

**2021 Michigan Annual Conference**  
**Opening Worship**  
**Rev. Dr. Cynthia Wilson, preaching**  
**June 5, 2021**

**Musicians – Monya Logan, Ibrahim Jones, Kali Douglas, Alvin Waddles**  
**Vocalists – Felicia Patton, Lisa Paik, Anthony Banks, Yeo Jin Yun, Calebria Webb, Rev. Brittney**  
**Stephan, Dorian Dillard, Denzel Douglas**  
**Liturgist – Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai & Rev. Eric Mulanda**

CENTERING MUSIC - REV. DR. CYNTHIA WILSON & BAND

*By The Waters of Babylon - African American Spiritual*

MALE VOICE OF GOD - REV. ERIC MULANDA AND BAND

Listen up people! Open your mouths and sing the story,  
Those of you who are far from home, immigrants, exiles, victims of oppression,  
those of you gathered here who need help, compassion,  
Some of you have come through the water, some through the flood,  
Yet I bid you come over a way that with tears has been watered.

*Sung: Then the wicked carried us away to captivity, required of us a song.  
How can we sing our Lord's song in a strange land?*

FEMALE VOICE OF GOD - REV. KENNETH BIGHAM-TSAI

Listen up people! Open your mouths and sing the story,  
sing the songs that your ancestors taught you!  
Do not hide the love of my law.  
Sing of my power and my might, tell them of my strength.  
Sing to them the story of how I rescued you from slavery;  
Tell them how I was your bridge over troubled water;  
You must be storytellers and story listeners too!

*Sung: So let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart  
Be acceptable in thy sight, O Christ.*

INVOCATION - REV. BRITTNEY STEPHAN

As we begin our time of prayer, I invite you to breathe deeply.  
Breath in the love of God and exhale all tension and worry.  
In these times, in all times, come together as one.

One: Be in control Lord...  
**ALL: Be in control.**  
One: Be in control.  
**ALL: We are still learning to trust in you Jesus.**  
One: We are still learning to trust in you God.  
**ALL: Be in control.**  
One: Be in control.  
**ALL: Be in control of your world!**

INVOCATION - REV. ERIC MULANDA AND BAND

"You are my people, I Am your God.  
You are my people, I Am your God,  
You are my people, close to my heart.  
Come, my people; Be glad!  
Sing praises!  
You are my people, close to my heart.  
With glad hearts, join together in singing praise with ALL Creation!

**ALL!** So let the words of my mouth,  
and the meditations of my heart  
Be acceptable in thy sight, O Christ.

INVOCATION - REV. KENNETHA BIGHAM-TSAI

You are our Strong Deliverer,  
You are our Strength and Shield,  
You are our Great Jehovah!  
Without a doubt, our help comes from you O Christ!!  
That's the Good News!  
**ASHE'!**

INVOCATION - REV. ERIC MULANDA AND BAND

In these past years, we have heard many say that their voices do not count.  
God, teach us how to refrain from passive spirits.  
Remind us that your kin-dom has not yet come and OUR work on this earth continues.  
YOU are called to work and pray without ceasing; to work for justice and peace.  
There is yet much work to do, SO move forward trusting the work of the Holy Spirit within you!

INVOCATION - REV. KENNETHA BIGHAM-TSAI

Continue to sing of peace!  
Continue to fight for the right!  
Continue to speak truth to power!  
Continue to stand on the side of the poor and the oppressed!  
Continue to build your world, our world, this creation into a place of spiritual splendor, courage  
and unity!

MOMENT OF SILENCE

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION - REV. BRITTNEY STEPHAN

Gracious God, as your scriptures are read  
and your Word proclaimed, send your Holy Spirit  
to open our hearts and minds that we may know  
your deep, flowing mystery and gentle, life-giving grace.  
Help us to hear your summons, to follow, and to serve  
in your name. Amen.

RESPONSE TO PRAYER - ENSEMBLE

Why We Sing

**Verse 1:**

*Someone asked the question  
Why do we sing  
When we lift our hands to Jesus*

*What do we really mean  
Someone may be wond'ring  
When we sing our song  
At times we may be crying  
And nothing's even wrong*

**Chorus:**

*I sing because I'm happy  
I sing because I'm free  
His eye is on the sparrow  
That's the reason why I sing  
Glory hallelujah  
That's the reason why I sing*

**Verse 2:**

*When the song is over  
We've all said amen  
In your heart just keep on singing  
And the song will never end  
And if somebody asks you  
Was it just a show  
Lift your hands and be a witness  
And tell the whole world no*

**Verse 3:**

*And when we cross that river  
To study war no more  
We will sing our songs to Jesus  
The One whom we adore*

PSALM 137 1-4 (NRSV) - REV. ERIC MULANDA

<sup>1</sup> By the rivers of Babylon— there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion.<sup>2</sup> On the willows there we hung up our harps.<sup>3</sup> For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"<sup>4</sup> How could we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

PSALM 137 1-4 - RESPONSE - ENSEMBLE

LEADER: This is the word of life!

**ALL: Thanks be to God!**

MUSIC: ACCEPTABLE - ENSEMBLE

*Let the words of my mouth,  
and the meditations of my heart  
Be acceptable in thy sight.  
Let the words of my mouth,  
and the meditations of my heart  
Be acceptable Lord to Thee.*

**Chorus:**

*Here I am Lord, bowing at your feet Lord.  
My soul looks up to Thee.  
Make my thoughts Lord,  
And my words Lord acceptable to Thee.*

HOMILY - NO LONGER STRANGERS - REV. DR. CYNTHIA WILSON

Remembering Zion, City of God  
Remember how it was tough adjusting to 2021?  
They found themselves in Babylon  
Babylon will silence your soul  
How can we sing when we can't even breath?  
Babylon is known for rivers  
Rivers create a soul connection  
Sings "Down by the Riverside"  
Once they found themselves on American soil, they were no longer strangers  
Forced into slave ships, violently brought to this land  
Their songs had been lost in the waters of the middle passage  
They are reminded, "Don't forget Zion"  
Whose songs must they remember? Who's story?  
The negro spiritual was the first music genre born on American soil  
What was that sound  
In the words of Fredrick Douglas...  
It was social commentary, encrypted codes.  
They began to teach each other, their specific songs  
Sings, "Over my head, I hear music"  
Sings, "We are here, Jesus"  
How God had protected them from oppressive systems  
Sings "This land is my land"  
We literally watched the dumbing down of American moral leanings  
This has become a strange land, of social distancing,  
This land calls for us to be locked out, from those shut in  
Some of us are angry that we continue to be confined, disrupted,  
We have forgotten how to cry out to God, to sing  
We have become silent  
Do we even remember what worship was?  
Reclaim our spaces  
There are times you just don't feel like blessing the Lord  
This is just the time to reach into our souls, reclaim our song  
Even in the valley of the shadow of death  
I came from Nashville. Folks know how to sing there.  
I came to Michigan, because you have a rich history of song  
I hope you begin to sing again. So the sick are healed.  
I hope you sing until the power of the Holy Ghost comes down  
How are you all singing?  
You cannot let trouble interrupt your prayers!

RESPONSE TO THE WORD - ENSEMBLE

*The Lord bless you and keep you  
Make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you  
The Lord turn His face toward you  
And give you peace  
Amen, Amen, Amen,*