

“FIRST FRUITS”
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OPEN DOOR MCC

Gleanings from the Liturgy

December 31, 2017

Opening Words:

We acknowledge and celebrate our creator God, provider, sustainer, and rescuer of humanity. We God to bless our worship as we learn and embrace the seven principles of Kwanzaa, the Nguzo Saba (n-GOO-zo SAH-bah). Bless us and bless the African and all other symbols we use in this worship.

God, grant us wisdom and understanding to honor the call to be your people. Having brought and being a people brought to an unfamiliar land and marked by this history, allow us to acknowledge you as the God who never leaves us.

"Habari gani?" (Ha-ba-ri ga-ni). **What is the news?**

We invoke Umoja (oo-MO-jah), the principle of Unity: to strive for a principled and harmonious togetherness in the family, community, nation, and world African community. “Behold how good and pleasant it is for family to dwell together in unity” (Ps 133). Help us to be a unified people while interacting with various communities, as unity is a blessing.

Umoja! May we employ the element of unity as we continue to celebrate God. May we strive to maintain the spirit of unity as we live as your people around the world. Umoja!

We invoke Kujichagulia (koo-jee-chah-GOO-lee-ah), the principle of self-determination: to define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves. May we be self-determining believers as God created us and know God's will for our lives so that we may help others.

Kujichagulia! We will learn to live self-determined lives knowing that our actions must help others and ourselves. Kujichagulia!

We invoke Ujima (oo-JEE-mah), the principle of collective work and responsibility: to build and maintain our community together; to make our siblings' problems our problems and to solve them together. Grant us the wisdom to develop and maintain collective interests, to think collectively and build family and neighborhood, and to be our siblings' keeper, even as God keeps us.

Ujima! We will strive to embody a spirit of collective work and responsibility, building and maintaining our communities and our ancestors. Ujima!

We invoke Ujamaa (oo-jah-MAH-ah), the principle of cooperative economics: to build our own businesses, control the economics of our own communities, and share in all our communities' work and wealth. God grant us the tenacity to build and maintain businesses within our communities, to support and encourage each other's efforts, and to share our resources with one another.

Ujamaa! God has provided for us. We will be good and faithful stewards over all you have provided. Together, we will build and profit. Ujamaa!

We invoke Nia (NEE-ah), the principle of Purpose: to make our collective vocation the building and development of our community to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

Nia! We will pursue our collective greatness. We will love God and our neighbor as ourselves. We will be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, a city built on a hill that cannot be hidden, so that all may see our good works and give glory to God in heaven. Nia!
(from Matthew 5)

We invoke Kuumba (koo-OOM-bah), the principle of creativity: to do as much as we can, in whatever way we can, to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than it was when we inherited it. May we share our creativity with the world through all media and honor the creativity of our people.

Kuuma! We acknowledge the creative genius of God and hope to be open channels of design to provide for the world. Kuumba!

We invoke Imani (ee-MAH-nee), faith: to believe with all our hearts in our creator, our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle for a new and better world. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11).

Imani! We have come this far by faith. We affirm the values of our ancestors and give thanks for their sojourn as we seek to emulate the best of what they have bequeathed to us. we have faith in God, in one another, in our race, in ourselves, and in humanity. Imani! Shadowed beneath thy hand, may we forever stand true to our God, true to our native land.

"Harambee!" (hah-RAHM-beh). **Let's pull together!**

Welcome

Bless each one who is here safely, and blessings on all who are away this week. Thank you for coming to Open Door MCC on the first Sunday of Epiphany, New Year's Eve, and Kwanzaa Sunday!

MCC and Open Door have a special outreach to vulnerable communities and those in solidarity: Love is our greatest moral value and resisting exclusion is a primary focus of our ministry. We are and want to be community where everyone is the family of God, and where all parts of our being are welcomed at God's table. This morning I'm grateful for each one of you.

Today we celebrate Kwanzaa by reading the seven principles and highlighting the voices of black leaders who illustrate them. The Kwanzaa team has taken leadership in the planning and ministry of today's service and has provided coffee hour with foods significant to the New Year. An insert in your bulletins includes descriptions of these traditions, including the Nguzo Saba, or seven principles, as well as a list of community businesses that we can support as an expression of Ujamaa, cooperative economics.

Today is the sixth day of Kwanzaa, highlighting the principle of Kuumba, Creativity, and you will hear from a number of folks throughout the service as they lift up some of the ministries of this church and community as examples of our creativity for physical, emotional, and spiritual justice.

We offer this service in the interest of building and bolstering our many intersecting communities and marginalized communities and hope that you enjoy it. Please join us in prayer:

Opening Prayer (Alice Walker)

<p>To change the world enough you must cease to be afraid of the poor. We experience your fear as the least pardonable of humiliations; in the past it has sent us scurrying off daunted and ashamed into the shadows. Now, the world ending the only one all of us have known we seek the same fresh light you do: the same high place and ample table. The poor always believe there is room enough for all of us; the very rich never seem to have heard of this. In us there is wisdom of how to share loaves and fishes however few;</p>	<p>we do this every day. Learn from us, we ask you. We enter now the dreaded location of Earth's reckoning; no longer far off or hidden in books that claim to disclose revelations; it is here. We must walk together without fear. There is no path without us.</p>
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Passing the Peace

Weave, weave, weave us together.

Weave us together in unity and love.

Weave, weave, weave us together.

Weave us together, together in love.

First Reading: Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 (NRSV, NCCC trans., inclusified)

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace. What gain have the workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. God has made everything suitable for its time, and moreover has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil.

This is the word of God. **Thanks be to God.**

Responsive Reading: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 (from Norman Fischer, trans.)

Here is the chance for young women and young men of devotion to lift again the banner of humanity and to walk toward a civilization which will be free and intelligent; which will be healthy and unafraid, and build in the world a culture led by black folk and joined by peoples of all colors and all races - without poverty, ignorance and disease!

W.E.B. DuBois, Unity, Umoja (oo-MO-jah)

If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive.}Audre Lorde, Self-Determination, Kujichagulia (koo-jee-chah-GOO-lee-ah)

Black boys became criminalized. I was in constant dread for their lives, because they were targets everywhere. They still are.

Toni Morrison, *Collective Work and Responsibility*, Ujima (oo-JEE-mah)

...The history of civilization, throughout the world, shows that without economic and commercial success there can be no lasting or commanding success in other fields of endeavor... At the bottom of education, at the bottom of politics, even at the bottom of religion, there must be for our race economic independence.

Booker T. Washington, Cooperative Economics, Ujamaa (oo-jah-MAH-ah)

You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man.

Frederick Douglass, *Purpose, Nia* (NEE-ah)

When members of a society wish to secure that society's rich heritage they cherish their arts and respect their artists. The esteem with which we regard the multiple cultures offered in our country enhances our possibilities for healthy survival and continued social development.

Maya Angelou, Creativity, Kuumba (koo-OOM-bah)

I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word.

Martin Luther King, Jr., *Faith, Imani* (ee-MAH-nee)

This is the word of God. **Thanks be to God.**

Second Reading: Revelation 21:1-6 (NRSV, NCCC trans., inclusified)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. I will dwell with them as their God; they will be my peoples, and God will be with them; I will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new," and also said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true," and then said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

This is the word of God. **Thanks be to God.**

The Great Thanksgiving

Gracious God, Giver of life, Thanks be to you for your many blessings, And for the beauty of the bountiful Earth. Help us not to take our many blessings for granted.

Enable us to care for your creation and make us responsible stewards. Merciful God, your creation groans for liberation. Let us be "the first fruits" of your Spirit for a hurting world. Help us to transform our bombs into bread, to transform our bullets into books, and to count our blessings and name them one by one.

God is with you!

And also with you!

Let us open our hearts!

We open them to God.

Let us give God thanks and praise!

It is a good and joyful thing to do!

(Langston Hughes)

It is good and joyful, always and everywhere, to give thanks! Please pray with me.
Gather out of star-dust,
Earth-dust,
Cloud-dust,
Storm-dust,
And splinters of hail,
One handful of dream-dust,
Not for sale.

Bless this meal, and make it become truly in us, with us, and through us your life-giving, life-changing, life-sustaining presence and your abiding love. Amen.

Closing Blessing (Zora Neale Hurston)

She knew things that nobody had ever told her. For instance, the words of the trees and the wind. She often spoke to falling seeds and said, "Ah hope you fall on soft ground," because she had heard seeds saying that to each other as they passed.

Go in peace

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