



Poetry and Protest February 15, 2022

Dear Member of the JustFaith Network,

We are grateful that you are a part of our JustFaith community. Whether you are a graduate of one of our programs or you are just getting to know us, we hope this offering will help sustain you spiritually and/or equip you to work for justice.

Our monthly small group resource is sent on the third Tuesday of each month; you can access an archive of past resources by logging into your JustFaith account. You can invite your friends, family, Sunday School class, or current/past JFM small group to join you in-person or via video conferencing. If you are new to video conferencing, Zoom tutorials are available on our YouTube page – [Click here to access.](#)

While we hope that these resources will inspire and nourish your community, for a more robust experience, consider one of our longer programs. Click [here](#) for more information. This week's resource speaks to themes found in our Racial justice series, which you will find [here](#).

This week's small group experience relies on each participant having read this short article: ["Support Black Poetry"](#) (specifically "Get Educated"). Please share this link in advance so that all participants can come prepared to discuss. Note: ask participants to read the article and at least one of the poems referred to in the "Get Educated" article and to come prepared to share a part of the poem they found particularly compelling.

Last but not least, all of our work is a collaboration with people like you. When you donate, your gift helps us sustain and equip individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out.](#)

Also, please feel free to forward this resource to friends and family! In fact, we urge you to do so. We want this resource to reach as many people as possible.

With gratitude,

The JustFaith Ministries Staff



Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

When everyone has dialed in, begin your time together with these or similar words:

Welcome, friends! It's so good to be with all of you. Today we'll begin with an opening prayer and spend a few minutes checking in with each other. Then we'll have some conversation about a podcast we listened to, before closing in prayer. This a time to care for one another and to be inspired to grow and act.

Let's take a few seconds of silence to pause, to listen to our breathing, and to be present in this space.

Pause for 30 seconds before beginning the opening prayer. In advance, assign someone to read aloud the following poem:

Touched by An Angel

**We, unaccustomed to courage
exiles from delight
live coiled in shells of loneliness
until love leaves its high holy temple
and comes into our sight
to liberate us into life.**

**Love arrives
and in its train come ecstasies
old memories of pleasure
ancient histories of pain.
Yet if we are bold,
love strikes away the chains of fear
from our souls.**

**We are weaned from our timidity
In the flush of love's light
we dare be brave
And suddenly we see
that love costs all we are
and will ever be.
Yet it is only love
which sets us free.**

- Maya Angelou



Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

Ask these open-ended questions. If you are by yourself, journal about them.

Note: If you are with a group, these questions have the potential to take up a lot of time. Some weeks may require more check-in time than others, depending on the needs of the group. To provide a shorter yet meaningful check-in time, choose ONE of the questions below, and ask participants to share a ONE sentence response.

- **Before we begin this our reflection, let's take a few minutes to check in. How is everyone feeling?** (It will be a bit more difficult via phone to know if someone is being talked over or is trying to get a word in.... Be sure everyone has a chance to speak).
- **What is something you're struggling with this week?**
- **Where have you seen a sign of hope this week?**

Other optional questions include: What is something you've learned about yourself during this time of social distancing? Where have you experienced a "thin place" in the last week? Where have you seen beauty this week? What is one new behavior you'd like to continue doing when the virus has passed us by?

Reflection (25 minutes or so)

Participants should have read this [article](#) (the section called "Get Educated") prior to the gathering. Also, each person should have read at least one of the poems referred to in the article and prepared to share what they found important in the poem.

Discussion questions

1. **What did you find interesting in the article?**
2. **The author of the article references the censorship of Maya Angelou's writings. Were you aware of this? How might this be related to the current efforts in cities and states across the country to ban certain books related to the history of slavery and racism.**
3. **Natalie Patterson is quoted near the end of the article: "I think of how giving them a single sheet of paper and a pen allowed them to come to terms with some things,**



- make peace, discover new things about themselves and the world.” How have you personally experienced the power of paper and pen?
4. Invite each person in the group to share a piece of the poem they read and why they selected it.

Announcements (5-10 minutes)

- This resource is a small sample of the kinds of conversations had in our 8-session programs. For a more intensive experience related to matters of racial justice, see our Faith and Racism program series; click [here](#).
- On Thursday, February 17, 7:00 p.m. ET, JustFaith Ministries’ “Acting for Justice” Series will continue with teacher/author, Joe Grant. Joe will address the topic, “Renew the Face of the Earth: Grounding Spirituality in Social and Ecological Crisis.” For more information or to register, click [here](#).
- Let participants know that the materials for this gathering were free, put together by the JustFaith Ministries staff to equip more people for the work of peace and justice. To support the creation of more resources and programs, participants are encouraged to donate to JustFaith Ministries; click [here](#).
- Are there any opportunities for action or advocacy happening in your community this week? Invite participants to share ways to support the work of local groups working for justice or care for the environment.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Then say: **Before we join in the closing prayer, let us pause to acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is as close as our very breath.**

Pause for 30 seconds. Then share the reflection below.

I, Too

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,



**But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.**

**Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.**

**Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—**

**I, too, am America.
- Langston Hughes**

Then, in these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it:

**We are disciples on a journey.
We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.**

**We hold one another as we carry the concerns of our neighbors.
If you feel moved, please share your prayer aloud.**

Pause

We pray also for the members of the JustFaith community across the country. Unite us through the power of your Holy Spirit, that together we might participate with you in the building of your Kingdom, in order to create a more just and peaceful world.

Amen.