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August 3, 2010

A Libation Ceremony

For Hunt's Chapel AME Church in Sparta, Georgia

We gather at this moment believing in God who is Love, believing in his son Jesus who is love incarnate, who walked the earth as a human being and demonstrated a life of compassion and care even for those who are our enemies. We gather believing in the Holy Spirit, the comforter and the holy presence of God with us and within us.

We gather at this moment remembering the prayer of unity that Jesus prayed. God in Jesus; Jesus in God; we in Jesus and God (John 17:21) We are sanctified in God's truth. God's word is truth. (John 17:17)

We gather at this moment convinced that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38) We are one in God's love.

We gather at this moment understanding that faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed by faith our ancestors received approval. (Hebrews 11: 1-2)

We gather at this moment mindful of the seven principles of African communal life: Umoja (unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination); Ujima (collective work and responsibility); Ujamaa (cooperative economics); Nia (purpose); Kuumba (creativity); Imani (faith).

We gather at this moment knowing that the unity of community includes our ancestors, the living and the not yet born.

We gather at this moment to pour cool water upon the earth in honor of our ancestors. This water represents the Holy Spirit of God, prophetic healing, prosperity and the living waters that flow from a spring of water gushing up to eternal life. (John 4:14)

We pour these libations in gratitude to God for our ancestors who built civilizations, survived the horrors of the Middle Passage, who stayed faithful to God through slavery, who maintained their dignity in the face of physical and psychic violence, who lived, laughed, loved and who gave us life. In the name of Jesus.

(pour out water)

We ask forgiveness for the things we have done that hurt or disappointed our ancestors. In the name of Jesus.

(pour out water)

We forgive our ancestors for the things they did that hurt or that disappointed us. In the name of Jesus.

(pour out water)

We realize that our life on this earth is fleeting and soon those who are not yet born will stand here and pour libations to us. God's Word says: "For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon your descendents, and my blessing on your offspring." (Isaiah 44:3) We thank God for this promise. We stand on and trust this promise. In the name of Jesus.

(pour out water)

We accept our responsibility and rededicate ourselves to live lives that are a praise to the glory of God, that honors our ancestors, and that will create a better world for those who are not yet born. In the name of Jesus.

(pour out water)

Now please name either out loud or in silence the ancestors you remember and honor today.

(the people speak)

Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.(Hebrew 12:1-2) In the name of Jesus.

(pour out water)

(closing and or silent prayer)

This libation ceremony is complete. Go in peace and serve God. Amen.