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leaning into the risk, rebellion, & reward of Sunday morning

Rev. Naomi Washington-Leapheart

Director, Salt | Yeast | Light

Worship is where we learn about the nature of God

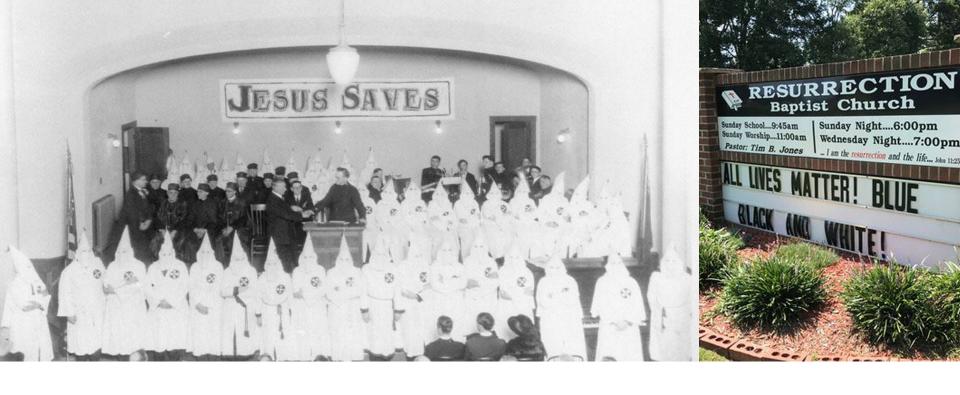


Worship is where we learn to make sense of our lives





Worship is where we learn how to respond to the world



Worship forms us theologically, but also forms us relationally & politically

The word liturgy derived from the technical term in ancient Greek (Greek: λειτουργία), leitourgia, which literally means "work for the people" is a literal translation of the two words "litos ergos" or "public service".

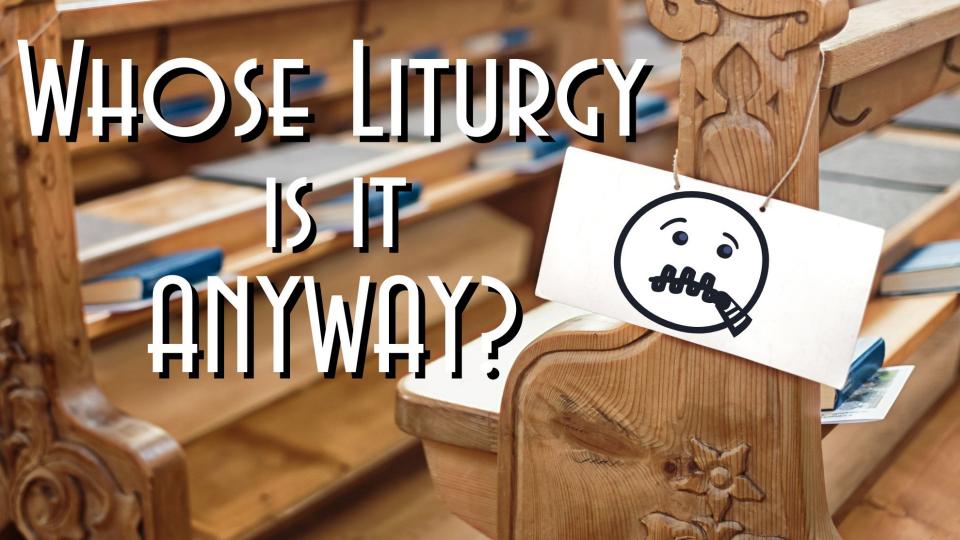
What is liturgy?

In origin, it signified the often expensive offerings wealthy Greeks made in service to the people, and thus to the city and the state.

The chief sphere remained that of civic religion, embodied in festivals. However, groups of rich citizens were also assigned to pay for expenses such as civic amenities and even payment of warships. Eventually, under the Roman Empire, such obligations devolved into a competitive and ruinously expensive burden that was avoided when possible.



Technically speaking, liturgy forms a subset of ritual. The word liturgy, sometimes equated in English as "service", refers to a formal ritual enacted by those who understand themselves to be participating in an action with the Divine.





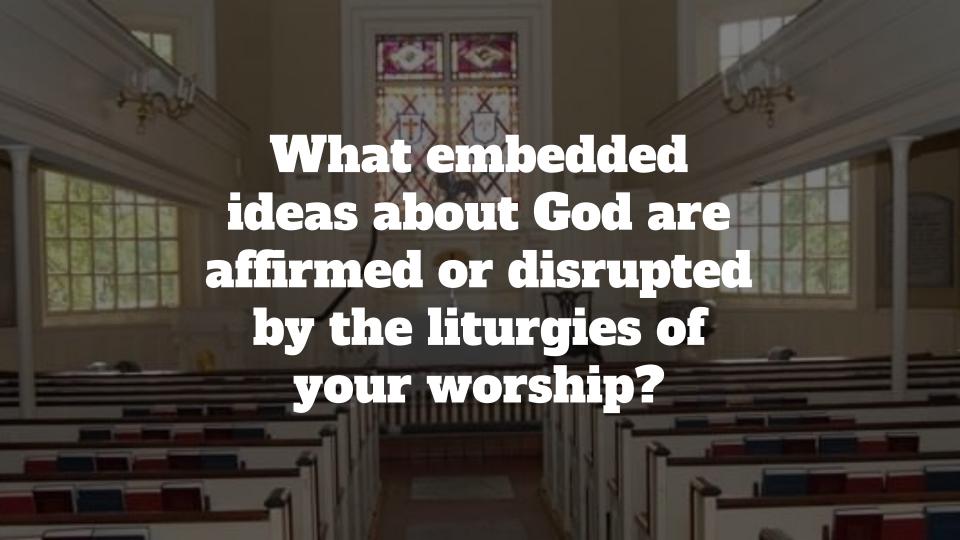
How does our theology of worship reflect so?

How might this line land on a dark-skinned person?

CHRIST AS PRIEST Nothing but the Blood What can wash a - way my sin? Noth-ing but the blood of 2. For my cleans-ing this I see: noth - ing but the blood of 3. Noth - ing can for sin a - tone: noth - ing but the blood of This is all my hope and peace: noth - ing but the blood of 5. Now by this I'll o - ver - come: noth - ing but the blood of What can make me whole a - gain? Noth-ing but the blood of my par - don this my plea: noth - ing but the blood of · naught of good that I have done: noth - ing but the blood of is all my righ-teous-ness: noth-ing but the blood of by this I'll reach my home: noth - ing but the blood of makes me white as - er fount I know, noth-ing but the blood of

Robert Lowry, 1876

PLAINFIELD 7.8.7.8.ref. Robert Lowry, 1876



Whose questions and doubts are reflected in our liturgies, songs, and prayers?

What lessons about pain, suffering, death, and loss are taught by our worship?

we need a

that liberates!

Who is ignored by our liturgy?

Who is harmed by our liturgy?

Who will feel seen, known, and unshackled by our liturgy?

What work does our liturgy imply?



By Artist & Poet Jaha Zainabu

Dear Isaac,

What if the story was never your father's?

What if the lesson to the world was meant from your vantage?

How old were you?

At what moment did you know?

The story sings his faith and courage, but what about you?

Was there no wiggle? No struggle to escape?

When did you give in?

Who saw the ram first?

Who heard the voice?

What was it like the second after?

Did he speak on the walk down Mariah?

What did he say?

Did you run tell your mother?

Your beautiful mother, who was barren for so many years?

Did you trust him after that?

How protected did you feel?

Did your mother sing to you that night? Rub your temples while you slept?

Did you flinch for years after every time he called you "Son"?

What did he tell you about his God to make you stay?

Please tell me Isaac.

What words did he say?

Tell me about that kind of faith.

Oh, it is a lovely song, Isaac!

How he had a son, was ready to sacrifice his only one...

But you were not, and could not have forgotten about Ishmael...

What about your brother?

It's like that, you know.

Us women with children, we are forgotten and dispensable.

Isaac, you ever wonder 'why you?'

Why **your** life was up for gamble?

What if he had not heard the voice?

Or saw the ram?

What if he acted too soon?

Then what?

Then what about **you**?

Don't mind me brother. I was always inquisitive.

What if the miracle was due to **your** faith and not his?

What about others after and before you, with no last-minute bells to be saved by?

Do you ever wonder?

Bewildered we are, and passion-tost, mad with the madness of a mobbed and mocked and murdered people; straining at the armposts of Thy Throne, we raise our shackled hands and charge Thee, God, by the bones of our stolen fathers, by the tears of our dead mothers, by the very blood of Thu crucified Christ: What meaneth this? Tell us the Plan:

Give us the Sign!

Keep not thou silence, O God!

W.E.B. Du Bois

A Litany of Atlanta (1906)



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VOL. 30, NO. 40.

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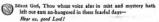
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A LITANY OF ATLANTA

BY DR. W. E. BURGHARDT DU BOIS IN THE INDEPENDENT

\$666666666666666666666666

A Litany of Atlanta



& Listen to us, Thy children: our faces dark with doubt, are made a mockery in Thy sanctuary. With uplifted hands we front Thy heaven, O God, crying :

We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord!

& We are not better than our fellows, Lord, we are but weak and human men. When our devils do deviltry, curse Thou the doer and the deed: curse them as we curse them, do to them all and more than ever they have done to innocerce and weakness, to womanhood

Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners !

And yet whose is the deeper guilt? Who made these devils? Who nursed them in crime and fed them on injustice? Who ravished and debauched their mothers and their grandmothers? Who bought and sold their crime, and waxed fat and rich on public iniquity?

Thou knowest, good God!

A Is this Thy justice, O Father, that guile be easier than innocence, and the innocent crucified for the guilt of the untouched guilty? Justice. O Judge of men !

* * Wherefore do we pray? Is not the God of the fathers dead? Have not seers seen in Heaven's halls Thine hearsed and lifeless form stark amidst the black and rolling smoke of sin, where all along bow hitter forms of endless dead?

Amake. Thou that sleenest

A Thou art not dead, but flown afar, up hills of endless light, thru blazing corridors of suns, where worlds do swing of good and gentle men, of women strong and free-far from the cozenage, black hypocrisy and chaste prostitution of this shameful speck of dust!

Turn again, O Lord, leave us not to perish in our sin!

9999999999999999999999

J From Just of body and Just of blood Great God deliver us!

& From the leagued lying of despot and of brute, Great God deliber us!

ROM lust of power and lust of gold,

Great God deliver us!

* A city lay in travail, God our Lord, and from her loins sprang twin Murder and Black Hate. Red was the midnight; clang, crack and cry of death and fury filled the air and trembled underneath the stars when church spires pointed silently to Thee. And all this was to sate the greed of greedy men who hide behind the veil of vengeance! Bend us Thine ear. O Lord!

& In the pale, still morning we looked upon the deed. We stopped our ears and held our leaping hands, but they—did they not was their heads and leer and cry with bloody jaws: Gease from Crime! The word was mockery, for thus they train a hundred crimes while we do cure one. Turn again our captibity, O Lord!

& Behold this maimed and broken thing ; dear God it was an humble black man who toiled and sweat to save a bit from the pittance paid him. They told him: Work and Rise. He worked. Did this man sin? Nay, but some one told how some one said another did-one whom he had never seen nor known. Yet for that man's crime this man lieth maimed and murdered, his wife naked to shame, his children, to poverty and evil.

Hear us, O heavenly Father!

. Doth not this justice of hell stink in Thy nostrils, O God? How long shall the mounting flood of innocent blood roar in Thine ears and pound in our hearts for vengeance? Pile the pale frenzy of bloodcrazed brutes who do such deeds high on Thine altar, Jehovah Jirch, and burn it in hell forever and forever!

Forgibe us, good Lord; we know not what we say!

& Bewildered we are, and passion-tost, mad with the madness of a mobbed and mocked and murdered people; straining at the armposts of Thy Throne, we raise our shackled hands and charge Thee, God, by the bones of our stolen fathers, by the tears of our dead mothers, by the very blood of Thy crucified Christ: What meaneth this? Tell us the Plan: give us the Sign!

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Keep not thou silence. O God!

Our dumb suffering Cont. To our dumb suffering. Surely Thou too art not white, O Lord, a pale, bloodless, heartless thing? Ah I Christ of all the Pities !

Forgive the thought! Forgive these wild, blasphemous words. Thou art still the God of our black fathers, and in Thy soul's soul sit some soft darkenings of the evening, some shadowings of the velvet

& But whisper-speak-call, great God, for Thy silence is white terror to our hearts! The way, O God, show us the way and point us

& Whither? North is greed and South is blood; within, the coward, and without, the liar. Whither? To death? Amen! Welcome dark sleep!

Whither? To life? But not this life, dear God, not this. Let the cup pass from us, tempt us not beyond our strength, for there is that clamoring and clawing within, to whose voice we would not listen, yet shudder lest we must, and it is red, Ah! God! It is a red and awfol shape.

& In yonder East trembles a star.

Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord !

J. J. Thy will, O Lord. be done!
Kurie Eleison!

& Lord, we have done these pleading, wavering words. We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord!

* * We bow our heads and hearken soft to the sobbing of women and little children.

We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord!

Our voices sink in sifence and in night. Hear us, good Lord!

♣ ♣ In night, O God of a godless land!

& In silence, O Silent God.

A Litany For Those Who Aren't Ready For Healing

Let us not rush to the language of healing, before understanding the fullness of the injury and the depth of the wound.

Let us not rush to offer a band-aid, when the gaping wound requires surgery and complete reconstruction.

Let us not offer false equivalencies, thereby diminishing the particular pain being felt in a particular circumstance in a particular historical moment.

Let us not speak of reconciliation without speaking of reparations and restoration, or how we can repair the breach and how we can restore the loss.

Let us not rush past the loss of this mother's child, this father's child...someone's beloved son.

Let us not value property over people; let us not protect material objects while human lives hang in the balance.

Let us not value a false peace over a righteous justice.

Let us not be afraid to sit with the ugliness, the messiness, and the pain that is life in community together.

Let us not offer clichés to the grieving, those whose hearts are being torn asunder.

INSTEAD...

Let us mourn black and brown men and women, those killed extrajudicially every 28 hours. Let us lament the loss of a teenager, dead at the hands of a police officer who described him as a demon.

Let us weep at a criminal justice system, which is neither blind nor just.

Let us call for the mourning men and the wailing women, those willing to rend their garments of privilege and ease, and sit in the ashes of this nation's original sin.

Let us be silent when we don't know what to say.

Let us be humble and listen to the pain, rage, and grief pouring from the lips of our neighbors and friends.

Let us decrease, so that our brothers and sisters who live on the underside of history may increase.

Let us pray with our eyes open and our feet firmly planted on the ground.

Let us listen to the shattering glass and let us smell the purifying fires; for it is the language of the unheard.

God, in your mercy...

Show me my own complicity in injustice.

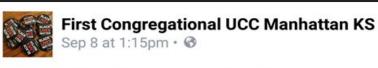
Convict me for my indifference.

Forgive me when I have remained silent.

Equip me with a zeal for righteousness.

Never let me grow accustomed or acclimated to unrighteousness.





Seen in chapel today at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa during their #blacklivesmatter worship. POWERFUL. Source: Dr. Peter Gathje, Professor of Ethics at Memphis Theological Seminary

Prelude

Susie Daugherty

Welcome

Dr. Sarah Morice Brubaker

*Call to Repentance

Chelsea Peary One: Moses went to Pharaoh and said, "Slave lives matter.

God says, 'Let my people go!'"

Many: Pharaoh said, "All lives matter. Get back to work."

One: The prophets went to the rulers of Israel and said, "Poor lives, widowed lives, orphan lives matter."

Many: The rulers of Israel said, "All lives matter. Shut up."

One: Jesus walked about the Roman occupied territory of Palestine and said, "Lepers' lives matter. Blind peoples' lives matter. The lives of the hungry, the

> thirsty, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned matter."

Many: The Roman occupiers and their collaborators said. "All lives matter. Enjoy your crucifixion."

#BlackLivesMatter worship service at Phillips **Theological Seminary**

In An Age of Twisted Values

Text: Martin E. Leckenbush

<u>Tune</u>: HYFRYDOL ("Come Thou Long Expected Jesus")

In an age of twisted values, we have lost the truth we need.

In sophisticated language, we have justified our greed.

By our struggle for possessions, we have robbed the poor and weak.

Hear our cry and heal our nation;

Your forgiveness, Lord, we seek.

We have built discrimination on our prejudice and fear.

Hatred swiftly turns to cruelty, if we hold resentments dear.

For communities divided by the walls of class and race,

Hear our cry and heal our nation;

Show us, Lord, your love and grace.

In An Age of Twisted Values

Text: Martin E. Leckenbush

<u>Tune</u>: HYFRYDOL ("Come Thou Long Expected Jesus")

When our families are broken, when our homes are full of strife,

When our children are bewildered, when they lose their way in life,

When we fail to give the aged all the care we know they need,

Hear our cry and heal our nation;

Help us show more love, we plead.

We who hear your word so often choose so rarely to obey.

Turn us from our willful blindness; give us truth to light our way.

In the power of your Spirit come to cleanse us, make us new;

Hear our cry and heal our nation;

Till our nation honors you.

From Cole Arthur Riley (@BlackLiturgies on Instagram)



Perfectionism is a form of self-hatred. Stop destroying yourself, and learn the language of self-compassion. You don't have to be perfect to be loved.

@BlackLiturgies

INHALE:

was not made to be perfect.

EXHALE:

I was made to be loved.

@BlackLiturgie

Tender God.

We are grateful for the ways beauty and blemish are enmeshed in the natural world around us-that what is irregular, what is marked, the bent and bowed is often what stirs our souls most deeply. We confess that we have not yet learned what it means to behold ourselves without impulse to destroy ourselves. We are haunted by interior demands of perfection that came to us through a world that celebrates illusions of flawlessness. A world that sets standards of perfection that are only purposed to elevate whiteness, workaholism, materialism, and self-hatred. Help us to reject the mirages of perfection, and release ourselves from expectations that only serve to destroy us. Hold us in the truth of our dignity; that we would no longer turn against our own bodies and emotions to attain worth, but that we would learn the language of self-compassion and grant our souls the rest they have promised.

@BlackLiturgies

INHALE:

I have made a mistake.

$EXHALE \cdot$

I can rest in my body.

@BlackLiturgies

INHALE:

Shame is a liar.

EXHALE:

can rest in my body.

@BlackLiturgies

From Cole Arthur Riley (@BlackLiturgies on Instagram)

And Mary sang:

This God has brought down rulers from their thrones and has lifted up the humble.

This God has filled the hungry with good things and has sent the rich away empty.

-Of Luke 1

@BlackLiturgies



blackliturgies "Mary's song, like other songs by women in sacred scripture, is not a song of pious submission but one of righteous judgment and vindication for all who, like Mary and her son, are born poor and oppressed and unjustly victimized.. those who are poor will receive God's bounty and those who are hungry will be fed while the rich and arrogant, those who are unjust, will be cast away."—M. Shawn Copeland

#blackliturgies

"It's not about supplication, it's about power. It's not about asking, it's about demanding. It's not about convincing those who are currently in power, it's about changing the very face of power itself."

-Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw

@BlackLiturgies

INHALE:
The tyrant will fall.

EXHALE:
The hungry will eat.

@BlackLiturgies

of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

The caged bird sings

with a fearful trill

-Maya Angelou, from Caged Bird

@BlackLiturgies

Terry J. **Stokes**

FOR WEIGHING A RELATIONSHIP O Spirit of calculated love, who gives us wants, needs, experiences, and ideals as tools for faithful discernment, order our thoughts. Help us identify the strengths and weaknesses of our relationship as they are, and count the cost of staying as well as leaving. Distinguish healthy expectations from unproductive ones. Reveal what of our ideals we can afford to deny or defer, and which are essential for the creation and sustenance of the desire which can become a school for virtue. Make us both objectively and subjectively deft, after the wisdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, who reigns with thee and our Father, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FOR AFTER GETTING DUMPED

O Man of Sorrows, betrayed by those you loved so fervently, let down by those who declared they would never fail you—be near to those of us whose relationship has ended. Speak to us in the sheer sound of silence. Be with us in the stark feeling of loneliness. Rebuke the Accuser who would seek now to convince us of lies. Illuminate us and govern our thoughts as we seek to process what happened. Place your scarred hands upon our wounded heart, and lead us down the path of healing. Harvest the good from this relationship; plant it deep in the ground of our soul, and bring forth life from this death, O God our Cultivator, through Jesus the true Vine, in the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FOR WHEN ONE HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO REBOUND

O Christ, who bounced back from death and the grave, show us, when love drops us, to seek no other landing place but thee When we feel the emptiness of a newly opened void, help us adjust to it, and not attempt in haste to fill it with something or someone else. If potential loves come to mind, make us mind thy work of healing in us, that we might defer our desire for them rather than treat them as deferred prospects for love. Yet do bring us friends who affirm our worth and winsomeness through the kindness of the Holy Spirit, who reigns with thee and our Mother, one God, world without end. Amen.

FOR WHEN ONE DESIRES TO BE SET UP

O Treasurer of our undisclosed desires, well acquainted with our readiness to give and receive romantic love, we thank thee for all the wonderful companions thou hast given us, as well as for all of their friends whom we do not know. Do help our friends to see our desire and to demonstrate love to us in the form of setting us up with one of the latter (perhaps especially [name]). Open their eyes to see which connection(s) would be fire, and their hearts to feel the big rom-com energy that could proceed from their actions. We do believe that this is one of the best ways to meet folks, and so we hope this request aligns with the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

From "Seasons of Survival: Liturgies for Women with Breast Cancer"

Diann L. Neu

Water Chant

Blessing with Water

Presider 2: In the center of our table is a bowl of water representing a sacred well. Holy wells through the ages have been believed to have healing powers that cure ailments. Water is a healing and regenerative force. It facilitates life. It is spoken of as the source, the healer, the transformer, the spring of ancient wisdom. Look at the well and visualize the healing powers of the water. Visualize your healing powers. (*Pause*).

Touch the water with your hands (*pause*), then touch your hands, saying: Bless my hands that I may touch gracefully.

Touch your eyes, saying:

Bless my eyes that I may see clearly.

Touch your ears, saying:

Bless my ears that I may listen to the words and body postures of loved ones. Touch your mouth, saying:

Bless my mouth that I may speak words of healing.

Touch your heart, saying:

Bless my heart that I may love tenderly.

Touch your breasts, or where your breasts used to be, saying:

Bless my breasts, or where they used to be, that I may love myself.

Touch your womb, or where your womb used to be, saying:

Bless my womb, or where my womb used to be, that I may be in touch with my creativity.

Touch your feet, saying:

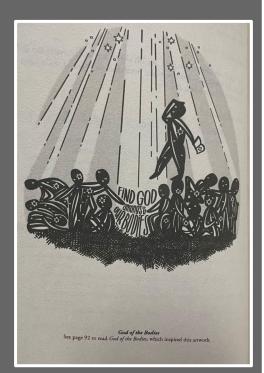
Bless my feet that I may walk my path courageously.

Touch your whole body, saying:

Bless my whole body that I may be filled with life.

From Liturgies From Below: Praying with People at the End of the World

Claudio Carvalhaes



God of the Bodies

O God that became body and presence, that wanted to share the path, the bread and the cup, that loved and embraced, that dreamed and suffered, that assumed the pain and stored up hopes.

Bring yourself today to those who feel pain in their bodies: the pain of an unwanted absence, pain that like a dagger cuts the soul and rips open the bowels.

O God, you touched injured bodies, you stretched out your hand to the despised bodies, you embraced the ignored bodies, you put on a body that struggled alongside the most humble, you felt in your own flesh the brutality of oppression, so lend your shoulder today to those who cry, to those who need to know themselves as loved and content because torturers and murderers continue to steal the lives of loved ones' bodies.

Naked God, exposed, trophy of genocides, your body crucified on a whim by the power of the day and ignored by the lukewarm complicity of so many. God, whose dead body was seen by the morbid and cried helplessly in silence for the persecuted. God, whose body was buried and guarded, out of fear . . . Become a body in the midst of our fears, liberate us, just as you freed yourself on the third day, from the sadistic omnipotence of those who carry the sword.

God of the transcendent body, of the body that makes us one body, community, people.
God of the body that remains, present in every search for justice and fulfillment, in each act of resisting the perverse, in each table where shared bread reaches and remains, and where wine is a transforming sacrament.
Rescue us from the waters of resignation, give us your hand of solidarity and walk with us to places where bodies can live and dance and be free, without appropriators, without repressors, without mercenaries of death

From "Seasons of Survival: Liturgies for Women with Breast Cancer" by Diann L. Neu

Litany of Solidarity

Presider 3: In Celtic mythology, stones have healing qualities. They activate the power of holy wells. Take a stone from around the well to symbolize your healing powers and the healing powers of this community. (*Each takes a stone.*)

Presider 3: One in every eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime. I put this stone in the water for every woman who hears the words: "You have breast cancer." Spirit of Life, give her strength to face the unknown, patience to go through the tests, and courage to make the decisions that are best for her. Let us respond, "We are here with you; you are not alone." **ALL:** We are here with you; you are not alone.

Presider 1: Early detection is the best protection. I put this stone in the water for all involved in cancer research whose life and work make early detection,

careful diagnosis, and the hope of healing possible. God of Many Names, guide their minds to crack the cancer codes.

ALL: We are here with you; you are not alone.

Presider 2: The days of treatment are so long, the chemotherapy and radiation so scary, the face in the mirror is so strange. I put this stone in the water for all women who fight the exhaustion, the fear, the loss of hair and appetite; for women who fight back, who stay the course, and look fear in the face with courage and even with humor. Holy One of Courage and Laughter, be near. ALL: We are here with you; you are not alone.

Presider 3: Faith, prayer, and community are sources of help and healing. I put this stone in the water for all the prayers and visits, the phone calls and cards, the food and kind acts that bring comfort and healing. Holy One of Hospitality, surround us with community.

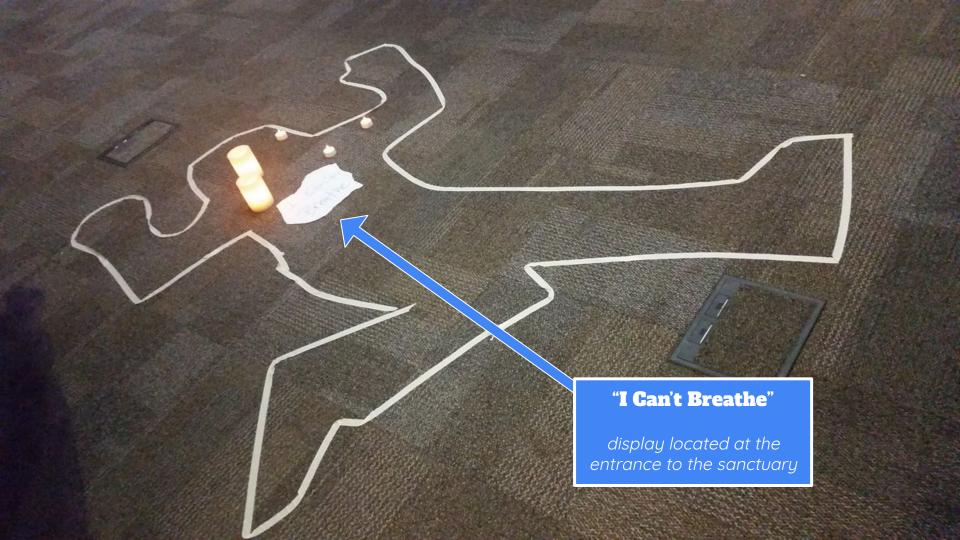
ALL: We are here with you; you are not alone.

Presider 4: There will be a cure; there must be a cure! I put this stone in the water for all who believe in and work toward the day when breast cancer does not take the lives of women. O Divine Healer, send your healing spirit to bring a cure for breast cancer now.

ALL: We are here with you; you are not alone.

Presider 3: Put a stone in the water and say, "I am here with you; you are not alone."

From "Seasons of Survival: Liturgies for Women with Breast Cancer" By Diann L. Neu





God and Black Lives Matter: Mock Trial



Courtesy of Rev. Naomi Washington-Leapheart

Students put on a mock trial for their final theology project about God's responsibility for black suffering.





RESOURCES FOR

LIBERATED LITURGY

