

# REFLECTIONS ALONG THE WAY

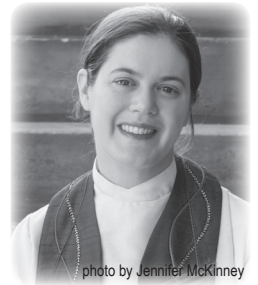
Dear friends,

In Roman Catholic and similar traditions, worshipers sing the Litany of the Saints at Easter Vigil, All Saints Day, and ordinations. A cantor lifts each name, and the people respond: "Pray for us."

*Saint Peter and Saint Paul, pray for us.*

*Saint John, pray for us.*

*Saint Mary Magdalene, pray for us.*



Christian worship breaks down the boundaries of space and time: we are surrounded by the saints whenever we pray. By invoking their names, we remind ourselves that we are not alone. There is a great cloud of witnesses among us, inspiring us through their example and encouraging us with their continued prayers.

On June 1, clergy convened at *Freedom Corner*, a gathering place in Pittsburgh's Lower Hill District hallowed by its role in the civil rights movement. Responding to a call from a group of Black church leaders from the Hill and the Mon Valley, they came from all parts of our region, representing over a dozen different judicatories. For some, demonstrating for justice was familiar. For others, this was their very first time bringing their faith to the streets.



The clergy wore face masks and kept their distance, conscious of the continued COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the risk, they were determined to stand against another pandemic, one that Rev. Raphael Warnock terms "COVID-1619"—the pandemic of racism that has afflicted this country for 400 years. Just like the coronavirus, COVID-1619 can be a deadly diagnosis.

After hearing from nine speakers, each representing a minute that George Floyd spent crushed on the pavement, the group set off on a march toward the City-County Building. Along the way, Rev. Brian Edmonds of Macedonia Baptist Church held a bullhorn and led the chant. He called the names of Black people who have died in racist violence and together the crowd responded:

*George Floyd. Say his name.*

*Breonna Taylor. Say her name.*

*Ahmaud Aubrey. Say his name.*

*Antwon Rose. Say his name.*

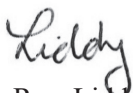
All the way down the hill, the litany continued. There was not a pew or a pulpit in sight, but the call and response felt like worship nonetheless. As Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel once said, describing his march with Dr. King: "I felt as if my feet were praying."

Of course, a single day on the march, or even a series of demonstrations as we've seen in this season, is not enough. Working for racial justice is sustained and complicated work that requires energy and courage. My fellow white Christians must resist our fragility, sustain our attention, and cultivate deep humility. Black Christians must lead boldly, even while tending their own broken hearts.

None of us do this alone. Along the way, with every step of our march, every word in our courageous conversations, every signature on a petition, we are in good company. The martyrs, the heroes, the saints: all those who came before us are with us. We say their names. They pray for us. They are here.

May your own efforts toward justice bear fruit in this season, and may the church and the world find wholeness once more.

Your sister in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Liddy".

The Rev. Liddy Barlow  
Executive Minister  
Christian Associates of Southwest PA

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