

2.27.22 –Combined Service NBMBC/UBC Black History Month

“The Mission Church: Shared Purpose”

The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

**The Missionary Church – Pastor Ed Young to read
Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15,16; John 17:18-21; Acts 13:1-5**

Part of a Reading from the New National Baptist Hymnal, #564 . . .

“. . . And he said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. (Mark 16:15-16)

As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. (John 17:18-21)”

L: These are the Words of God! C: Thanks be to God.

Please pray with me:

Father God, thank you for the praise of worship, prayers, and readings already experienced together today. So that we may hear you, please clear our minds of war, violence, grief, anxiety, or thoughts of friends not here today. Let us wash our hands and hearts before you, leaving all of it in the basin at the altar. May we feel your healing presence. Help us Lord to live in unity on mission here on our campus and beyond in our community. May those at home today feel your power and love wherever they are. Lord, speak now through your messenger. **“Amen.”**

Thank you to all our leaders and participants for bringing God’s Word with such conviction and inspiration. We have come together today to honor Black leaders in history, and to recognize our common faith in Jesus Christ. As Mission Center partners, the United Baptist Church is grateful for you, both today’s collaboration and our growing relationships with one another. Can you believe we have been together here for three years now? Praise the Lord!

As I prepared for this service during a devastating news week of Russian aggression and noble Ukrainian resistance, the reading by Pastor

Young helped me focus on something positive: unity and a shared purpose. I don't have to tell you how difficult the last two pandemic years have been for both churches, your families, friends, personal losses, and a perceived loss of freedom. Yet we survived and thrived! Some even got married and others had babies! God is good. If confirmed, Ketanji Brown Jackson will become the first ever African American female Supreme Court Justice in history! Long overdue, yet progress. We will pray for a smooth, bi-partisan nomination process. You have silver linings to share too, so compared to the destruction of war, we are blessed.

The disciples' grief after the crucifixion must have been the worst time ever, yet there had been sightings of Jesus as he appeared to his friends over those forty days. Before his Ascension to the Father in Acts 1, Jesus joins their meal and commissions these apostles, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the "ends of the earth". That means everywhere, even Annandale, Falls Church, Fairfax, Alexandria, Woodbridge and beyond! The second Acts passage tells of the first missionaries from the church at Antioch; Barnabas and Saul (Paul) along with John Mark are commissioned to GO and preach the good news of Jesus' resurrection to Seleucia and Salamis on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus off the coast near Syria.

The Mark passage is the longer version and not always referenced but is another commissioning to go into **all** the world and preach the Gospel. Those who believe and are baptized will be saved. But before they go, Jesus prays and intercedes for these apostles (as he does for our evangelism and service). He prays that through his own life, death on the cross, and resurrection at the tomb, his apostles will be sanctified and

empowered to spread this good news so that all (Jews and Gentiles alike) may believe God sent him: “¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).”

Despite differences in heritage, appearance, or cultural preferences, we have a **spiritual oneness** that comes from Jesus Christ. The world is watching how we believers live our lives in community. We can be a good example or a poor model of Christian unity. Thank you, Lord, that Christ intercedes for us, especially when we sin or fail to serve when and where we are called. By our faith we have Christ’s divine nature within us, and through it, we are truly united as believers. Together, as believers in Jesus Christ, we also receive the power of divine grace and forgiveness of our sins. We are empowered through the Holy Spirit to share Christ here on our campus and beyond these walls into the community.

Our shared purpose is to reconcile one with another through hard conversations, applaud our uniqueness, repent of past and present offenses, and to make space for a more holy union of agape love. Through Christ’s sacrificial love comes mutual blessing, compassion, and service. God’s bountiful love prompts us to give more money, time, and talents to the needs of our communities than we could ever do alone or on our own. We are a team, called to share Jesus! **A shared Gospel purpose drives the mission church**; yes, the ministries of our two congregations may be different or distinctive, but through listening prayer and holy intentions, we might hear God’s voice more clearly and louder than ever before. Not through words, but through the intuition of our spirits, powered by Christ’s advocate, the Holy Spirit working in and through us.

We come together virtually and in person on Sundays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and for other monthly activities to worship God, study Scripture, sing praises, to be in fellowship together, and to pray for one another. Some of you may have questions about Jesus or doubts about God's grace, depending on your life circumstances. This is the place to work those out! We are the people who can help you wrestle with unbelief, who can stand by your side, and call on Jesus in prayer to intercede for you. We gather together as churches to **refuel** ourselves to serve others during the rest of the week. The price of gasoline and groceries may be going up, but the **spiritual fuel** of the Holy Spirit is FREE, to us that is. Jesus paid the ultimate price for our freedom. He is the light of the world that gives us courage to be salt and light **in** the world. Jesus' power through his Advocate, the Holy Spirit, gives us the power and calls us to action to serve others in compassion and love. We must continue to pray for each other's ministries, knowing that **our shared purpose is the Mission church**, formed by Christ's disciples and today's gifted apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers. "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart (Galatians 6:9 ^{NKJV}). Go and tell your personal testimony! Your story and your serving speak volumes about God's love. Lord, prepare us spiritually for the doing of the new work to come. |/"

Let us pray, Dear Jesus, we thank you for sharing how our brothers and sisters of the early church were sent out with your blessing and intercession; how they were sanctified and unified to spread the Gospel by words and service to a world not interested in you. May we too be worthy of your trust by our humility and obedience to share the work that

glorifies you and the Kingdom! Through the power of the Holy Spirit, give us the courage to speak your name! Please keep us faithful, healthy, and strong, so that we do live out the Gospel and share it with others. In your name, we pray and abide, **Amen.**