

Hildegard von Bingen, the 11th Century mystic, in her “Book of Divine Works” wrote this vision of Caritas, the Spirit of Divine Love: “I am the supreme and fiery force who sets all living sparks alight and breathes forth no mortal things, but judges them as they are. Circling above the circumscribing circle with my superior wings, which is to say circling with wisdom, I have ordered the cosmos rightly. But I am also the fiery life of divine essence: I blaze above the beauty of the fields, I shine in the waters, I burn in the sun and the moon and the stars. And with the airy wind I quicken all things to life, as with an invisible life that sustains them all. For the air lives in viriditas and in the flowers, and the waters flow as if alive, and the sun lives within its own light, and when the moon has waned it is rekindled by the light of the sun and thereby lives anew and the stars shine forth in their own light as though alive.”

Opening hymn is Red #28 “I Sing the Mighty Power of God”

Our first reading this Black History Month is from the closing of W.E.B. DuBois great work, “Black Reconstruction”. “The most magnificent drama in the last thousand years of human history is the transportation of ten million human beings out of the dark beauty of their mother continent into the new-found Eldorado of the West. They descended into Hell; and in the third century they arose from the dead, in the finest effort to achieve democracy for the working millions which this world had ever seen. It was a tragedy that beggared the Greek; it was an upheaval of humanity like the Reformation and the French Revolution. Yet we are blind and led by the blind. We discern in no part of our labor movement; no part of our industrial triumph; no part of our religious experience. Before the dumb eyes of ten generations of ten million children, it is made mockery of and spit upon; a degradation of the eternal mother; a sneer at human effort; with aspiration and art

deliberately and elaborately distorted. And why? Because in a day when the human mind aspired to a science of human action, a history and psychology of the mighty effort of the mightiest century, we fell under the leadership of those who would compromise with truth in the past in order to make peace in the present and guide policy in the future.”

A second reading comes from the epilogue of “The Conquest of Paradise” by Kirkpatrick Sale. “However, one may cast it, an opportunity there certainly was once a chance for the people of Europe to find a new anchorage in a new country, in what they dimly realized was the land of Paradise, and thus find finally the way to redeem the world. But all they ever found was half a world of nature's treasures and nature's peoples that could be taken, and they took them, never knowing, never learning the true regenerative power there, and that opportunity was lost. Theirs was indeed a conquest of Paradise, but as is inevitable with any war against the world of nature^—those who win will have lost — once again lost, and this time perhaps forever.

Doris Melliadis, an Irokwa woman from New York City said in 1975, “Now they come to gather for the coming disaster and destruction of the white man by his own hands, with his own progressive, advanced, technological devices, that only the American Indian can avert. Now the time is near. And it is only the Indian who knows the cure. It is only the Indian who can stop this plague. And this time the invisible will be visible. And the unheard will be heard. And we will be seen and we will be remembered.”

So, we may hope. There is only one way to live in America, and there can be only one way, and that is as Americans — the original Americans — for that is what the earth of America demands. We have tried for five centuries to resist that simple truth. We resist it further only at risk of the imperilment — worse, the likely destruction — of the earth.”

Our final reading on this birthday of Charles Darwin and Abraham Lincoln is Lincoln’s second inaugural address. “On the occasion

corresponding to this four years ago all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it, all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to *saving* the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to *destroy* it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union and divide effects by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would *make* war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would *accept* war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union even by war, while the Government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the *cause* of the conflict might cease with or even before the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh." If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which

the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations. [\[7\]](#)”

Let us share our Concerns and Joys carried in our hearts this morning, voicing them into this community of loving Friends.
(Friends share)

Let us hold these expressions from Friends together with those joys and concerns left unsaid in our hearts, and for the many near and far, in Light and love. (Musical Interlude)

Dear Friends—We hope for the blessed humility to reunite with this natural world and take our place within the larger creation, as part of the blessed and sacred forces of Love and Light. Let us allow Caritas to reign over us, let us be part of the viriditas, the force of regenerative life that animates our universe. We pray for all to leave power over the universe to universal power. Let us see the force of nature and justice in our history and accept its balance and the boundaries of our lives and time. Shape us and renew us, fold us into the arms of nature and the cosmic forces of evolution that can transform us fully into balance with one another, and with all of the natural world, as truly one, and among many. Amen

Message hymn Red #45 “O Lord of Every Shining Constellation”

Message: Dear Friends—On this evolution Sunday, which this year is the actual birthday of Charles Darwin along with another saint born on the same day and year, Abraham Lincoln, I was compelled to reflect on how Darwin's message and work sought to restore people, all people, to being a part of nature, of a true human nature, and the miraculous world of life. Darwin was a deeply committed abolitionist, along with many members of his family, and was deeply horrified by the practices of slavery he observed on his voyages. His work on the mutability of species and the unity of life and humankind is the subject of a 2009 book, *Darwin's Sacred Cause: How a Hatred of Slavery Shaped Darwin's Views on Human Evolution*. During his time of scientific work was also when scientific racism was developing, and he regularly refuted in angry tones in his letters anyone in his circle who tried to suggest that humans were of different races or had different biological backgrounds or abilities. He had been trained in taxidermy in Edinburgh by a famous Black scientist and mentor, John Edmonstone. He knew firsthand and stated that "black and white men possessed the same essential humanity." His scientific fascination with life and its adaptability, regeneration, also led to him being a very strong proponent of what today would be called animal rights and to a view that we are all part of a larger web of life that is interactive and interdependent, and must be followed not as a choice, but as the way of the world.

Darwin purposely avoided writing on the evolution of humans because of what he regarded as distasteful controversies, but also because he was meticulously documenting the great variations within single species around the world, such as pigeons, to show that all of the colors and presentations were within a single family, as is also true of people. The balance and justice in the forces of nature, the adaptability to living within context all speak to our current climate crisis that was just starting to accelerate in his day as exaggerated empires and attempts to control the world and exert power over it and extract wealth from it have led to our terrible

modern threat to the existence of all. His close examination of nature led to his great respect for it, as in the visions of Hildegard von Bingen in our opening reading.

The readings I chose for this morning are from that tragic era in the second half of the 19th century when the truths of Darwin, of Lincoln, of human justice, and of the indigenous worlds were all defied and drown out in profound racism and greed. We need to place ourselves fully in the universe, deeply in the laws of nature, away from the distorted lust for power and a hideous Christian nationalism that defies morality and justice. The idea that humans are one, and one with the universe and life, is a beautiful idea. It is a truth of nature, and we are facing the consequences now of defying nature and justice and the universe in frightening and destructive ways. Indigenous people of the world, those who live close to the land and to place have long known this truth. The disastrous efforts to reshape the world through colonialism, racism, and capitalism are failing, indeed collapsing in profound and horrifying ways. Only love can bring us all safely home.

Darwin looked closely at our world and saw that truth of nature, and that we are fully a part of it, not above or beside it, but deeply within it. Let us be part of the universe and part of the unity of life and humankind. Darwin's sacred earth is our own. There still is a rightness and a right order, and it is natural. The five thousand years of Egypt were not without tremendous technology and art and beauty, but the enduring stability was built on the rhythms of the Nile and the sun. The message of evolution is that we have always been a part of the right order, a part of everything, the dust of stars and Light and life, and the balance will be restored with or without us in the fullness of time. We must accept and love our mother, and all of our relations in living and being.

Closing hymn is Green #1, "All Things Bright and Beautiful"

Charles Darwin wrote, "If the misery of the poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin.

How paramount the future is to the present when one is surrounded by children."

It is not the strongest of the species that survives, not the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change."

The love for all living creatures is the most noble attribute of humankind."