

Sermon Title: **“Black History Month, UMC, and GCORR”**

Bible: **Psalm 1 & Luke 6:20-23**

When: on Sunday, February 13th, 2022

Where: about 30 people (plus YouTube live streaming viewers) at Gilroy UMC

### **Opening Prayer**

O Lord, we confess that we have not been with our sisters, brothers, and friends in Christ when they were suffering. Please forgive us because we have not heard their cry. Please open our eyes to see your love and your will. Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

### **1. Black History Month**

February has many special events. Today is the Super Bowl. Tomorrow is Valentine’s Day. Next Monday will be President’s Day. And the whole month of February is Black History Month. While I was reading today’s Scripture readings from the lectionary, I could not help but think of our African-American sisters and brothers in our United Methodist Church.

### **2. United Methodist Church since 1968**

“Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.” In our history of the UMC, there was a time of tears, because we were not one body of Jesus Christ. Like the Jim Crow Laws, “separate but equal” was a part of our church history. The United Methodist Church has a long history, but the official name of the United Methodist Church was established in 1968 through two unions: one internal and one external. The external union meant a merging of

two Wesleyan bodies: the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church became one denomination, the United Methodist Church. Is there anyone who remembers the 1968 conference? Or is there anyone who was a member of the Methodist Church or the Evangelical United Brethren Church? The internal union is the joining together of Black and White Methodists into the radically integrated denomination. Before 1968, we could not worship together with our African-American brothers and sisters. That's because of a separate Central Jurisdiction. (Map: In 1939, five of the jurisdictions were based on geography, while the shaded area representing the Central Jurisdiction would segregate African-American Methodists from the rest of the denominational structure.) Just as we have many States in America, like California and Nevada, our church has a regional Annual Conference and Jurisdiction. We are the Cal-Nev Annual Conference, and we belong to the Western Jurisdiction. But before 1968, there was a separate Central Jurisdiction for African-American Methodists. Unfortunately, sadly, and painfully, we thought and behaved according to the Jim Crow Laws that were in place: separate but equal even in our church history. Thankfully, we ended the segregation of our African-American congregations in 1968. (Photo: On April 23, 1968, two bishops followed by two children, two youths, two adults, six ordained ministers, two church officers and finally all 10,000 people present joined hands and repeated in unison: "Lord of the church, we are united in thee, in thy church, and now in The United Methodist Church. Amen.") Thanks be to God! Our logo for the United Methodist Church has a cross and two flames. Why two flames? It can be

interpreted as two denominations joining to become one. It can also imply our painful and sad history of segregation. While I am proud of our church, I am also humble at the power of the Holy Spirit, who makes us one.

### **3. GCORR**

When we became the United Methodist Church in 1968, the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) was established to hold the newly formed United Methodist Church accountable in its commitment to reject the sin of racism in every aspect of the life of the church. Our African-American sisters and brothers think not only of themselves, but also about all of our sisters and brothers of the United Methodist Church. Someday, I would like to attend a retreat or workshop provided by GCORR. It is like a tree in Psalm 1. "They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither." I believe that thanks to their commitment and their effort, I was able to become a pastor in the United Methodist Church. I am also able to be your pastor in a Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural appointment. I am proud of you as our congregation who accepts me as your pastor. Even though we are different, we are serving this church, and this community together for the kingdom of God. I am thankful for our Black sisters and brothers who have walked before us. I feel African Spirituality, how they want Jesus even during suffering, and how what they want is not hate but love. (Song Lyrics: Give me Jesus, Give me Jesus, You can have all this world. But give me Jesus!) When they see Jesus on the cross, they see Jesus as not only their savior, but also as their brother Jesus, who suffered with them.

#### 4. We are UMC!

Our church has a long history. We have painful and sad moments. (Photo: SACKCLOTH AND ASHES -- United Methodist Bishops (from top) William Oden, Alfred Johnson, Arthur Kulah and Robert Morgan offer sackcloth and ashes during a service of repentance for racism at the United Methodist Church's 2000 General Conference in Cleveland. During the service the church confessed to the sin of racism within the denomination.) (Photo: REPENTANCE -- Alice Glenn (right), a reserve delegate from the California-Nevada conference, embraces delegate Angela Brown during a service of repentance for racism at the United Methodist Church's 2000 General Conference in Cleveland. During the service that included the symbolic wearing of sackcloth and ashes, the church confessed to the sin of racism within the denomination.) We also have moments of joy and gratitude! (Photo: The Rev. Renita Thomas (center) wipes away a tear during a service of appreciation for African Americans who stayed in the church despite institutional racism at the United Methodist Church's 2004 General Conference in Pittsburgh. Thomas is flanked by Bishops Violet L. Fisher (left) and Charlene P. Kammerer.) (Photo: Holding hands during a service of appreciation for African Americans who stayed in the church despite institutional racism at the United Methodist Church's 2004 General Conference in Pittsburgh.) We are the church. We are not perfect. But we are the church, the body of Jesus Christ. God is calling us to cry together and to love together. As you see in our logo, we confess that we have Jesus and we have the Holy Spirit. With the

power of the Holy Spirit, who makes us one and who makes us the body of Jesus Christ, even when we cry, and even when we suffer, let us build our church together.

### **Closing Prayer**

O Lord, we are the church. We are the body of Jesus Christ. Please make us humble in our history. Please make us one in Christ. Please use us for this church and your kingdom of God.

In Jesus' name. Amen.