

“Liberty is meaningless where the right to utter one's thoughts and opinions has ceased to exist. That, of all rights, is the dread of tyrants. It is the right which they first of all strike down. They know its power. Thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, founded in injustice and wrong, are sure to tremble, if men are allowed to reason Equally clear is the right to hear. To suppress free speech is a double wrong. It violates the rights of the hearer as well as those of the speaker.” —Frederick Douglass

Friday, 19 June, 2020 At Home
St. Andrew's United Church of Cairo
38, 26 July Street, Box 1422
Cairo, Egypt

Rev. Christie Manisto, Pastor
Rev. Ayad Samuel, Sacristan
Rev. Rachel Leslie, Council Chairperson
pastor@standrewschurchcairo.com
www.standrewschurchcairo.com

StARS
(St. Andrew's Refugee Services)
Phone: 2575-9451
Email: info@stars-egypt.org
www.stars-egypt.org

St. Andrew's Partner Congregations

Cairo Christian Fellowship (English)
Christ Nation Ministry (Arabic)
Ethiopian Evangelical Church (Amharic)
Presbyterian Church of South Sudan-Dinka-Padang (Dinka)
Presbyterian Church of South Sudan-Nuer (Nuer)
Sudanese Lutheran Church (Arabic)

Welcome to St. Andrew's United Church of Cairo

In this time of worldwide crisis, we as a church are not able to gather for worship as the body of Christ. While we cannot be together in person, we can hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer. We welcome you to this time of prayer just as you are, wherever you are.

A WORD OF WELCOME

Welcome to our worship service on this day. Today in our worship service we have gathered together to hold many things as it feels like so much in our world needs to be held. Today we mark the remembrance of Juneteenth, which is celebrated in the United States yearly on June 19. This day commemorates people of African descent in the United States receiving freedom from slavery. We are also lifting up this morning World Refugee Day, a day commemorated each year on June 20, which is a day set aside internationally to commemorate and honor all refugees, through raising awareness and soliciting support.

A word about St. Andrew's and why these things are important to us: St. Andrew's is an interdenominational/international church that has been around for over 100 years. We are home to many who have traveled to Cairo from all over the world, including individuals who have been forcibly displaced from their homes, also known internationally as refugees. The church's intentional ministry with refugees began with those who were fleeing unrest and arriving in Cairo from the Horn of Africa in 1976. We are proud to say that this ministry, guided by some amazing individuals such as Chris Eades, our current director, has grown over the years. Now known as St. Andrew's Refugee Services, with its own staff and board of directors, this ministry serves over 35,000 people from Ethiopia, Iraq, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Syria. It has become an organization that lifts up the voices, stories, history and expansive knowledge and expertise of individuals who have been displaced. The StARS vision is one of "a safe, inclusive and supportive environment for refugees in which they can exercise their rights, pursue their aspirations, and live in dignity."¹

StARS is truly an organization "for refugees by refugees" where over 85% of the staff and directors who serve have experienced displacement firsthand. More information can be found online at stars-egypt.org, or email us and we will share more with you!

Today's service is brought to you in great part through the efforts of our partner-congregation pastors, who are refugees themselves and leaders at St. Andrew's. They will be using the language of their choice, so I invite you to read along in English. Alongside our international congregation that meets at 10 a.m. on Fridays, five other congregations also call St. Andrew's home. Often members of these congregations join us on Friday mornings, and we join them in their worship as well. We continue to seek collaboration and relationship with our partner churches, and we hope services such as this are a step in that direction. We'd like to thank our brothers and sisters in Christ who generously gave their time to record Scripture and music for this service today.

¹ <http://stars-egypt.org>

One note about how this service will work: After the reading of the Gospel there will be a time of remembrance for those who have lost their lives to oppression, racism, violence and marginalization in the United States and around the world. The listing will, of course, not even be close to lifting up all the names, so there will be a time of silence so that you can share your own names and you can pray your own prayers. I invite you, if you have one, to light a candle during this time.

One liturgy cannot hold all the pain, all the loss, all the suffering, all the injustice, so we join hands on this day and all days and ask God for the strength to serve and to continue to move as a people of faith not just to pray but to effect real change. We pray for a world where World Refugee Day will no longer be needed, where cries of injustice and pain cease to exist, where the few are no longer favored over the many. This will not happen overnight. It's going to take a lot of work, yet we trust that God is good and will inspire us to keep on.

GATHERING

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Holy and righteous God, you created us in your image. Grant us grace to contend fearlessly against evil and to make no peace with oppression. Help us, like those of generations before us who resisted the evil of slavery and human bondage in any form and any manner of oppression. Help us to use our freedoms to bring justice among people and nations everywhere, to the glory of your holy name through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

Opening Song

Amira Abdulgader

WORD

FIRST READING:

Read by Pastor Bedasa Chefe in Amaharic

Jeremiah 20:7-13

⁷O Lord, you have enticed me, and I was enticed; you have overpowered me, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all day long; everyone mocks me. ⁸For whenever I speak, I must cry out, I must shout, "Violence and destruction!" For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. ⁹If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name," then within me there is something like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot. ¹⁰For I hear many whispering: "Terror is all around! Denounce him! Let us denounce him!" All my close friends are watching for me to stumble. "Perhaps he can be enticed, and we can prevail against him, and take our revenge on him." ¹¹But the Lord is with me like a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble, and they will not prevail. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten. ¹²O Lord of hosts, you test the righteous, you see the heart and the mind; let me see your retribution upon them, for to you I have committed my cause. ¹³Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hands of evildoers.

PSALM 69:7-10 [11-15] 16-18 BCP

Read by Pastor Daniel Akec in English

- ⁷Surely, for your sake I have suffered reproach,
and shame has covered my face.
⁸I have become a stranger to my own kindred,
an alien to my mother's children.
⁹Zeal for your house has eaten me up;
the scorn of those who scorn you has fallen upon me.
¹⁰I humbled myself with fasting,
but that was turned to my reproach.
¹¹I put on sack-cloth also,
and became a byword among them.
¹²Those who sit at the gate murmur against me,
and the drunkards make songs about me.
¹³But as for me, this is my prayer to you, at the time you have set, O Lord:
"In your great mercy, O God, answer me with your unfailing help.
¹⁴Save me from the mire; do not let me sink;
let me be rescued from those who hate me and out of the deep waters.
¹⁵Let not the torrent of waters wash over me, neither let the deep swallow me up;
do not let the Pit shut its mouth upon me.
¹⁶Answer me, O Lord, for your love is kind;
in your great compassion, turn to me.
¹⁷Hide not your face from your servant;
be swift and answer me, for I am in distress.

¹⁸Draw near to me and redeem me;
because of my enemies deliver me.

SECOND READING:

Romans 6:1b-11

Read by Pastor Ayad Samuel in the Jieng language of South Sudan (Dinka)

^{1b}Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? ²By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? ³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For whoever has died is freed from sin. ⁸But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Gospel

Matthew 10:24-39

Read by Gatdaet Gatnog Machar in English and his wife, Sarah David, in Arabic

[Jesus said to the Twelve:] ²⁴“A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; ²⁵it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

²⁶“So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. ²⁷What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. ²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰And even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

³²“Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; ³³but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

³⁴“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father,

and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

³⁶and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

The gospel of the Lord.

Prayer of Remembrance

A candle is lit, a bell is tolled and silence is kept during the reading of the names.

Immanuel, God with us. You call us to take up our crosses and follow you. You call us to a boldness and a courage that so often we feel is beyond us. Yet, while we know that in these times discipleship is not easy, you continue to love us in our faltering and encourage us to be unwavering in our witness to your love in this world through our thoughts, words and deeds, especially as we stand against oppression, racism, violence, the separation of families and brutality of all forms. We lift up in this moment all whom hate has cast down. We especially remember today: Naimo, Obama, Alan Kurdi, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Sandra Bland, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Trayvon Martin, David McAtee, Tamir Rice, Breonna Taylor, the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, Cynthia Hurd, the Rev. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Tywanza Sanders, Ethel Lance, Susie Jackson, DePayne Middleton, the Rev. Daniel Simmons, Myra Thomson, the 35,000-and-rising refugees and migrants who have died trying to reach Europe, and the countless more who have died in deserts, on freeways, in trucks, in detention facilities, at the hands of torturers, and alone on their way to find shelter. We pray now for people of African descent, once enslaved in the United States, and for the generations who follow them today who suffer the injustice of enslavement through mass incarceration.

(silence is kept)

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Intro: Ayad Samuel, Daniel Akec, St. Andrew's United Church of Cairo, St. Andrew's Refugee Services.

Closing prayer: Steve Saari (George Floyd Memorial, Minneapolis, Minn.), Sunday Saari (protest at Minnesota State Capitol), St. Andrew's Refugee Services (Naimo), Shutterstock (refugee images).

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Following are brief introductions to the wonderful individuals who shared their gifts in our service today. We invite you to come by St. Andrew's (when we are open once again) and get to know them better. We give thanks for their work and ministry!

Pastor Ayad Samuel (New Testament) came to Cairo from Sudan in 1994. He has a lovely wife named Ebtehaj Elonsi (Baya) and a daughter, Ayen. He began learning English at the Nile Union Academy. He first came to St. Andrew's in 1998 to pray in English. His congregation prays in the Jieng language (Dinka) to "help the new generation," which was started in 1999. He began working as the St. Andrew's sacristan in 2000, and on Aug. 26, 2016, he was ordained by the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan and Sudan. If you have a question about St. Andrew's, ask Ayad—he can tell you it all.

Amira Abdulgader (musician) came to Egypt from Sudan in May 2017. She and her husband, Lee, a teacher with StARS, have just celebrated their one-year wedding anniversary. She began as the St. Andrew's United Church of Cairo administrative assistant, hired by Pastor Kirsten, but then received a promotion (to our joy and loss) to the finance team at StARS. She is amazing at finance and also is an awesome cook as well as guitar player. Fun fact: She just began playing guitar this year. We hope she remembers us when she is famous. She attended Pastor Daniel's congregation at St. Andrew's and now can usually be found on Fridays at Maadi Community Church.

Pastor Bedasa Chefe (Old Testament) is originally from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and is lead pastor for the Ethiopian Evangelical Church, which meets at St. Andrew's. Before he became a pastor, he studied national telecommunications and information administration. He studied theology at Victory Bible College. Bedasa has a beautiful wife and daughter who both live in the United States whom he hopes to join as soon as he can.

Pastor Daniel Akec (psalm) is from Kenya and is the senior pastor of the Christ Nation Church, which meets at St. Andrew's. He has lived in Egypt since 1986. He writes that he was born again in 1992, worked as a Sunday school teacher for five years, then in youth ministry for five years and has been a pastor for ten years. His favorite Bible verses are Acts 2:38 and Proverbs 11:30.

Gatdaet Gatnog Machar (Gospel), also from Sudan, began his studies at the American University in Cairo in 2014. He has worked for StARS for several years and currently is in charge of the huge job of the management of our property downtown, working closely with the HR supervisor. He and his wife, Sara David (who read our Gospel in Arabic this morning), are both from South Sudan. Sara comes to Cairo by way of Ethiopia, then Khartoum, Gatdaet by way of Bentiu, South Sudan, then Khartoum. They have two beautiful children; their second, whose name means "blessing," was born on April 29. They are part of Pastor Daniel's Christ Nation Church, and Gatdaet is studying to one day become a pastor himself.

Steve and Sunday Saari (closing song): Steve is Pastor Christie's husband and, as teacher and musician by trade, works for both the church and StARS. Sunday, Pastor Christie's youngest daughter, is currently a student at Carnegie Mellon University in the musical theater program. They'd like to say how much they love and miss everyone at church and can't wait until the day we are all back together again.

Resources

If you'd like to read more or get involved, here are a few (of the many) places to start:

<http://www.refugeesthrive.org>

<https://www.elca.org/emanuelnine>

<http://stars-egypt.org>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/19/us-modern-slavery-report-global-slavery-index>

<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/teaching-about-refugees.html>