



Roll Down, Justice!
Reflections from the Alabama Pilgrims

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor

2023

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the devotional booklet for Lent 2023. This year's Lenten theme is **Roll Down, Justice!** We look forward to journeying through Lent using the series, written by Worship Design Studios and inspired by Mark Miller's songbook *Roll Down Justice! Sacred Songs and Social Justice*. This theme was chosen as a path for Lent to prepare us for the ongoing work of anti-racism at FUMC.

In October of 2022 a group of 24 FUMC pilgrims traveled to the Alabama cities of Birmingham, Montgomery and Selma. There we journeyed in the footsteps of civil rights protesters visiting prominent sites of the Civil Rights trail, met with local Black clergy, explored the Civil Rights Institute and Equal Justice Institute Legacy museums and encountered works of art that moved our spirits as we faced the larger truth of injustice for African Americans in our homeland.

We delighted in the companionship of one another, while buffeted by the emotional and gut wrenching truths we learned about slavery, lynchings, mass incarceration and the ongoing reality of White Privilege from which most of us benefit. In order to share our experience with the congregation, pilgrims were invited to share reflections of their experience on the trip by responding to questions including these examples below:

- How were you changed by the experience?
- What are the most striking memories you have of the trip?

- What do you see as your charge to keep?

We hope that these reflections will encourage conversations and continued knowledge gathering around the issue of justice/injustice. Let this verse be our spirit guide in this season of Lent:

Amos 5:24

*"But let justice roll down like water
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."*

Carole DeHart & Jessica Allison



*Beacon Center
Metropolitan United Methodist Church*



*Rev. Richard Williams
Montgomery, AL*

LENT WEEK 1

Reverence for the Black Church

"There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28

One of the Alabama encounters that lingers with me is a conversation with Rev. Thomas Wilder, Pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Birmingham. Pastor Wilder gave us a history lesson of the local Civil Rights movement as we walked past the spot where Pastor Fred Shuttlesworth's home was bombed three times during the Civil Rights movement. Pastor Wilder now leads that Dr Shuttlesworth's church and explained what they are doing now to bring hope and justice.

Finding him a wise and approachable man, I asked Pastor Wilder, "How can we be an ally of the Black church without competing to put Black people in our pews?" He responded, "No matter how often you sing, 'Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing,' Black friends may not show up." He helped us understand more deeply that a mostly white church cannot offer Black folks the same experience and support that the Black church can. The Black church has historically been a haven from white-dominated society. It's a place where Black members have been offered respect and understanding, where they work together on equal footing and their contributions are valued.

At FUMC, I hope that we find ways to offer multicultural experiences that expand our understanding of the wideness of worship. Let us give a hearty welcome to any Black friends who join us. But let us move away from the goal of hoping to fill our pews with Black bodies. (MORE)

(CONT) Let us move towards the process-oriented goal of finding ways to be in relationship with our Black siblings who may be more nourished in their own Black churches. May we show reverence for the special role of the Black church in their lives and histories.

Holy One,

Help us to mingle with our Black neighbors, not to convince ourselves that we are not racist, but because we are all God's beloved. Help us to see our Black neighbors as so much more than people who might educate us about the Black experience. Or as people who have problems that we think we can solve. Help us to show reverence for the Black church and love towards its members. May we walk humbly as friends and siblings in God's kin-dom.

Amen.

Amy Fryar Kennedy

Dirt

Dirt was very commonplace to my family when I was growing up on a farm; our shoes and boots were often covered by dirt. There was dirt from the garden, dirt from the driveway, and dirt from the pig pens carried into the house and routinely swept up. A day without dirt meant we had been away from home. Just as God played with the dirt to create humans, we played in the dirt daily.

Dirt was necessary, however; it was the bedrock of our lives as farmers. The beautiful, rich, black dirt in Iowa meant beautiful, healthy crops that supported us financially and kept us in food, clothes and shelter.

(MORE)

(CONT) When I first saw the dirt filled jars in the Equal Justice Institute museum in Montgomery, AL, it struck me that this dirt must be valuable for some reason. No one just collects dirt like rocks or flowers. These jars had words on them; names, dates and locations. This dirt was valuable – collected by the ancestors of the lynched, it was the dirt from the spot where the lynchings occurred. This was sacred dirt, dirt that was witness to a horrific crime. The EJI Museum had created this dirt exhibit as part of the Community Remembrance Project. This dirt was more than a means to an end; it was a holy reminder of lives lost in terror and injustice.



This exhibit will remain with me forever. I will look at dirt and think of the families mourning their lynched kin. And I will remember that in the beginning, God played with dirt to give us life so we could love one another.



May we remember those whose lives were lost; and may we remember that we were created from dirt, with God’s breath, made into holy and beloved creations.

Debbie Houghton

By the fifth and last day of this trip I was so full of guilt for all the atrocities that happened to black people over the last 400 years, that I was struggling with what I, a white person, could do to make a difference. We were in Selma listening to Joanne Bland share with us what happened to herself, her sister and others as they prepared for the March from Selma to Montgomery.

In March of 1965, JoAnne, age 12, and her sister Lynda, 14 years old, had the opportunity to hear Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speak at their church. Dr. King shared that there was going to be a peaceful March from Selma to Montgomery as a protest because black people were not allowed to vote even though President Johnson had signed a bill saying that all citizens could vote. On what is now called Bloody Sunday, March 7, 1965, children and adults were set to march peacefully. The town's law enforcement, all white, began hitting the marchers and even used gas. Lynda was beaten and was overcome with the gas. She had to have seven stitches over her eye and 28 in the back of her head (a peaceful March did take place on Lynda's 15th birthday March 22, 1965).

My insides continued turning over and over until Joanne said, "Now you white people who are feeling guilty, get rid of that guilt and start letting others know our history."

This was a recurring statement that I heard many times as I lived this history while many others have not. In order to make change, everyone needs to understand the why. (MORE)

(CONT) While I still have guilt, it lessens every time I have the opportunity to share what I learned on this trip, be it in just chatting with another person about the trip and/or showing pictures, as well as reading and watching documentaries so that I can be more prepared to give information.

I strongly feel that I am being guided by God to share my experience with others so that together we can move forward with the understanding that we are all God's children... and should be treated equally.

Dear Lord, please continue to guide us in not only sharing with others the atrocities of the past but in ways that we can make positive changes for all your people. Amen.

Elinor Saunders



LENT WEEK 2

So Much Dedication and Joy Seen on The Civil Rights Pilgrimage

I was impressed by the Dedication and Devotion of the people who are doing good work to help our brothers and sisters. We met Rev. Thomas Wilder, Rev. Richard Williams, Michelle Browder, Joanne Bland and Lynda Blackmon Lowery. I was touched by all of these selfless individuals and their hard work to make life better for their neighbors. Rev. Thomas Wilder shares the history of the Bethel Baptist Church and the Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, who led the fight against segregation in Birmingham. Rev. Richard Williams of the Beacon Center has services for mental health help, addiction therapy and a food bank for those in need. Michelle Browder told us of the young slave girls who suffered at the hands of Dr. J. Sims as he did research on them with no anesthetics. He got all of the credit but the young girls, Lucy, Anarcha and Betsy suffered and got no credit for the medical facts learned. Joanne Bland showed us around Selma and shared the history of the marchers going from Selma to Montgomery and also showed us that Selma is still a very poor city with many needy people who are still not treated equally. Joanne is also trying to get funds to build a playground in housing area where she grew up and where 500 people still live. Lynda Blackmon Lowery told us of her activism at the age of 14 in the early 1960s. She was arrested many times for peacefully marching and she was the youngest marcher to walk in the successful march for voting rights from Selma to Montgomery in 1965.

All of these people are working tirelessly to share history and to improve the lives of their neighbors and our brothers and sisters. (MORE)

(CONT) They are all working with few resources, low pay and little recognition but so much satisfaction that they are doing the Lord's work. They were all full of joy, intelligence and the knowledge that they are doing the right thing and that they are making a difference in the lives of others. May we all feel this dedication as we do what we can do to help our neighbors and to treat everyone with respect and kindness and strive for equality in the lives of our brothers and sisters. .

Lynn and John White

Reflection on a Moment in Birmingham, Alabama 2022

Our tour guide at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham described the damage done by the bomb that exploded on Sept. 15, 1963 killing four beautiful innocent Black children as we stood where they were standing that day. Their Sunday school lesson that morning was to have been "A Love That Forgives." He pointed to the large, stained-glass window that hangs just above the place where the bomb had been hidden outside the church. The window today is large and depicts the full figure of Christ. Our tour guide told us that on that horrific day, the only damage done to that window was to Christ's face. Where his face should have been was an emptiness; as if Christ himself could not face what had happened. And, he told us, there was a long crack across the stained glass of Christ's chest - Jesus' heart was broken.

I thought it was a dramatic and moving metaphor - a compelling story that the guide probably told again and again to pilgrims like us. (MORE)

(CONT) Then, while we viewed a short film of the event, I saw a photo of the window taken shortly after the blast in 1963. Tears welled and I realized this was no metaphor or compelling story we were told. Here is the image.



And yet, the capacity for love that forgives; love that makes something beautiful of violence and brutality is astounding. The people of Wales heard of the bombing and raised money to create a new, beautiful piece for the 16th Street Baptist Church. Here is the “Wales Window.”



In the small town of Llansteffan, Wales, an artist named John Petts volunteered his services and created this lovely window. Based on the scripture Matthew 25:40, he included the words, “You do it to me.” Christ’s right hand in the glass pushes away hatred and injustice; his left hand offers forgiveness.

In the name of white dominance and supremacy, what have we done? In acknowledging so much waste, terror and death, may we find the courage to face this brutal history and find our broken hearts changed. Isn’t it with changed hearts that we have the greatest chance of becoming one in Christ?

Elaine Shaw

I got the most impact from Montgomery. The Legacy Museum there was phenomenal! It took us through the entire history of slavery in this country via visuals and sound. I remember especially the voice of a small boy calling for his mother over and over.

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice was extremely moving. It visually reinforced the contents of The Legacy Museum. And it taught me just how widespread lynching was.

I must say that I knew much of the content of the trip, and it reinforced my lifelong conviction that slavery was wrong and that Black people have suffered a grievous harm in this country.

Sherry Marcy



LENT WEEK 3

As the Water Covers the Sea

"The earth will surely be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, just as the water covers the sea." Isaiah 11:9

These words remind me of my visit to the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama.

This museum traces the history of the Black experience in our country. We began in a room that depicted the ocean at night. Standing in this dark room, we heard the crashing of powerful waves of water all around us. We moved forward to find charts showing hundreds of journeys of slave ships, then we entered a room where we learned what happened to those kidnapped humans who did not survive the journey.

How many people died along this journey, often called the Middle Passage? It's hard to know for sure, but researchers estimate that over the many years when slave ships operated, nearly 2 million people died. TWO MILLION. And when they died, they were thrown into the sea.

I'll never think of the ocean in quite the same way. It boggles my mind.

How could the sea hold all those lost souls?

How long does it take for bodies to decompose?

Did marine predators swim alongside ships, hoping for a meal?

Was a word of regret or comfort spoken as they passed?

These and other questions remain. (MORE)

(CONT) In the museum room illustrating this tragic end, we walked over a narrow strip of flooring with water on both sides containing chained bodies that had been thrown overboard. It was a jarring beginning to our museum visit. It was a brutal, dehumanizing end for them.

That narrow strip that we walked on reminds me of the Hebrew children who crossed the sea on dry land to flee slavery in Egypt. I hope that our willingness to walk that pilgrimage path will be a step towards freeing ourselves of ignorance and denial.

Holy One, may we continue to walk towards the freedom that comes from admitting that a tragedy has occurred. May we find ways to help mend what was broken. Amen.

Amy Fryar Kennedy

Old Magazines

I have a funny habit of storing magazines in a small basket before throwing them out. Looking back to see how the articles a few months or a year ago stood the test of time is interesting to me. It provides perspective.

In paging through the August/September edition of Fortune before tossing it out, I found an article, *"America's Black Brain Drain, Why African-American Professionals Are Moving Abroad - And Staying There."* The article led off with the story of Najoh Tita-Reid, a 2013 executive with the pharmaceutical giant Merck. She moved her family from New Jersey to Europe. (MORE)

(CONT) "Like many of corporate America's ladder climbers, Tita-Reid first went after an international role with the goal of enhancing her career. *But in the years since she made that first move to London, she's become part of a cohort of Black American expats who have chosen to stay abroad because they've found that the professional benefits of working overseas are far more profound than the usual resume-building check mark. Working in Europe, Tita-Reid says, has been like wearing an oxygen mask. It's allowed her to breathe - to lead and perform without feeling the crushing weight of America's dysfunctional racial dynamics at every moment.*"

Our Civil Rights Pilgrimage and this article have a message in common: the legacy of slavery and the racial discrimination left in its wake continue to be part of the American landscape. It won't be erased until we face it, admit that it exists and actively seek measures to resolve it. Until then, I doubt African Americans in this country will feel like they can breathe.

Jim Higdon

LENT WEEK 4

Courageous Non-Violence!

When Fred Shuttleworth's* parsonage in Birmingham, Alabama was bombed on Christmas evening in 1956 and he survived, he felt touched by God to lead the fight for freedom. He became a force leading non-violent demonstrations, sit-ins and marches. His bravery drew others to the cause. They demonstrated against Jim Crow segregation including segregated schools, riding only in the back of the bus, white-only food counters, separate entrances and drinking fountains, ridiculous rules for registering to vote and on and on. Fred's church was bombed, as were others in the area because most of the leaders and marchers were centered in churches. Those demonstrating risked injury or death from attack dogs, high powered fire hoses, and people who would do anything to keep them down. The marchers included children as well as adults. The children and the adults were arrested and went to jail in awful conditions. Yet they marched on, the crowds swelling. More and more marches and demonstrations were held. Young children left school to participate. Joann Bland, who marched as an 11 year old in Selma, told us of her experiences and introduced us to her sister Lynda, who at 14, was severely beaten by police at a march at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, on what was nicknamed Bloody Sunday. Three people were killed at that time, one woman from Michigan. Finally, after the march of 80 miles from Selma to Montgomery, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act in August of 1965. (MORE)

(CONT) It was thought after the Civil War that racism would end. It was thought after the civil rights laws were passed in the 60's that racism would end. Racism continues. The message from many of our presenters to us was that we must continue to fight for equality for all.

Dear God, thank you for those who have given their all to bring more freedom to people in the past. Help each one of us to find a way to play a role as we work to be anti-racist now. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

**Fred Shuttleworth's efforts in the Civil Rights Movement were acknowledged in 2008 when the Birmingham airport was renamed the Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport.*

Ann Hanton



Symbolic footprints of Marchers in Montgomery.



A statue of an attack by policeman and dog on a non-violent demonstrator.

A birthday is just a date on a calendar, that which we use to celebrate life, the arrival of a new family member. Yet at the Equal Justice Institute's Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama I found my birthdate on a jar containing soil from the site of a lynching on Oct. 11, 1942. Not my birth year, but a month and date associated with celebration for me will now be forever intertwined with the stories of Charley Lang and Ernest Green.

I was unprepared for the wave of nausea, the racing of my heartbeat or the cotton mouth feeling as I gazed at the many jars on the wall and found one bearing Ernest's name with my birth month and date. Needing to learn more about this tragedy, an internet search found news clippings and the name of Charley. My horror doubled. These 14 year olds were accused of attempted rape of a teenage white girl, not an uncommon charge used to create terror and keep blacks in line. Charley and Ernest were abducted from jail and hung from an infamous bridge in Clark Co, Mississippi, known as the "hanging bridge."

I have learned much about the use of lynchings as a tool to instill terror in black Americans. I will never know if these charges were based on actual events. I don't believe so based on readings about unfounded charges leading to lynchings. In any event, this was mob justice meted out. Someone's child, grandchild, brother, nephew was arrested, charged, jailed, and then abducted from same jail to be hung from a bridge, their bodies found the next day. The fear, vulnerability and helplessness that must have permeated communities after lynchings can only be hinted at in our imagination.

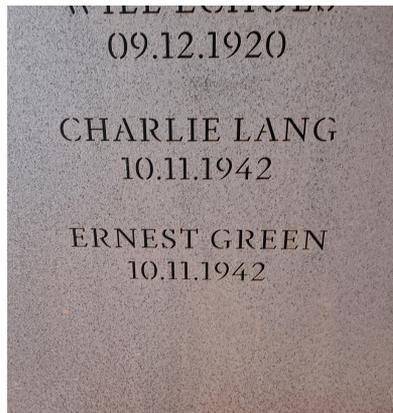
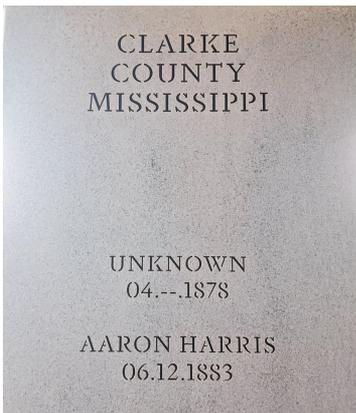
The wave of lynchings documented after the civil war until the 1950s is not over, just as slavery is not really over. (MORE)

(CONT) It has merely shifted to another form, first lynchings and now mass incarceration, biased laws and sentencings, as the Legacy Museum teaches in unforgettable exhibits, documents, sculptures, recordings and videos.

I first visited the Equal Justice Institute in January of 2022. After returning home, Debbie Houghton, Amy Kennedy and I set about to organize a trip so others of our congregation could experience a similar pilgrimage. It is a privilege to continue my journey of learning, sharing with others and helping bring Jesus' message of LOVE for ALL to our congregation and community. That is my "charge to keep."

*O gracious and loving God,
Open our eyes to see injustice of ALL manner in the world.
Open our hearts and fill us with compassion for ALL your creation.
Open our minds to receive the entire truth and history of our land and ALL its people.
Send us forth to create a world in which justice truly prevails.
Amen.*

Carole DeHart



I grew up in an all-white community, and really have not had much close contact people of color during my working life. So the trip to Alabama was a real education for me. It was a bit of an emotional roller coaster – being discouraged by the often-brutal history of blacks in America, and then encouraged by the optimism and energy of the black leaders we met during our tour. The Equal Justice Initiative's Legacy Museum in Montgomery had a big impact on me.

It led us through stages of Black presence in America, from slave ships to slave auctions to lynchings to voter suppression. It saddened me to see that society could be so tolerant of the cruelty imposed on the black population.

One fact that I found especially galling – after slavery was abolished, the states created a loophole; prisoners did not need to be paid for their labor while in prison. So then corrupt leaders simply arrested innocent blacks, sent them to prison, and then leased them out as cheap labor to local industries. The police and prison officials kept all of the money.

I was impressed (in a bad way) with how effective structural racism has been at suppressing generations of blacks from equal treatment. I have begun to realize how advantaged my life has been, even without any individual acts of favoritism on my behalf (that I know of).

But in the face of generations of discrimination, we met leaders working hard every day to improve their communities. I left with hope that intentional anti-racism can change (too slowly) our American culture to allow everyone an equal chance at a good life.

Bill Seitz

LENT WEEK 5

Lenten Pilgrimage Reflection: A Balm in Gilead

Jeremiah 8:18-22

"No healing,

only grief;

my heart is broken.

Listen to the weeping of my people

all across the land:

"Isn't the Lord in Zion?

Is her king no longer there?"

Why then did they anger me with their images,

with pointless foreign gods?

"The harvest is past,

the summer has ended,

yet we aren't saved."

Because my people are crushed,

I am crushed;

darkness and despair overwhelm me.

Is there no balm in Gilead?

Is there no physician there?

Why then have my people

not been restored to health?"

As we left the Legacy Museum, we passed through a room with the portraits of many Black heroes and heard the words to a beautiful hymn: There is a Balm in Gilead. I'll include some of the lyrics here: (MORE)

(CONT) There is a balm in Gilead
To make the wounded whole
There is a balm in Gilead
To heal the sin-sick soul

Sometimes I feel discouraged
And deep I feel the pain
In prayers the holy spirit
Revives my soul again

There is a balm in Gilead
To make the wounded whole
There is a balm in Gilead
To heal the sin-sick soul

Hearing these words was such a hopeful way to leave the museum. Most of us felt a bit overwhelmed with all the information we'd taken in. There is a steep learning curve for white folks trying to revisit our history from the perspective of Black Americans.

But these lyrics were brilliant as we exited:

If you are Black and leaving feeling the burden of your ancestors, there is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole.

If you are white and descended from slave holders, there is a balm in Gilead for you too-one to heal the sin-sick soul.

Prayer:

Holy One, thank you that no matter where we start, your holy spirit helps us learn to hold difficult truths and revives our souls again. Amen.

Amy Fygar Kennedy

Artists Help Us Confront Our Brutal History

"She set about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks... she opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy."

Proverbs 31: 17, 20

Michelle is a skilled, thoughtful, wise artist in Montgomery who has dedicated her creative heart to making artistic justice for enslaved women who were victimized by a white physician known as the "Father of Gynecology" in 19th century Alabama. When Michelle was a young artist, she came across a painting by Robert Thom of this physician and an eerie tableau of frightened Black women and curious white male scientists. Here it is (and by the way, it is part of the University of Michigan's collection).



Michelle proudly showed us her towering sculpture called "The Mothers of Gynecology" in which she exalts and honors the three women in the painting - their legacy and identity. (MORE)



(CONT) And, she had something else to show us: her perspective on Robert Thom's rendering of that scene in medical history. Here is the mural she created with roles reversed.



In a building close to her studio which once housed the office of the "Father of Gynecology," Michelle hopes to provide low-cost healthcare at her "Mothers of Gynecology Healthcare Clinic."

She is a powerful woman.

Michelle Browder inspired us with her declaration that we all have a charge to keep. For me, the charge is to spread the word. As James Baldwin said, "Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced."

Holy One, create in us a new mind and heart that will enable us to confront our own complicity in upholding structural racism. As we come to understand it, may we be released from its hold over us.

Elaine Shaw

Civil Rights Devotion

As Alabamans talked to us during our pilgrimage, Civil Rights events came alive for me. Two women I found unforgettable talked about going on the Selma March as teenagers. Both had fled from police violence; one came home with 28 stitches in her head, and I think both had struggled to overcome PTSD from the experience.



Their story was one of many we heard and read about. Inequalities in job opportunity, education, medical care, income, arrests, and jail sentencing threaded through all of them. At least as destructive was the constant wear on self-esteem and expectations that people faced by living in a society that condoned racial superiority and racial violence.

Yet somehow, in spite of all of this, the people we met maintained their perseverance, hope, consideration, and kindness. (MORE)

(CONT) Sometimes, during Lent, we give up something to help us remember God's gifts to us. This year I will try to take something on in that same spirit.

The Dalai Lama said, "Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible."

In the spirit of the people of Selma, Montgomery, and Birmingham, I will try to remember and practice kindness this Lent.

Prayer: Help me remember that my actions tell others who I am and what I believe. Help me to look past differences and misunderstandings and to reach out in kindness to each person I meet.

Karen Lind

LENT WEEK 6

Howard County Lynchings

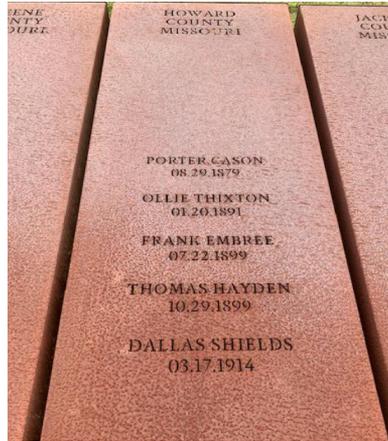
Many of my summer weekends as a child were spent at my grandmother's farm in central Missouri. It was a small family farm; the type that became impossible to be profitable enough to sustain a living. But the land had value and could be maintained at little cost. My mother was born in the farmhouse on the property and she inherited the farm when my grandmother passed.

The farm is located in Howard County, Missouri, about 40 minutes from Columbia, where my brother and I grew up. When my mother passed a couple of years ago, my brother and I inherited the farm. Since neither of us had interest in maintaining the farm, we sold it.

The National Memorial for Peace and Justice documents lynchings with 805 hanging steel rectangles, the size and shape of coffins. On each rectangle the names and dates of victims of lynchings are etched. The rectangles are organized by state and then by county within each state. Some of the information is replicated on monuments laid out on the ground in a separate area of the outdoor museum. (MORE)



(CONT) I was drawn to the counties I knew as a child in Missouri. Howard County had five documented lynchings, the last being in 1914. My grandmother was a child in 1914. How did these come about?



There is some insight into one of these lynchings on a plaque mounted on the wall in the halls of hanging rectangles, “inappropriate conduct with a white woman.” No trial. No accountability of the accusers or those who carried out the lynching. No justice.

Jim Higdon



Freedom to Dance and Praise

Psalm 96

*"Let the heavens be glad, and let
the earth rejoice;
let the seas laugh, and all
that fills them;
let the fields exult, and
everything in them!
Then shall the trees of the forest
sing for joy
before the coming of the Beloved,
who reigns in glory!
For through Love will come truth
and justice,
offering all the people gifts
of new Life."*

In Selma, we heard firsthand accounts of teenagers who were beaten on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. It was even worse than we thought: the beatings continued after the bridge when they sought refuge in the nearby Baptist church. We saw housing projects and a downtown in decay. Yet we connected in a powerful way with Black friends who offered us lunch and hospitality at a community center. We danced together to the wonderful song, Freedom, by Jon Batiste. It was a glimpse of the determination not to let an unjust world or unfair authorities steal our joy. We were reminded we all remain children of a God who sees us as beloved. (MORE)

(CONT) Here's a few simple lyrics to *Freedom* by Jon Batiste that might remind you of the joy of movement. A word of caution: you might find your toes tapping too!

When I move my body just like this
I don't know why
But I feel like freedom
I hear a song that takes me back
And I let go
With so much freedom
Free to live (how I wanna live)
I'm gon get (what I'm gonna get)
'Cause it's my freedom

Now it's your time
(It's your right)
You can shine
(It's alright)
If you do
I'ma do too

*Holy one,
No matter what the circumstances of our day, may we continue to feel
beloved and to share joy with each other and all creation.
Amen.*

Amy Fryar Kennedy



*2022 FUMC Pilgrims
Historic Bethel Baptist Church*



*Rev. Thomas L. Wilder, Jr.
Birmingham, AL*