                      John 1:43-51

The Morning Message

1968. It was both a good and bad year. My sister was born in 1968. We moved into a beautiful new home. The year saw violent demonstrations in many major cities in the US and across the globe. The focus of the US protests was the Vietnam War. It was also the year that Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Sen. Robert Kennedy were both assassinated.

I remember lying in my bed listening to my parents and some neighbors talking shortly after Dr. King's death. I remember no dialog, but, I remember well the tension and fear that seemed to cling to their conversation. I was just eleven years old. I was scared.

Just a few months later, my grandmother and I were preparing for a summer trip to visit my uncle and his family in England. The night before our departure, Sen. Kennedy was shot and died hours later. We were mid-flight when a pilot informed the passengers of his death.

One of the things we did soon after arriving in England was to visit the American Embassy in London, where a tribute was set up to acknowledge the loss of an American statesman and someone for whom the Brits held affection.

We joined the line to sign a sympathy book from the citizens of the UK to the Kennedy family. My grandmother ushered all of us into the line. I remember signing my name, and with that simple act, I felt a sense of loss and fear again. And we were far from the security of home. These emotions were ones I had too few years to really understand.

Decades later I can tell you about grief and its phases. We could talk about the great social problems that have not abated much since 1968. We could talk about the mess from which our government leaders seem incapable of moving us.

I'm pretty much addicted to the national news, but, it's woefully unsatisfactory anymore. All the talking heads are still making the same arguments they have for a long time. It sounds futile.

It makes me doubt that change and progress will move many paces in our immediate future.

But, a year ago, just when I gave in to pessimism and cynicism, a young woman appeared. And standing out in her yellow coat before thousands of people at the inauguration of President Biden, Amanda Gorman reminded me, and maybe some of you, that there is hope and there can be change for this country and maybe the world.

Change had indeed already come to her. She was living, shining proof.

Ms. Gorman is the first Youth Poet Laureate ever in the United States. She was born in Los Angeles and raised by a single mother, a sixth grade teacher. She was academically gifted and won a scholarship to Harvard University. She is both a poet and an activist, as is her twin sister, Gabrielle.

But it wasn't always an easy path for her. Amanda has an auditory processing disorder and is hyper-sensitive to sound. She spent years in speech therapy. She says her disability is also her gift, because being intensely focused on auditory and vocal processes made her really good at reading and writing.

When she stood at the podium on Inauguration Day, we didn't see all the struggles of her young life. But, we witnessed her poise, confidence, intelligence, skill, presence, artistry, and grace. We witnessed a young woman claiming her call. It's a call that is still forming, but, we know she will be equipped to embrace it.

When young Samuel was called by God, he didn't even recognize God's voice. Eli had to

steer him in the right direction. We still read Samuel's story and acknowledge the role he played in salvation history.

When Jesus called the fishermen, he was calling them into a life of uncertainty and risk. But, they followed anyway, learned by Jesus' side, and helped birth the early church. Their lives still influence us today.

Hear me clearly as I make the next statement. The citizens of our land have been blessed by good leaders and harmed by others. Many people looked to the advocacy and spiritual work of Martin Luther King to bring about change for the vulnerable, the poor, the minority citizens of the US. Robert Kennedy also tried to raise the conscience of the country in much the same way in the same era. Some saw this not as progress, but saw it as unwelcome revolution. And we weren't ready.

All these years later, I wonder if we will ever be ready to make peace in our land. But I hang onto hope.

So, with a new year's hope, from a fresh mind and in a positive spirit, I offer you the words today of Amanda Gorman for the new year:

May this be the day  
We come together  
Mourning , we come to mend,  
Withered, we come to weather,  
Torn, we come to tend,  
Battered, we come to better,  
Tethered by this year of yearning,  
We are learning  
That though we aren't ready for this,  
We have been readied by it.  
We steadily vow that no matter  
How we are weighed down,  
We must always pave a way forward.  
This hope is our door, our portal,  
Even if we never get back to normal.  
Some day we can venture beyond it,  
To leave the known and take first steps.  
So let us not return to normal,  
But reach toward what is next.  
What was cursed, we will cure,  
What was plagued, we will prove pure,  
Where we tend to argue, we will try to agree,

Those fortunes we forswore, now the future we forsee.  
Where we weren't aware, we're now awake.  
Those moments we missed,  
Are now these moments we make,  
The moments we meet,  
And our hearts, all together beaten,  
Now altogether beat.  
Come look up with kindness yet.  
For even solace can be sourced from sorrow.  
We remember not just for the sake of yesterday,  
But to take on tomorrow.  
We heed this old spirit,  
In a new days' lyric,  
In our hearts we hear it,  
For auld lang syne, my dear,  
For auld lang syne.  
Be bold, sang Time this year,  
Be bold, sang time.  
For when you honor yesterday,  
Tomorrow ye will find.  
Know what we've fought,  
Need not be forgot for none.  
It defines us, binds us as one,  
Come over, join this day just begun,.  
For wherever we come together,  
We will forever overcome.

May that be our hope and our intention in the year ahead. Amen.

*\*Affirmation of Faith (from A Brief Statement of Faith)*

**We trust in Jesus Christ, fully human, fully God.**

**Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:**

**preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives,  
teaching by word and deed and blessing children,  
healing the sick and binding up the brokenhearted,  
eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners,  
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.  
Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,  
Jesus was crucified,  
suffering the depths of human pain  
and giving his life for the sins of the world.**

**God raised this Jesus from the dead,  
vindicating his sinless life,  
breaking the power of sin and evil,  
delivering us from death to life eternal.  
With believers in every time and place,  
we rejoice that nothing in life or death  
can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.  
Alleluia. Amen.**

\*Hymn 581 Gloria Patri

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Holy One, as we have called for your justice to roll down like waters, we are painfully aware that many in our nation and in the wider world have never or rarely known justice and righteousness. As we pause to recognize Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, we admit that the issues of racism are far from resolved. Most of us will never know the hurts and offences and even violence our brothers and sisters have suffered their whole lives long. Our experiences have been very different. Save us from contributing to their pain and all the offenses born of discrimination and the de-valuing of others. Help us to walk some miles in their shoes that we might be your faithful children seeking understanding. We pray for that day when we are all truly at peace with the differences in race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, and any human attribute that can be used as a weapon against another. Forgive us for our failures and fill us with strength and conviction to live after the manner of Jesus Christ, who came not to be served, but to serve,

God, we know you help us in times of trouble. We continue to pray for the global community working through the pandemic. Remind us to do our part to prevent illness and to help those who suffer from this disease. We are thankful for the vaccine that is now making its way into our community and offering hope of protection against the ravages of Covid. Make us advocates that all our neighbors, here and around the world, will benefit from the promises of modern medicine.

Loving God, you know the concerns and needs on our hearts, the family, friends and others who are in need of a sense of your presence and care. You know the blessings and occasions for praise. We lift them to you now.

We praise you for those who have been called by the voice of this church as elders to serve on the session. Inspire and empower Kevin Dennison, Jon-Tyler Roach, Merritt True, Nancy McIntosh, and John R. Thomas as they lead the congregation and provide for their **spiritual welfare. May their time of service be a blessing to them and to all of us.**

We make our prayers in Jesus' name and in the way he taught us saying, Our Father...Amen.

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

\*Hymn 606 Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

**Gracious God, we are so aware of the abundance of gifts you have provided. We know, too, the great joy of sharing those gifts with others. As we offer our tithes and offerings this day, prompt us to commit more than dollars, but also those gifts you have written on our hearts- gifts meant to spread love, joy, and peace to the world. In the name of the Prince of Peace, Jesus, Amen.**

\*Hymn 644 Give Thanks, O Christian People

\*Blessing

Go now. Listen for the voice of the Lord and follow wherever it leads.

Do not be dominated by anything.

Allow no room within yourself for deceit,

but offer yourself as a temple for the Holy Spirit.

And may God be with you and speak through you;

may Christ Jesus be one with you and raise you to new life;

and may the Holy Spirit dwell in you richly. Amen.

\*Postlude