

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

Heavenly Father, you created and gave your children the gift of this earth. You filled it with a rainbow of people to love, respect and live in community with each other. You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the Supreme Example of Holy Unity.

Thank you for loving us enough to send us your darling Son, Jesus to be our Christ. Thank you for your grace that ensures neither our fickleness, failures nor frailty will be able to separate us from your Love. As we live in your forgiveness and are reconciled to you in Christ Jesus, our hearts release those who have treated us in unloving and unjust ways and, through your love, we live in pursuit of justice and reconciliation.

Gracious God, we come in thanksgiving and in praise for so many things. But today, we especially give you praise for the great son of Methodism, Richard Allen. We give you glory for calling and empowering him to preach your Gospel and to live out the Gospel by standing against inequality and injustice. We give you praise for the African Methodist Episcopal Church born out of a struggle for equality and justice.

Therefore, we join our voices with that great a cloud of witnesses who surround us: Sarah Allen, Jarena Lee, Henry McNeil Turner, Daniel Alexander Payne, Deaconess Rosa Parks and the many unnamed heroes and sheroes, those who now are looking to us over the canopy of the heavens, those who died in the faith, not having received the promises but having seen them afar off. We join our voices with our forebears who have already joined the

eternal chorus of angels, archangels and all the company of heaven and in victory we laud and magnify Your Holy name evermore praising you and singing,

**Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of Thee.
Heaven and earth are praising Thee.
O Lord, Most High. AMEN.**

Yes Lord, You are Holy and Righteous and Powerful and altogether Lovely. There is none like you. When the blood of heifers and doves would no longer suffice of the sins of Your people, You sent Your Son from His throne in Glory to condescend to live among us, a people who had wandered far from you. Jesus lived and showed us the way of love and the path of peace. Jesus died and opened for us the way of salvation and victory. Jesus rose and demonstrated the way to overcome. You sent your Spirit and empowered us to continue the ministry of Jesus, our Christ.

And so Lord, we gather at your table in celebration. Empower us, as we feast at your table, to follow the example of Christ that we may fully embrace justice and equality. You declare us equal at this Table. At this table of equality there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, black nor white, rich nor poor, male nor female. At this table, we are one. By Your great power Lord God, our hope that the equality we experience at this table is now being realized in the earth.

In celebration of the establishment Your Kingdom of Equality our

Lord Jesus, in the same night that he was betrayed, took Bread; and, when he had given thanks, he brake it; and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat; this is my Body which is given for you: Do this in remembrance of me. Likewise after supper he took the Cup; and, when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all, of this; for this is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins: Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me.

Lord, you are wholly and entirely Other. Show us increasingly how to open our hearts, our lives to You. And, day by day, help us to open our hearts to one another. Thank you for teaching us how to love and to accept those different from ourselves. You, O God, are the Supreme example of divine hospitality. You, Great Host of this Holy Table, have welcomed us to the heavenly banquet and sent your Son who died to ensure that all, ALL have a place at Your Table. Hallelujah! As we feast today at Your table, fill us with your Holy Spirit: that we may very soon see clearly that what binds us is infinitely greater than what separates us; that we may know that people among us still live under oppression; and, that we may never be found among those who believe you have sanctioned the oppression of those who are different from us.

Pour out Your Spirit , O God, upon the offerings set before You on this table and upon those who stand around this holy table offering themselves to you as living sacrifices. We pray that you will make us holy and acceptable that, through us, the establishment of your Kingdom will continue and the entire creation be made better. This is our prayer through Jesus Christ

our Lord. AMEN.