

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

KNOW THE PAST.  
SHAPE THE FUTURE.

FEBRUARY 2020

IN RECOGNITION AND SOLIDARITY WITH OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF AFRICAN DESCENT, MATERIALS HAVE BEEN PREPARED FOR THE BUILDING UP OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD BY CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH.

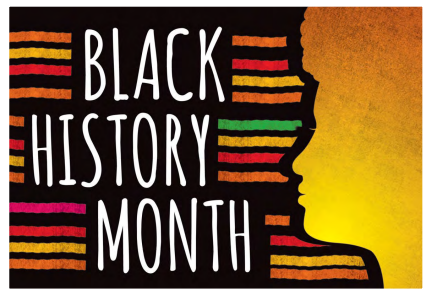
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. SALVATIONISTS OF AFRICAN DESCENT VIDEO
2. GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE
3. WORSHIP CONTENT IDEAS
4. SERMON OUTLINE
5. POSTER FOR CORPS EVENT



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## Salvationists of African Descent Video

**Video Link:**

<https://youtu.be/ApY5wkO4Leo>

**Description:**

During Black History Month, Americans celebrate the contributions that African-Americans have made to our society, especially in recognition that this aspect of our shared heritage has often been ignored. A new video, presented by the Mission and Culture Department of The Salvation Army—USA Eastern Territory, highlights the journey of Salvationists of African Descent who have made significant contributions to the Army even while enduring various kinds of injustice. For the first time, this story is expressed through the experiences of members of the Salvationists of African Descent Committee—one of the three official bodies that provide advice and accountability to the territory on issues of race and inclusion. We hope that every corps, ARC center, and other Army unit will provide space and time for their constituents to view and discuss this video. It is both challenging and encouraging, and we trust that God will use it in our communities to answer our earnest prayer—“Thy kingdom come,... on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

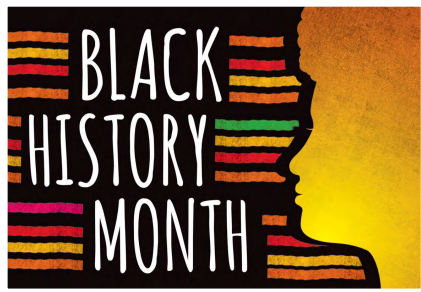
**Viewing Suggestions:**

The video and discussion guide are intended to be used in a group setting where people can have honest, good-faith dialogue. Please schedule adequate time for viewing the video (approx. 24 mins.) and facilitating discussion (approx. 45 mins.). Ideal settings include after a Sunday potluck dinner or during a weekday evening group meeting.

**Other recommendations:**

- If a large group gathers to view the video, hold the discussion in clusters of 4-8 people, so everyone can be heard.
- Be sure to test the sound quality and volume beforehand. View and discuss in a comfortable setting. Demonstrate hospitality with enjoyable foods.





## Video Discussion Guide

### Salvationists of African Descent Video

**Video Link:**

<https://youtu.be/ApY5wkO4Leo>

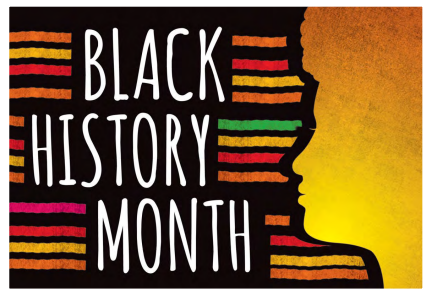
### Group Discussion Questions

- What did you learn or what may have surprised you from watching this video?
- In what ways did the video help you to appreciate the experience of the Salvationists of African Descent?
- In what ways has our corps/center experienced some of the issues presented in the video? What is our corps/center history regarding these issues?
- What can our corps/center do to gain a better understanding of our community, it's diversity, and the concerns and concerns of the varied cultural groups that exist in our community?
- What can our corps do to combat racism and promote greater justice and understanding?

**During the discussion, observe these 'ground rules'**

- Maintain the confidence of anything that is said.
  - Respect people who differ in opinion.
  - Listen well to one another.
  - Participate fully.





## Worship and Program Content

### Call to Worship: Hold Fast to Dreams by Langston Hughes

“Hold fast to dreams. For if dreams die, life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly.  
Hold fast to dreams. For if dreams go, life is a barren field covered with snow.  
First in the heart is the dream. Then the mind starts seeking away.  
Then the hands seek other hands to help; a community of hands to build.  
Thus the dream becomes not one man's dream alone;  
Not my dream alone, but our dream, belonging to all the hands who build.”

### Additional Resource on Black History Month

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/black-history-month>

### Worship Planning Notes

- Recommended Songs: “**Lord You Are Good**” (Israel Houghton | 2001 Integrity’s Praise! Music), “**We Are United in Jesus Christ**” (Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir), “**All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name**” (SASB 73), “**I Then Shall Live**” (SASB 850), “**I Believe That God the Father**” (SASB 34), “**Lift Up the Army Banner**” (SASB 993), “**Let Us Break Bread Together**”
- Thematic reading: **Psalm 148** or **Psalm 8** (Call to Worship), **Matthew 25:31–46** (Gospel Reading).

## Responsive Prayer

**Leader:** We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; Persecuted, but not forsaken; Cast down, but not destroyed.

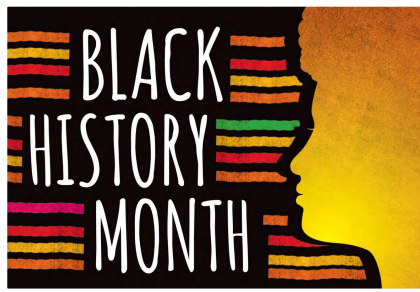
**People:** African American history tells the story of a people whose faith in God, hope in the future, and love for one another sustained them through every generation.

**Leader:** As You gave them strength to fight, give us power to break the chains of mass incarceration, poverty, violence, and the sins that so easily beset.

**People:** As we gather for worship, we remember the sacrifices and faith of these courageous men and women.

**All:** Guide our feet, focus our minds, and sustain our hearts as we strive to serve this present age in unity and brotherhood. Amen.





## Worship and Program Content

### African American History of Faith

**In Music:** “The Negro Spiritual: A Brief History” (Reading attached)

**In The Church:** “ History of African American Christianity: African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AME Zion)” (Reading attached)

**In the Salvation Army:** Salvationists of African Descent Video

### THE NEGRO SPIRITUAL: A Brief History

Excerpt from “The Gospel Truth about the Negro Spiritual” by Randye Jones

Negro spirituals are songs created by the Africans who were captured and brought to the United States to be sold into slavery. This stolen race was deprived of their languages, families, and cultures; yet, their masters could not take away their music.

Over the years, these slaves and their descendants adopted Christianity, the religion of their masters. They re-shaped it into a deeply personal way of dealing with the oppression of their enslavement. Their songs, which were to become known as spirituals, reflected the slaves’ need to express their new faith:

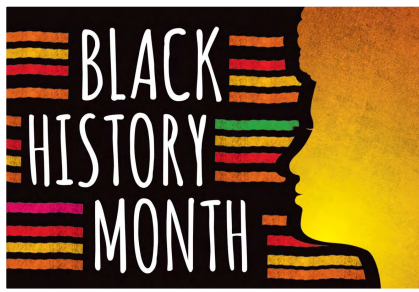
My people told stories, from Genesis to Revelation, with God’s faithful as the main characters. They knew about Adam and Eve in the Garden, about Moses and the Red Sea. They sang of the Hebrew children and Joshua at the battle of Jericho. They could tell you about Mary, Jesus, God, and the Devil. If you stood around long enough, you’d hear a song about the blind man seeing, God troubling the water, Ezekiel seeing a wheel, Jesus being crucified and raised from the dead. If slaves couldn’t read the Bible, they would memorize Biblical stories they heard and translate them into songs.<sup>1</sup>

The songs were also used to communicate with one another without the knowledge of their masters. This was particularly the case when a slave was planning to escape bondage and to seek freedom via the Underground Railroad.

Spirituals were created extemporaneously and were passed orally from person to person. These folksongs were improvised as suited the singers. There is record of approximately 6,000 spirituals or sorrow songs; however, the oral tradition of the slaves’ ancestors—and the prohibition against slaves learning to read or write—meant that the actual number of songs is unknown. Some of the best known spirituals include: “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child,” “Nobody Knows The Trouble I’ve Seen”, “Steal Away,” “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” “Go Down, Moses,” “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hand,” “Every Time I Feel the Spirit,” “Let Us Break Bread Together on Our Knees,” and “Wade in the Water.”

<sup>1</sup> Velma Maia Thomas. *No Man Can Hinder Me: The Journey from Slavery to Emancipation through Song* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2001), 14.





## Worship and Program Content

### History of African American Christianity: African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AME Zion)

The origins of this church can be traced to the John Street Methodist Church of New York City. Following acts of overt discrimination in New York (such as black parishioners being forced to leave worship), many black Christians left to form their own churches. The first church founded by the AME Zion Church was built in 1800 and was named Zion; one of the founders was William Hamilton, a prominent orator and abolitionist. These early black churches still belonged to the Methodist Episcopal Church denomination, although the congregations were independent. During the Great Awakening, the Methodists and Baptists had welcomed free blacks and slaves to their congregations and as preachers.

The fledgling Zion church grew, and soon multiple churches developed from the original congregation. These churches were attended by black congregants, but ministered to by white ordained Methodist ministers. In 1820, six of the churches met to ordain James Varick as an elder, and in 1821 he was made the first General Superintendent of the AME Zion Church. A debate raged in the white-dominated Methodist church over accepting black ministers. This debate ended on July 30, 1822, when James Varick was ordained as the first bishop of the AME Zion church, a newly independent denomination. The total membership in 1866 was about 42,000.[1] Two years later, it claimed between 164,000 – 200,000 members, as it sent missionaries to the South after the American Civil War to plant new churches with the newly emancipated freedmen.[2] The A.M.E. Zion Church had been part of the Abolitionist movement and became known as the Freedom Church, because it was associated with the period after emancipation of the slaves.

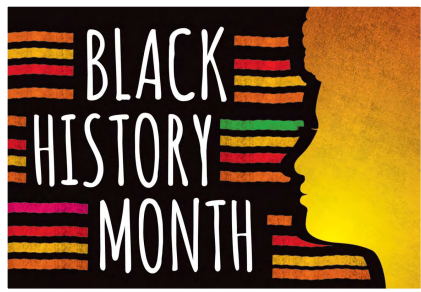
By the beginning of the 20th Century the A.M.E. Zion Church also challenged the standard protocols of both white and black denominations at the time. For example, they were one of the first denominations to ordain women as ministers. They also promoted women, putting them in positions of authority within the Church. [3]

1. The Annual Cyclopaedia: 1866," (1867), p. 492

2. The Annual Cyclopaedia: 1868," (1869), p. 481

3. Sgambelluri, S. (2018, July 16) African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church (1821- ). Retrieved from <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/african-methodist-episcopal-zion-amez-church-1821/>





## Sermon Outline

**Title:** How God Forms a Christian Community

**Scripture:** Galatians 3:23-4:7

### Introduction

- The Evangelical church has tended to emphasize an individual's personal relationship with Jesus, but leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. remind us of the broader implications of the gospel.
- All Christians have a responsibility, not only to respond to God's call upon their own heart, but also to respond to God's heart for the world.
- Paul's heart and mind about God's people changed radically (Gal 6:15–16). This message examines how God forms a Christian community in three dimensions—Individually, Socially, and Globally.

### Point 1—He Restores a Vision of Creation

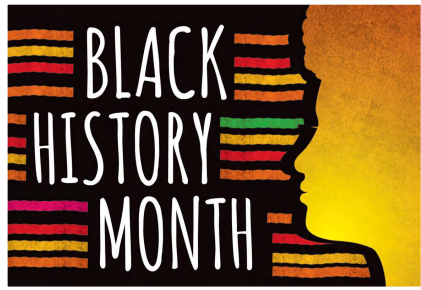
ANCHOR VERSE—"SO IN CHRIST JESUS YOU ARE ALL CHILDREN OF GOD THROUGH FAITH" (GAL 3:26, NIV).

- The creation liturgy that opens Genesis (1:1–2:4) is entirely celebratory. It reflects a peace and completeness that God, the Creator, designed into the material universe.
- When biblical prophets refer to God's ultimate hopes, they often envision creation restored—New Creation (see Isaiah 11:1–16; 25 1–12; Rev 7:9–17; 21:1–8; cf. 2 Cor 5:17).
- Humanity is central to this vision. Genesis 1:26–28 uses both familiar religious language and family resemblance language to say that we were created in the image of God to be God's own children.
- The tragedy is that sin separates us from God and others. It undermines and degrades the bonds between God and humans. One definition of sin is anything that prevents interpersonal communion.
- Martin Luther King, Jr: Segregation was "an existential expression of man's tragic separation, an expression of his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness" (Letter from Birmingham Jail; Aug 1, 1963).
- Paul learned that, in Christ, God was reconciling the whole world to himself (2 Cor 5:18–21). An individual's eternal destiny is too narrow a scope for salvation. God aims for global reconciliation.
- The church is the most diverse collection of people in the world and, when we yield our lives to the Spirit and the will of God, the body of Christ can be a testimony of God's will for humanity.
- The legacy and witness of the church is not as a source and bastion of division and hatred. These are contrary to the gospel. God calls us to repent and strive for his vision of redemption (Heb 12:14).

### Point 2—He Dismisses Our Claims to Social Status

- Paul listed his society's tokens of status—ethno-religious, socio-economic, and gender. Our world uses skin color, age, political party, sexual orientation, clothing style, or sports team in similar ways.
- Each of us has a different collection of these tokens. We were born with some, and we acquired others. We now hold that collection, and people label us and assess our worth by it.
- Before he knew Christ, Paul organized his world by these labels and divisions. Afterward, he wrote, "Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ" (Phil 3:7). He was a lightening rod of persecution, for his gospel annulled long-held prejudices.





## Sermon Outline

**Title:** How God Forms a Christian Community

**Scripture:** Galatians 3:23-4:7

### Point 2 Continued—He Dismisses Our Claims to Social Status

- According to Paul's gospel, those "who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace;... and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us" (Eph 2:11–14). Christ offered his own body to be broken, so that humanity could be healed.
- Paul once used labels to persecute people. In his mind, they weren't worthy to live. He was later captured in Jerusalem and wrongly accused of polluting the sanctuary. The elders said, "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!" (Acts 22:22). His own words came back to sting him (Acts 22:3–5).
- Labels degrade our full humanity—the *imago dei*. The world reduces us to our labels and expects us to live into a reality determined by those narrow labels. Valuing people based on labels that confer or deny social status contradicts both the law of Moses (Torah) and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### Point 3—He Transforms Our Hearts

ANCHOR VERSE—"AND BECAUSE YOU ARE CHILDREN, GOD HAS SENT THE SPIRIT OF HIS SON INTO OUR HEARTS, CRYING, 'ABBA! FATHER!'" (GAL 4:6, NIV).

- God works on a global and social level through people whose lives he directly touches. Salvation and sanctification are not formulaic or transactional. God himself gives us direct assurance. The Spirit gives us new birth (Titus 3:3–7) and transforms us into his image (Galatians 4:19). Reborn into God's family, through the Spirit, we cry out "Father!"
- Something dramatic happened to Paul on the Road to Damascus. Was it that he lost his sight or that he discovered that he had been blind? He had refused to accept God's will—strangers were kin.
- Recognizing God as Father, we embrace a central implication of redemption—that all of his children are our siblings and equals. To disown or degrade one of his children is to diminish him as Father.
- The Army's eighth theological proposition refers to "the witness in himself," affirming that our sense of belonging comes through the Spirit. We don't logically arrive at this knowledge. The Spirit gives it to us directly along with rebirth and our identity as brothers and sisters in the Christian family.

### Conclusion

- God forms a Christian community at three levels of redemption—global, social, and individual. Paul conveys an expansive vision, but let us focus on implications for ourselves.
- We can continue Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision of people not being "judged by the color of their skin," (or any other token of status) "but by the content of their character."
- If we judge people as worthy or unworthy of respect and esteem based on the world's labels, we must recognize our need for repentance and transformation. The good news is that God is still reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor 5:18–21).



# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

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SHAPE THE FUTURE.

FEBRUARY 2020

JOIN US FOR THE FIRST-TIME EVER SCREENING OF A NEW VIDEO ABOUT SALVATIONISTS OF AFRICAN DESCENT PRESENTED BY THE SALVATION ARMY--USA EASTERN TERRITORY'S MISSION AND CULTURE DEPARTMENT. GROUP DISCUSSION WILL FOLLOW.



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TERRITORY

DATE:

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