



PAAM Sunday 2022

A worship service created by the Staff of the Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota Conferences of the UCC with inspiration and elements drawn from the 2019 GS PAAM Service and PAAM Sunday 2021. To learn more about PAAM, visit paamucc.org.

Many thanks to our special guests and contributors: Rev. Sharon Lee MacArthur, Dick Hom, Cassie Chee, Rev. Rodney Yee, and the 2021 PAAM Virtual Choir

Words of Welcome

Lead by ACM Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Welcome to worship for this second Sunday of Easter. It has become the practice of conference staff over the past few years to offer worship materials for your congregation to make use of on the Sunday following Easter. Whether you are viewing these materials with your pastor or have been able to provide a Sabbath Sunday for your pastor, we are glad that you are making use of these materials today.

This year we are lifting up PAAM Sunday. PAAM stands for Pacific Islander and Asian American ministries, and this is a group that officially became recognized by the United Church of Christ at the General Synod in 1975. We are really grateful for the participation of many members of PAAM who we will be acknowledging later in the service who have generously given up their time and their enthusiasm to help encourage us as we have compiled these resources for today. We pray that they will be a blessing to you, that they will expand your view of who the United Church of Christ is and who are its members, and that you will be able to celebrate with us, as well as act with us as we continue to stand with those who are often marginalized. Later in the service, there will be calls to action and things that you can do to support members of the Pacific Islander and Asian American community. We pray that these worship materials are rich and encouraging for your congregation, and that you have a beautiful Sunday with us today.

Call to Worship

Adapted from the 2019 GS PAAM Service “Responsive Prayer” by Rev. Christopher Ponnuraj
Lead by the Conference Ministerial Staff

One: Holy One, we gather newly aware of your presence,
All: a bit weary from the work of this time,
One: inspired by the commitment of your people,
All: and reminded of our common purpose as the Body of Christ.
One: We are in awe of the tenderness of your love for us,
All: and in wonder at the bodies you have given to us.
One: We breathe in your gracious spirit,
All: and we breathe out your loving kindness.
One: We see you in the faces of those gathered here,
All: in our own faces, and in the faces of those we call stranger.
One: We hear your speaking in languages we know and understand,
All: and in the diversity of voices your children use to call on you.
One: We pray your Spirit would open our senses,
All: our hearts and our minds,
One: that we might live and love
All: as Jesus taught. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

Adapted from PAAM Sunday 2021 by Rev. Mitchell Young
Lead by ECM Rev. Brigit Stevens

Will you pray with me?

Oh God, you have journeyed with us even as our ancestors have traveled across the continents and oceans of this world. You have been with us as we walked through the deepest valleys of migration and movement, as refugees of war, economic necessity and displacement.

On this PAAM Sunday we give you thanks and pray for the Pacific Islander and Asian American ministries of our United Church of Christ. For 48 years strengthening the voices of the Pacific Islander and Asian American churches, taking seriously God's call to bind in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues and races. Help us and teach us to practice relationship based on respect, sovereignty, self-determination and religious freedom of all indigenous peoples within our church and global community.

We pray for the land and the people, and we lift up specifically today our siblings in Hawaii whose water has been contaminated by fuel tanks owned by the U.S. Navy. And for those in Micronesia, whose islands still bear the scars of nuclear testing. Holy God, we pray for healing and hope and true reconciliation. Help us to welcome everyone to your table, that goodness and mercy might follow us all the days of our lives. For such a time as this global pandemic, we remember with pain the early days when COVID-19 was referred to as the Chinese virus. We give you praise for voices that actively work against racism and violence. We also pray for your guidance and compassion for those who hold on to misinformation against others and point fingers at their neighbors. Give us all courage in the struggle for justice and peace as we welcome the stranger into conversation along our mutual journey.

God of resurrection hope, as the world begins to emerge from the tomb of fear and isolation, we look to you. We pray for the millions of people who have lost their lives in the global pandemic. We embrace their families as well. We pray for all who suffer in body and spirit. Walk with them through each dark valley. Feed them with mercy. Anoint them with healing. We trust that you are greater than any virus, continuing to bring lives together even when we are apart from one another. Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you, oh God, as we offer all our prayers to you in the name of Jesus Christ, our good shepherd.
Amen.

Special Music: “Open My Eyes”
Written and Performed by Rev. Rodney Yee

Open my eyes so I may see
Visions of truth you have for me
Place in my hands the wonderful key
That will unlock and set me free

Silently now you wait for me
Ready, my God, your will to see
Open my eyes, illumine me
Spirit of mine

Open my ears so I may hear
Voices of justice far and near
And when they come, or reappear
May I not fall away in fear

Silently now you wait for me
Ready, my God, your will to see
Open my ears, awaken me
Spirit of mine

Open my heart and hands to share
Kindness and goodness, love and care
Grant me your strength and help me prepare
Love for your children everywhere

Silently now you wait for me
Ready, my God, your will to see
Open my heart, empower me
Spirit of mine

Scripture Reading - Matthew 5:14 -16

Lead by ACM Rev. Ellis Arnold

14 You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. 15 No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand. And it gives light to all the house. 16 In that same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to God in heaven.

Sermon and Interviews

Sermon: Rev. Sharon Lee MacArthur at the 2019 GS PAAM Service

Interviewees : Dick Hom, Rev. Sharon Lee MacArthur, and Cassie Chee

Introduction and Interviews lead by ACM Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

Introduction and Invitation:

Next in our service is a wonderful sermon from the Reverend Sharon Lee MacArthur. This sermon was recorded in 2019 at General Synod, when PAAM was highlighted as part of the worship experience. And, it is a wonderful opportunity to hear directly from a member of the Asian American Pacific Islander community. When we were beginning to plan this service, our own Reverend Ellis Arnold recommended that I connect with Sharon as a point person and active member of PAAM. And when I spoke with Sharon, she generously offered to have us use her sermon as part of our worship service. One of the things that we continue to learn as we build relationships with each other, no matter what our background, but especially when we are getting to know people who are very different from us, is the power of story. And so, the power of lived experience and direct experience from people who have had the encounters that are unique to their culture and to their setting are important for us, to hear from, to not speak for others, but to allow others to speak for themselves. And so I hope that you will appreciate this sermon and that it will allow the spirit also to speak with you and open your hearts and minds.

Sermon:

Please pray with me. God of many names, hear us, be with us today, may the words from my mouth, the meditation of our hearts, the thinking of our minds, be all that you hope for in us, our rock and our redeemer, amen. The Hui, Kawaii, Hawaii 1965. It was my first time to this beautiful island.

My husband and I were on our honeymoon. And after a few days in Honolulu, we went to Kawaii, to visit and stay with his army buddy and his wife and family. The Tamagawas lived in a little house on stilts, way out in the boonies. Our first night there, I couldn't fall asleep. My husband Noel was already snoring next to me. There were no other sounds, except crickets, rustling leaves and a distant frog or two. It was so dark. I couldn't see my hand in front of my face, even though my fingers, were touching my forehead. There was no light, anywhere. No street lights outside. No neighboring porch lights. It was overcast that day. So there were no stars, or planets to wish on in the sky or neon beams to hang a dream on. I felt like I was part of the darkness. Actually I was the darkness. The feeling was indescribable, fear, awe, terror, wonder. A sensation of being erased. I eventually fell asleep and woke up to the chirping of birds and found myself bathed in sunlight. I had fallen asleep a part of the darkness and had awakened a part of the light. Everything in the room was bathed in sunlight, looking at the world through my blurry sleepy eyes. It seemed that each object in the room, including me, had absorbed the light in such a special way that it glowed with multiple halos.

Multiple halos, rings of light that extended out from its source. Each ring tinged with a color of a flame, like the colors of the ribbons that you have now, that you're holding maybe. Those colors, those rings of light in that room that morning on Kawaii, extended out from its source, until they touched another halo. The entire room became brighter, and brighter as each ring touched others. The brightness became brighter to the nth degree. The sensation, I wasn't just a part of that light. I was the light. It occurred to me that if it were not for the night, if it were not for disappearing into the night, if it were not for becoming one with the darkness, I wouldn't be the light that was so extraordinarily bright that morning.

I was raised in the California valley town of Stockton in the '40s and '50s by a Chinese immigrant mother who never learned to speak or understand the language of the adopted country. So I never realized that the world around me was trying to erase my identity. My mother had no clue about the anti-Asian laws that existed. It was not until I started school, and interacted with the world outside my home, that I entered the darkness.

The experiences and the challenges of growing up in an immigrant family in America, for me, for many of my friends then, and now, can be described as darkness. We grew up wrestling with questions like anyone growing up. By cultural or biracial or multicultural or multiracial. Like the question of identity of belonging. There's a feeling that we don't belong anywhere. There's a feeling of not being totally comfortable in any group. We were two American to fit in with the immigrant kids and two Chinese or two whatever to fit in with the American kids. We were too quiet, too studious to be in the social swim. Each of us was sure that no one else had this curse.

Fast forward a few decades. Revisiting those days with friends, with classmates in seminary and with colleagues. I was surprised to discover, that what I thought was darkness then, has become light now. You see to survive, we had to get along with all groups. We had to figure out how to communicate in ways that allowed us to hold our ground, yet not offend. We had to know how to study, how to subtly change our vocabulary, our demeanor, our body language, and yet remain true to all that we were. We had to find ways to cope with what we perceived as rejection. We began to learn and live relativity, knowing that our strength had to come from what we perceived as weakness. We began to realize that our light came from the darkness. Those skills acquired along the way, boost the light in the darkness. Who would've guessed? That out of that dark period of my life light would come forth.

I should have known, the clues were there. There were so many challenges that turned into blessings. Like the challenge of being raised by a single mom who spoke no English. The blessing, self-esteem and self confidence. You see Chinese girls back then were discouraged to interact with a scary world at large. I on the other hand had to do just that. I was the only one in the family who could speak English. So I accompanied my mother whenever she had to interact with the world beyond the Chinese community. I was her translator, her interpreter, her connection to life beyond the home. Light from darkness, Self-esteem from hardship.

Another challenge, being dismissed, rejected and teased because I was Chinese. I remember being called Ching Chong Chinaman by classmates who ran away from me, as if I had cooties or something. The blessing. Remember, I had a mother who had no clue about the prejudice against Asians then. She was totally confident in who she was, Chinese. So, when I came home and complained to her about being teased, she said, very matter-of-factly, 'They don't know any better, you'll have to teach them.' And I finished the sentence in my head. That being Chinese is good. That was my mother's charge to me over 70 years ago. And I'm still teaching folks. Looking back, I realized that God's love was always there.

Even when I didn't recognize it or believe it or understand it, reflecting on the Matthew passage for this evening, I realized that Paul's words in his letter to the Ephesians came to life. For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord, you are light, live as children of light. We all know darkness. It comes in many forms. Life in inequitable economy. What's happening now about immigrants? About those who don't look like us, or believe like us. The abuse of our planet and pollution of our environment, judgment of rape survivors, continuing use of violence, bullying, and war as a means to solve our differences. And so much more.

This evening, we zeroed in on the immigrant experience. That's what I know best, but all experiences, your experiences, your challenges, along with the blessings that emanate from them. They are so important. The recognition that blessings can come from challenges may take a while, but you know what, that's what we're called to do as children of light, to recognize how darkness and light, can work together to recognise and understand and embrace darkness and light.

So have you seen the commercial where some old timers compare hardships from the past. At the end of the commercial, they all agree, those with the good old days. It's a reminder that what we frequently remember fondly are the times that were the hardest. So what if we look for how these hardships eventually worked into good. Articulate them, share them with someone. To me, that's the hope for all who feel overwhelmed by darkness, that God's love and light shines perhaps even brighter, when it comes from a place of darkness. The magnificent beauty of both, it's not dark versus light, its darkness and light together. One with the other, one in the other.

My friend Moira commented not so long ago. Isn't it curious that we now have a photo of the black hole and we couldn't have that photo if it were not for light. Yeah, the way of the universe, God's way, both and curious, coincidence, God sighting, light and darkness, darkness and light. And that light that we're becoming, may the joy and thanks that we feel for God's love, God's light be so compelling, be so intense that we can't help, but share it. No, we cannot hide it, under a bushel, under a bowl, under anything, lest we relegate this notion of we can't hide it under a bushel to one of the platitudes we espouse.

Remember those flame colored ribbons. These flame colored ribbons. Let's vow not to hide them. Let's vow to share them. Let's share them tonight, as you leave this place, let's share them tomorrow on your way home, or as you check out of your hotel and remember the dark patches of your life. Remember the folks who you know, are still in the darkness. Remember them, hold them close and pray. Then let your light shine. Share your light as you share your ribbons, for you are God's hope for God's beloved community. You are the light of the world. Amen.

Interview Introduction:

In addition to the sermon for today, as well as the musical selections and the light news that have been written specifically to lift up PAAM Sunday, we also have a few interviews that feature members of the Asian-American Pacific Islander community. And you will have the opportunity to hear from them now. As I mentioned before the sermon, the most important thing we can do is listen to one another and hear from each other about our experiences and really take into our hearts and really take seriously what other people have shared with us and to believe them. And so, as you hear these experiences and stories, I hope that you continue to allow them to sink into your being, to open your mind and to allow you to appreciate things that may be brand new for you. But which can enhance and expand your understanding of the vast array of diversity in this kin-dom that God has created for us.

Interview with Dick Hom and Rev. Sharon Lee MacArthur:

Dick Hom: As part of an introduction, I'm Dick Hom and I am the current National Moderator for the Pacific Islander and Asian American Ministries, PAAM within the UCC. And first, thank you, Sarah, for the opportunity to share our stories, the PAAM stories, with the wider UCC. I guess the opportunity to share our story is wonderful. Unfortunately, it happened. It needs to be shared in a time when negative thoughts, comments, and actions against AAPIP people, Asian-American Pacific Islander People, that causes us to be more interested in the story that we have to tell. That it wasn't always happening, but it is, we're taking an advantage over it.

And the reason it's important, I think for us to not only be aware of what's happening in the Asian American and Pacific Islander community, but for all people of color. We sometimes forget that we are UCC, which means that we are together, we are one. As it says in our model that we are one. And to be proactive in that, means that we need to understand what's happening with the others, people of color within our denomination. It also forces us as Asian Americans to realize that we wouldn't be where we are now as far as active in supporting the things that we are, that are important to us without the interaction with our black and African American brothers and sisters. Some of the African Americans are the first to step up and understand what we are going through now, and support us. I come from San Francisco, that's my background. And we had issues there with Asian Americans back in the '60s. And first group that stepped up to support us, in person, and in the media were our black brothers and sisters.

One instance I will share with you is that we have in the San Francisco area, an area known then as Manilatown, where there were a lot of Filipinos, and there was one instance there where a lot of them were in a resident hotel called the International Hotel, that was being evicted so that they could put up whatever they were gonna put up. And these were people that have lived there for many years. So, the Filipinos and the people in Chinatown, which was a very close proximity to the hotel, were in protest about evicting these people and kicking them out without due process. And first ones that stepped up were African-Americans and our black brothers and sisters. And we had Jesse Jackson actually flew out and gave support. And the interesting thing is that during the anniversary of that event, which was last year, he actually flew off to San Francisco to support us again.

So, we learned from that how to be more proactive in the things that were important to us and the things that we felt were racist issues with us. So having the interest now of people like in your conference and across the denomination, wanting to know more about it, more about us, about PAAM is a good thing. And, it gives us an opportunity to spread that word. So, the thing of being together and being understanding and learning more, education, discussions are vital to get the word out. So I lead that into, see what Sharon has to incorporate into that.

Rev. Sharon Lee MacArthur: Well, just continuing on that theme. I am Reverend Sharon Lee MacArthur, ordained UCC minister and currently now retired finally, after forth retirement is taken. So my story's a little bit different. I had a mother who didn't recognize the racist stuff. So I saw the world from her eyes, initially. Although she spoke no English, which is one of the reasons why she was, sort of, protected or immune to the stuff going around, which in turn affected me. So I didn't see the world as racist. I felt going into the world without speaking any English, that it was fine being Chinese, 'cause that's what my mother thought. There was few incidences in my Stockton home because the neighborhood I lived in, although we were the first family of color in that neighborhood, except for a very few instances, I felt no discrimination. In fact, being a person of

color and in a very diverse high school that I attended, we were pushed those of us who had potential were pushed and were, sort of, teachers pets.

So fast forward, I marry somebody who's white. So a lot of the stuff that I felt in the '70s and the '80s was the height of equal opportunity. So having a white husband in a civil service job, I felt reverse discrimination. Because if he was up for a promotion with someone of color, he never got it, right?

So, then, fast forward more, and I find myself, now a Christian, now an ordained minister, now serving at the national level at the then executive council, which was the governing body back then. And, I felt representing my people, Asian Americans. I got a lot of help from my white allies. So, sitting in an executive council Meet and Greet, wet behind the ears, not knowing exactly what I'm supposed to be doing. I happened to sit next to John Deckenbeck. Who was then the conference minister of the Southeast somewhere back there And I would whisper asides to him. Well, I don't think that's right, or you know ...da da da da I would offer my point of view and he would encourage me to speak up. So being the needy, I wouldn't, but he would. He would speak up and say, consider blah, blah from the perspective of, so I got pattern sentences, and in a sense he coached me, and he taught me how to speak up, and share in a way that is productive, and have everybody there because at that time, although the board of justice and witness was committed to having at least 50% historically up underrepresented groups. The executive council was not, at the time. So I felt that I had this on my shoulders, this mantle of speaking up for all my peace and John helped me figure out how to say and when to say , et cetera.

So, to make a long story short, I think that story, kind of encapsulates, how our allies are important, whether they're black, whether they're Hispanic, whether they're white is to consider the point of view of how any discussion or comments or decisions, how that might impact people of color in their communities, their culture, their traditions, and how to support and accept and embrace all of that, as part of we are all one. So that's kind of from one perspective.

And of course in our, what Dick was talking about, our sacred conversations, I'm an optimist, I tend to forget the bad things, right? So, reaching that partly in seminary and partly from the sacred conversations, I reach back, and I do recall, certain racist incidents that I was a victim of or a party to or listened, but it's a part of who I am, and a choice to do what I did back then, which was nothing, and just, okay, that's the way it is, to now, when I feel like telling these stories outright and having them be a part of the fabric of life of whoever you are. That can be a growing place, a yearning place to be a part of all of the joy and the pain and the suffering and do something about it. So that's kind of where I come from.

Interview with Cassie Chee:

Cassie Chee: My name is Cassie. I use, she/her pronouns, home for me is Okinawa, China, and Korea. That's where my ancestors are from. And my roots also run through Hawaii. So we've been, displaced settlers here since plantation times, So on my Chinese and my Okinawa side, we came over here to work on plantations. And then on my mom's side she was an immigrant from Korea to Los Angeles. So I grew up actually on Duwamish land, which is also known as Seattle today in the Pacific Northwest. That's where I got to grow up. And for me, I think that was my home, here in Hawaii, where I live now is my home, and also when I would go visit my family in Los Angeles. So, I got the like west coast Asian American experience and also the experience of what it is to like be in Hawaii, and as you know, um Sarah, that's a very different kind of place. I think, that race shows up differently, and I got to be in the Midwest a little bit. I was at Garrett-Evangelical Seminary, getting my MD over

there, and now in doing community organizing with faith action for community equity. So focusing on how do we, as people of faith make change in our communities that are in alignment with our faith and our values. So working right now on some stuff around transformative justice. So not criminalizing people for just being poor and keeping people in jail cause of that. Yeah, so that's kind of where I'm at right now.

ACM Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones: Did you grow up in the UCC or what is your denomination of origin?

Cassie: Yeah, so I grew up in a Japanese Presbyterian church and then to a Methodist seminary learned all the Methodist policy and then came to the UCC just a couple years ago because of a mentor I had. That was a UCC pastor in Chicago. So I'm now a member in discernment with the UCC here in Hawaii, but pretty new learning a lot about the UCC.

Rev. Rentzel Jones: Yeah, and was there anything in particular that attracted you to the UCC in terms of what kind of some of the core beliefs or the sort of platforms that are our denomination is really outspoken about?

Cassie: Yeah, well, I guess the first thing was my mentor was Reverend Marilyn Pagan-Banks in Chicago. And I went to her installation service at her church and just all of these, it was mostly black women, but women of color showed up to do the installation service and they were all clergy. And I was like, what is this? I've never been in a place like this. And it was just such a warm and welcoming space and just felt so, I don't know, I guess in their culture too, of that church and of their neighborhood. And I was like, I love this. If this is UCC, like I wanna be here and out how to do church like this.

And so I think I'm learning that every UCC church is like super different as I'm visiting a lot of different churches. But I think I like that there's grassroots feeling too, of, we decide things together as a community. And I really love that about like local church being of a place. One thing that I have found is like, no matter where I go, if it was the Midwest, if it was in Seattle, if it was here in Hawaii where it feels like home for me is where people will take me in and feed me. And I think in a lot of different cultures, right? That's like just how we do community together is like we eat together. So I think in a short term, that's like an easy step is like, there opportunities to eat together and just kind of talk story or have conversation, 'cause I think that's the best way to kind of learn about one another mutually is through storytelling and learning each other's histories and each other's interests and things like that.

I think on, if we're thinking more on a structural level or like how to become more hospitable or inclusive churches, I think a question I'm always asking is like, who is in the room and who is not? So even in a church that I'm part of now that's like primarily Asian American, there's a lot of different dynamics even within Asian American circles. So the difference between being native Hawaiian is very different than me being a mixed Korean Okinawa and Chinese person is very different than being Micronesian or Pacific Islander. So I think I'm also asking who's in the room and who is not in the room, and why is that? And then also who feels like they hold power. So not only do you feel safe, but who feels like they can make decisions if they need to about like what is hospitable and what feels good in the culture?

Rev. Rentzel Jones: Is there, has there ever there been an experience that you feel comfortable sharing where maybe there was a difficult dynamic in a church context that you wish had been different?

Cassie: Yeah, I'm sure there have been plenty. I'm trying to think of, of which one. Well, I'll share this. So I grew up in a predominantly white suburb of Seattle and then we would go to my church, which is a Japanese Presbyterian church. It was pretty mixed Asian American bag, but one time I invited this friend that was white to come to my church. And I usually went to her youth group like during the week. And that was a church that was mostly white. And, there was never any explicit kind of racist things happening to me. But after she visited my church, I thought that she had had a good time. And then we were at school one day and she was sharing with our friends who were mostly white like, 'Oh my gosh! I felt so out of place at Cassie's church, like I was the only white person there. It was so weird. I felt like so uncomfortable.' And I was like, oh my gosh! this is how I feel all the time. Like at your church and at my school, like there's other people of color there, but I think, I just didn't realize that she didn't see, this was something that I was a daily experience for me, to be a minority in a space. So yeah, that's something that always kind of sticks with me was her discomfort. But not knowing that I was kind of that daily discomfort in some ways, for me in like predominantly white spaces, yeah.

Rev. Rentzel Jones: Do you feel like it's a helpful experience for white folks to have to be in situations, where they have that experience of feeling out of place or feeling like they're being judged by their skin color or their background without people really knowing them?

Cassie: Yeah, I think it's good for like of all races people to experience cross-cultural experiences and hopefully in ways where people feel like they don't have to be judged and it is safe. And I think that's why for me, it always goes back to like eating together. 'Cause I just feel like that's a really good like evening kind of space for people to be able to kind of share stories or build relationships. 'Cause I think the relationship part is key. We can learn as much as we want, about race and about history and that kind of stuff and it's important. But I think really the mutual transformation with the spirit, even to me help happens with stories and when we get to know one another's experiences, yeah.

Rev. Rentzel Jones: Is there anything that you feel like you would want to share that we haven't touched on?

Cassie: Yeah, maybe just one more thing. So I know that in the past year or two, there's been a lot in the media about like anti-Asian violence. And I remember when I was in school in Chicago kind of like experiencing some of that kind of subtly, whether like people were like crossing the street, like when COVID was starting, or things like that when I would be walking down the street. But I think in line with like kind of disrupting white supremacy or stopping the violence of racism, I think one thing that like white folks can do or any folks that are in the majority can do is just to like ask a question. So not necessarily to, if I feel like a lot of times it's kind of like it's that person being racist or not. I'm not really sure. I think it's worth it just to like pause and ask a question to somebody. 'Cause we might not know what the right answer is. We don't know what people's intentions are, but it could make a really big difference. I think in somebody's life, if we just pause a situation, and just kind of step back and interject and ask somebody like, hey, what do you

actually mean by that? Or like, why did you say that to that person? And I think that's kind of a way that one can invite some conversation, but two might actually interrupt some violence that an Asian American person, or somebody who's marginalized in some way might be experiencing in that moment. So I think that's one thing that I would offer just especially in this time where there has been kind of some more heightened violence recently.

Special Music: "Together We Are One"

By Dick Hom and Adele Neri

Recorded for the 2021 Thursdays for the Soul PAAM Service

Musicians: Members of the PAAM Virtual Choir

We have come from afar, over land and sea
To be with others like you and me
We face great struggles in what we do
But together we know we'll see it through

Together we are one seeking truth and love
Together we are one with help from above
Together we are one with outstretched hand
Together we are one, united we stand

Our numbers are small, but our faith is great
We seek God's will to enter heaven's gate
To all people around, the truth we will give
And as His servants, we'll always live

Together we are one seeking truth and love
Together we are one with help from above
Together we are one with outstretched hand
Together we are one, united we stand

With love and support for all who ask
We will overcome problems, do any task
With Him as our center, we are proud
To do what is needed and what is allowed

Together we are one seeking truth and love
Together we are one with help from above
Together we are one with outstretched hand
Together we are one, united we stand

So join the fellowship of justice and peace
Care for each other, and we'll never cease
If we stand alone, we're weak and small
But together we'll bring God's goodness to all

Together we are one seeking truth and love
Together we are one with help from above
Together we are one with outstretched hand
Together we are one, united we stand

Prayer Litany

Adapted from the 2019 GS PAAM Service

Lead by ACM Rev. Samantha Houser

One: Holy One, your people gather here,
as they do around the world,
to seek your guidance,
to bring to you all that we carry in our hearts,
and to trust in your eternal grace.
You, who created the earth, and the seas, and the skies,
and all that is in them
also dared to create us,
modeling us in your very image,
entrusting us with the care of all creation.
We unite ourselves in prayer,
stepping into the great river of prayer
that spans every culture, every tradition, and every time.
Help us, O God...

All: May our light shine throughout the world.

One: God of every tongue, tribe, and language
forgive us the divisions we have made among your people,
the differences we have allowed to separate
what you intended to be one.
Remind us that you are the source
of all that has been, all that is, and all that will yet become.
Nurture in us your spirit of unity,
your dream of wholeness for the universe.
Guide us that we might learn to celebrate
the wondrous diversity you created,
working together for the common good of all your children.
Help us, O God...

All: May our light shine throughout the world.

One: God, whose Spirit fills the world,
we pray you would fill us here and now.
If possible, lift from us every burden,
and if that is not possible, remind us that we never carry our burdens alone.
Remind us that you are with us, whatever life may bring,
and that you have gifted us with companions who journey with us,
who are here to lighten the load, to carry our burdens with us,
to remind us of joy in times of struggle,
and to bring us hope in every season.
Help us, O God...

All: May our light shine throughout the world.

One: God, whose first language is love,
open us to the change that is possible
if we embrace your love with all of who we are.
Open our senses that we might live your love with our every breath.
Open our minds to know your love is behind us,
the foundation of who we are,
and that your love goes before us to lead the way
towards whatever tomorrow may bring.
Help us give ourselves completely to love
~ to loving you, and our neighbor, and the stranger,
and the immigrant, and the exile, and our friends,
and ourselves with all our hearts, and our minds, and our spirits.
Help us, O God...

All: May our light shine throughout the world.

One: God whose presence shines in the great rivers and mountains,
whose life is seen in the soaring birds and the crashing waves,
whose beauty is revealed to us in every burning sunset
and every breaking dawn,
still us with your gentle power.
Take from us all that we do and hold it in your loving care.
Receive all we have faithfully tried to do for your kingdom here on earth.
Remind us that while we sleep you will carry on the work you first began,
the work of transforming, renewing, and restoring creation.
Help us to remember that this work is not ours alone,
that we stand beside generations of our ancestors
who have trusted in you and in your call.
Help us be good stewards of the work they did,
and let us rest this Sabbath and always, in their love.
Help us, O God...

All: May our light shine throughout the world. Amen.

Offering

Adapted from PAAM Sunday 2021 by Rev. Mitchell Young
Lead by ACM Rev. Kendy Miller

Singer Audrey Assad reminds me of what it is to not want. Not only material things but how to release the love of our own comfort, how to release the fear of having nothing, how to release desiring worldly passions and the need to be understood. The need to be accepted, and from the fear of being lonely. "Deliver me oh God." She sings, "When I taste your goodness, I shall not want." And indeed, when we do taste God's goodness we realize that our cups already overflow with enough. Enough faith, enough love, enough. Let us share this overflowing cup in the care of all God's children. Let us love, not simply in word or speech but also in truth and action as we give from our abundance.

We'll now take a few moments and invite you to offer out of this abundance your financial gifts to UCC Pacific Islander and Asian American ministries. Your contributions help to provide our PAAM congregations with a continuous voice within the UCC. As well as support for their youth and young adults and the needs of PAAM's six regions.

Online donations can be made at paamucc.org/donate or by check to:

PAAM UCC, Attn: Jacob Thomas
140-55 34th Ave., #4M
Flushing, NY 11354

Thank you for your generosity. Loving shepherd, you have laid down life itself to show your love for all people. May our gifts of time, talent, and treasure. Bring comfort to those who walk through dark valleys and bring wholeness and peace to those not of this fold. As we have gathered our gifts, gather us also as one flock in the care of your goodness. Help us to taste and see that in Christ we shall not want. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, through the power of the holy spirit. Amen.

Offertory Music: "Hine E Hine"
Composed by Princess Te Rangi Pai
Performed by Aidan Spencer

Born in 1868, Princess Te Rangi Pai was a New Zealand singer and composer of Maori descent. She wrote this song after retiring due to health problems. Aidan learned this in 2010 while living in New Zealand.

Translation:

You are crying, little girl, little girl
You are tired little girl, little girl
Do not fear for there is love
In the Creator's heart for you

Benediction
Lead by ACM Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

We're so glad that you have been with us for this worship service today. And we pray that as you leave this place and return to your lives of service, that you can carry the message of this service with you. That you can shine your light as someone who helps to bear witness to the vastness of God's creation, to the diversity of humans who are part of this church, as someone who cares about others and wants to guard and protect them.

And so we have listed some items that you can take action on. We especially want to bring your attention to the [issue of clean in water in Hawaii](#), and the ways in which the US military has been polluting the water, especially around Oahu. And we also want to help you to learn more about the history of the Marshall Islands and the [bombings that took place years ago](#) that have led to lots of issues of cancer and other malignancies in the population there. You can also save the date for May 3rd, 2022 when we will host a [webinar](#) with special guests from PAAM to talk more about the the Importance of PAAM in the UCC. You may also consider attending the [UCC COREM Convocation](#) on June 23rd-26th as a way to learn more about all of the ethnic ministries of the UCC. If you are viewing a printed rather than online bulletin, visit ucctcm.org/full-calendar/paam-Sunday for clickable links to the action items.

There's so much that is happening in our world and we know that it's a lot. It's just a lot. And yet, there's a lot for us to learn and to be able to be in solidarity with our siblings in Christ who come from different backgrounds and how have different experiences. And so we pray that your heart and your mind have been expanded and widened by this experience of worship today. And that as you go forth from this place you can shine your light in such a way that you bless others and that you allow them to know how much God loves them. And that you also would know that God loves you beyond anything you can possibly imagine.

Go in peace, Amen.

Worship Leaders

Special Guests:

Cassie Chee

Dick Hom

Rev. Sharon Lee MacArthur

Rev. Rodney Yee

PAAM Virtual Choir

Conference Staff of the IA, NE, and SD UCC Conferences:

ACM Rev. Ellis Arnold

ACM Rev. Samantha Houser

ACM Rev. Kendy Miller

ACM Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

Communications Specialist Aidan Spencer

Thank you for joining us! God bless and be well!

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.