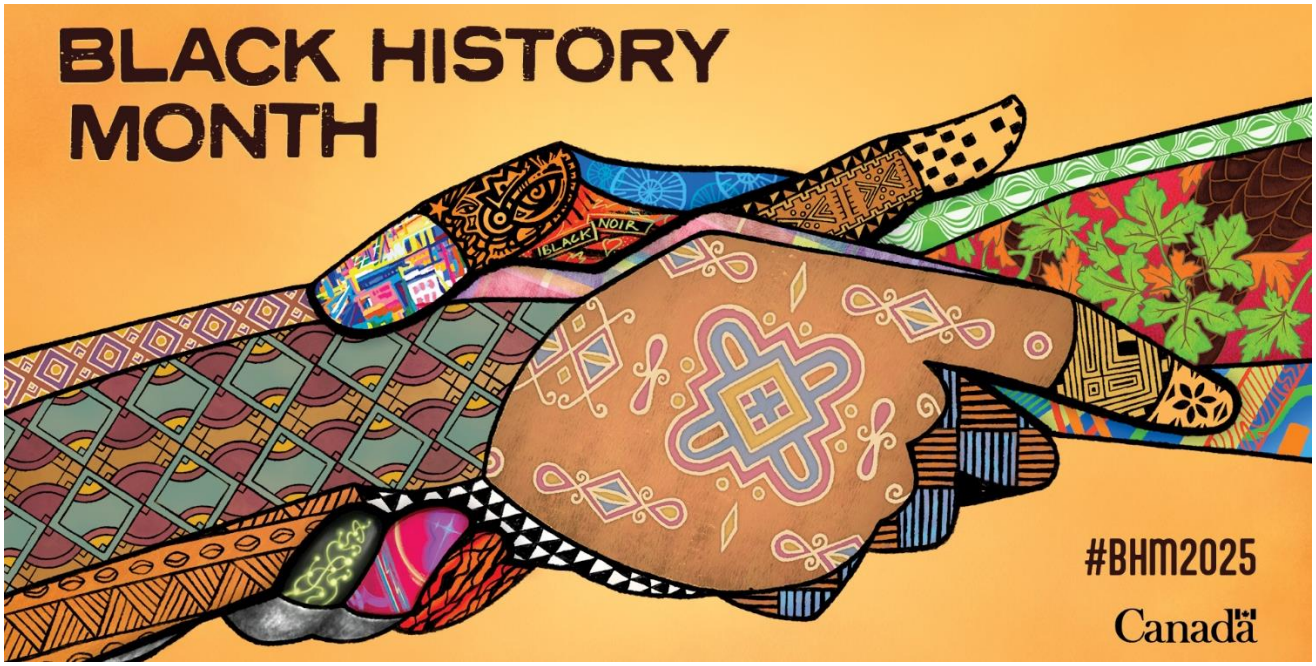
Music Notes for Today's Service



At today's service, the music that will be performed and mostly sung speaks not only to the deep stylistic range of Black music but also how Black composers from across the diaspora have contributed to the repertoire of works that accompany and speak to the liturgical power within the Anglican mass.

Prelude and Postlude

It begins and ends today with selections from the four volumes of the ***King of Kings*** series edited by James Abbington that chronicle the sacred organ works of Black composers such as Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Florence Price and George Walker.

Introit

'**Come to Me, Ye Who Are Hard Oppressed**,' today's Introit, was composed by Ontario born R. Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943) who, in addition to composing, was an organist, pianist, choral director and educator.

Lift Every Voice and Sing has been lauded as the Black National Anthem for over a century now. It was composed at the turn of the 20th century. The lyrics are by James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938) and the music by J. Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954). It is a hymn of resilience and triumph, interpreted by artists as diverse as Charles Lloyd, Melba Moore, the Boys Choir of Harlem, Max Roach, Ray Charles and Beyoncé.

Service Music

The ***New Plainsong Mass*** of Dr. David Hurd (1950-) provides the settings for the Gloria, Sanctus, Benedictus and Angus Dei. Like Dett, Hurd is, in addition to being a composer, an organist, choral director, educator. He currently serves as the Director of Music at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin (Manhattan) in New York. He was Professor of Sacred Music and Director of Chapel Music at the General Theological Seminary, Chelsea, New York City, for 39 years.

Today's ***Alleluia*** was written by the Zimbabwean musician Abraham Dumisani Maraire (1944-1999) and the Amen after the Great Thanksgiving was written by the South African composer Stephen Cuthbert Molefe (1917-1987).

Offertory

'In Christ There is No East nor West,' was written by the English writer John Oxenham, the *nom de plume* of William Arthur Dunkerley (1852-1941), and is set to a tune adapted from a spiritual by Harry Burleigh. Its vision of unity that transcends racial lines has a deep resonance for today's service.

Communion Hymns

The Communion Hymns are **'Let Us Break Bread Together'** and **'There's a Balm in Gilead'**. The former is believed to have its origins in West Africa and was also one of the hymns of the Underground Railroad; the song's title served as a code that signified one's intention to escape to freedom. The origins of the latter developed from a traditional chorus which was popularized when Washington Glass added its famous chorus to his 'The Sinner's Cure.'

The Communion Anthem is **'Nasadiki,'** a piece of unknown origin from Kenya that the musician, composer, arranger and the one-time Director of the Muungano National Choir Boniface Mganga (1954-2011) adapted for his *Missa Luba: An African Mass*.

Towards the End of the Service

The service concludes with the famous Caribbean hymn '**The Right Hand of God,**' with lyrics by Patrick Prescod (1932-2013) of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines added to the music for 'La Mano De Dios' by Jamaican composer Noel Dexter (1938-2019) for the first gathering of the Caribbean Conference of Churches in 1973."

Text written by Robert Gilbert