

*I Hear Music*  
*FebFest 2024 Concert*

Co-sponsored by Coro Lux and the United Church of Santa Fe

Readings

*New Day's Lyric*

U. S. Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman, 2022

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 weren'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.  
So let us not return to what was normal,  
But reach toward what is next.

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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 foresee,  
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, once altogether beaten,  
Now all together beat.

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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.

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*New Day's Lyric (cont.)*

Be bold, sang Time this year,  
Be bold, sang Time,  
For when you honor yesterday,  
Tomorrow ye will find.

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Know what we've fought  
Need not be forgot nor 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.

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***Deep River: The Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death***

Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman (1899 – 1981)

Howard Washington Thurman was an American author, philosopher, theologian, mystic, educator, and civil rights leader. As a prominent religious figure, he played a leading role in social justice movements of the twentieth century. Thurman's theology of radical nonviolence influenced and shaped a generation of civil rights activists, and he was a key mentor to leaders of the American civil rights movement, including Martin Luther King Jr. In his book, "Deep River: Reflections on the Religious insights of Certain Negro Spirituals," Thurman underscores "the genius of the Spirituals and the creative power of God." He wrote in the Introduction:

The ante-bellum Negro preacher was the greatest single factor in determining the spiritual destiny of the slave community. He it was who gave to the masses of his fellows a point of view that became for them a veritable door of hope . . . for he was blessed with one important insight: he was convinced that every human being was a child of God.

This belief included the slave as well as the master. When he spoke to his group on an occasional Sabbath, he knew what they had lived through during the weeks; how their total environment had conspired to din into their minds and spirits the corroding notion that as human beings, they were of no significance.

Thus, his one message springing full grown from the mind of God repeated in many ways a wide range of variations: "You are created in God's image. You are not slaves, you are not what they call you; you are God's children." Many weary, spiritually and physically exhausted slaves found new strength and power gushing up into all the reaches of their personalities. . . they had discovered that which religion insists is the ultimate truth about human life and destiny. It is the supreme validation of the human spirit. The one who knows this is able to transcend the vicissitudes of life, however terrifying, and look out on the world with quite eyes.

It is out of this sense of being a child of God that the genius of the religious folk songs, the spirituals, were born. Moreover, there is great strength in the assurance that may come to a people that they are children of destiny. . . Daring to believe that God cared for them despite the cruel vicissitudes of life meant the giving of wings to life that nothing could destroy.

*The Hill We Climb* (excerpts)

Amanda Gorman, from her poem for the 2021 Presidential Inauguration

When day comes, we ask ourselves,  
    where can we find light in this never-ending shade?  
The loss we carry. A sea we must wade.  
We braved the belly of the beast.  
We've learned that quiet isn't always peace,  
and the norms and notions of what "just" is isn't always justice.  
    And yet the dawn is ours before we knew it.  
    Somehow we do it.  
    Somehow we weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken,  
    but simply unfinished.

We, the successors of a country and a time  
where a skinny Black girl descended from slaves  
    and raised by a single mother  
    can dream of becoming president, only to find herself reciting for one.

And, yes, we are far from polished, far from pristine,  
but that doesn't mean we are striving to form a union that is perfect.  
We are striving to forge our union with purpose.  
To compose a country committed to all cultures, colors,  
    characters and conditions.

And so we lift our gaze, not to what stands between us, but what stands before us.  
We close the divide because we know to put our future first,  
we must first put our differences aside.  
We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to one another.  
We seek harm to none and harmony for all.  
Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true.  
That even as we grieved, we grew.  
That even as we hurt, we hoped.  
That even as we tired, we tried.  
That we'll forever be tied together, victorious.  
Not because we will never again know defeat,  
but because we will never again sow division.

Scripture tells us to envision that everyone shall sit  
    under their own vine and fig tree,  
    and no one shall make them afraid.  
If we're to live up to our own time, then victory won't lie in the blade,  
    but in all the bridges we've made.  
That is the promised glade, the hill we climb, if only we dare.  
It's because being American is more than a pride we inherit.  
It's the past we step into and how we repair it. . .

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*The Hill We Climb (cont.)*

(And) one thing is certain.  
If we merge mercy with might, and might with right,  
then love becomes our legacy and change our children's birthright.  
So let us leave behind a country better than the one we were left.

Every breath from my bronze-pounded chest,  
we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one.  
We will rise from the golden hills of the West.  
We will rise from the windswept Northeast  
    where our forefathers first realized revolution.  
We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the Midwestern states.  
We will rise from the sun-baked South.  
We will rebuild, reconcile, and recover.

And every known nook of our nation and every corner called our country,  
our people diverse and beautiful, will emerge battered and beautiful.  
When day comes, we step out of the shade aflame and unafraid.

The new dawn blooms as we free it.  
For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it.  
If only we're brave enough to be it.

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**From *O Black and Unknown Bards and Lift Every Voice and Sing* --**

James Weldon Johnson

The great American poet James Weldon Johnson was both an activist and a writer. As a leader of the NAACP through the 1920's, he worked tirelessly to get Congress to pass an Anti-Lynching law, which didn't happen until 2018, long after his death. During the Harlem Renaissance, Johnson was known for his poems, novels, and anthologies collecting both poems and spirituals of black culture. His poem "O Black and Unknown Bards" Johnson's "O Black and Unknown Bards," pays tribute to the unknown composers of the African American spirituals.

In his classic poem, "O Black and Unknown Bards," Johnson wrote:

*O black and unknown bards of long ago,  
How came your lips to touch the sacred fire?  
How, in your darkness, did you come to know  
The power and beauty of the minstrels' lyre?  
Who first from midst his bonds lifted his eyes?  
Who first from out the still watch, lone and long,  
Feeling the ancient faith of prophets rise  
Within his dark-kept soul, burst into song?*

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James Weldon Johnson (cont.)

Johnson wrote the hymn, *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, in honor of the renowned educator Booker T. Washington. It was first recited by 500 school children on the birthday of Abraham Lincoln. Later set to music by his brother John Rosamond Johnson, the song became known as the “Negro (or Black) National Anthem.” It sings of both the crushing hardship experienced by African Americans and also the affirmation of victory over that suffering.

*“Lift every voice and sing, Till earth and heaven ring,  
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;  
Let our rejoicing rise  
High as the list’ning skies,  
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.  
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,  
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;  
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,  
Let us march on till victory is won.*

*God of our weary years,  
God of our silent tears,  
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;  
Thou who hast by Thy might,  
Led us into the light, Keep us forever in the path, we pray.*

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