

FEBRUARY 2025



# Foundry Forge

Inspiration and Information for the Weeks Ahead

JOIN OUR JOURNEY TO RACIAL JUSTICE

## Civil Rights Pilgrimage in June

PAULA BLAIR

Following the beauty of Advent, Christmas and New Year's, we move to the cadence of Black History Month. We've returned to our work acknowledging the sins of history and the anxiety accompanying a change in presidential leadership – especially leadership that rejects the gains of more than 50 years of struggle to establish a level playing field for Black people in America.

As three churches bound together historically by slavery and its ill effects, Foundry UMC, John Wesley AME Zion, and Asbury UMC have reconnected to share our historical beginnings and cultivate authentic relationship. In recent years, we have shared worship services, pulpit exchanges, and book studies, such as exploration of the wisdom of the Black mystic, Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman.

This year we elevate our commitment to learning and advocacy for racial justice by joining together for a six-day pilgrimage to sites in Atlanta and Alabama, led by the three churches' pastors. Ginger Gaines-Cirelli (Foundry), Christopher Zacharias (John Wesley AME Zion), and Ianther Mills (Asbury) will accompany 50 participants June 16–21, 2025. The shared experience of visiting historic civil rights sites will be educational, challenging, and transformative, reminding us of the realities of past sins and inspiring us to collaborate and advocate for the marginalized.

Arranged through MARS Tours, this initiative — the JAF Civil Rights Pilgrimage — involves a learning journey

through churches, museums, and other civil rights sites, starting in Atlanta at the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historical Park, proceeding through Birmingham, Montgomery, and Selma, Alabama, and ending with a walk across Selma's Edmond Pettus Bridge, site of Bloody Sunday, where the late Rep. John Lewis and others suffered during their nonviolent protest for voting rights in 1965.

One key objective of the JAF planning committee is to create a powerful intergenerational experience that energizes continuing advocacy and action by participants and the congregations. Grant funds have been secured to reduce trip costs for seniors (65+) and youth (14–21). The exact reduction will be announced in late April, once a count of registrants who have made a deposit can be made. Youth are strongly encouraged to join this journey to hear how the era's stories and struggles changed the course of history.

At a time when the history and contributions of Black citizens are threatened with erasure, this is a unique chance to gain a deeper understanding of the journey to racial justice by sharing this tour with others of faith.

Registration is open. Reserve your spot and find more details at this link [foundryumc.org/civil-rights-pilgrimage](https://foundryumc.org/civil-rights-pilgrimage). Foundry's JAF Planning Committee members may be reached at [civilrightstour@foundryumc.org](mailto:civilrightstour@foundryumc.org)

# Reflecting and Connecting

SHAWN STEFFY

Last year, I was grateful to contribute to Foundry's Lenten devotional for the first time.

Reflecting on God's love as described in Romans 8:38-39, we explored how conviction in God's unbreakable connection with each one of us shapes our faith and our relationships. Writing my devotional invited me to pause and consider how God's promises sustain and guide us, even when we have – or despite – our doubts. I felt humbled to be part of a collection of reflections that brought together so many diverse voices, each sharing a unique perspective on faith.

This year's theme, **Grounded in Grace**, feels especially relevant. Psalm 91:1-2 reminds us that God is our refuge, a place of safety, and strength. Life often presents challenges – especially in these times – that leave us feeling unsafe, uncertain, or scared. Lent offers an opportunity to reconnect, to plant ourselves firmly in the rich soil of God's grace and grow toward the light of Jesus. Our theme reminds us of God's steady, nurturing presence, which holds us even when we struggle to feel it.

Contributing to the devotional is more than a creative exercise. To borrow a John Wesley's theme, it's a moment to turn our faith into works. What anchors you during life's storms? How does the assurance of God's presence and grace encourage you to take risks, embrace change, or grow in love? Whether your answer takes the form of a personal story, a poem, or a piece of art, your expression of faith will inspire and comfort others on their faith journeys.

Writing for the devotional allows you to connect with God and the Foundry community. For me, it's a chance to embrace Foundry more fully, just as it embraces me. And, if I'm being honest, it was also



an opportunity to do something beyond attending the 9:00 am Sunday service. For all of us, it's a chance to share how grace has shaped our lives and offer encouragement to those who read our words or experience our art. At the very least, it provides an opportunity to slow down, reflect, and grow spiritually.

*Shawn grew up at the Jersey Shore and came to DC to attend American University... and never left. He's been attending Foundry since 2002 and was drawn to Foundry's embrace of all people and commitment to social justice. Shawn lives in the U St neighborhood with his husband of 18 years and pup, Jomo.*

## Register to Get Your Lenten Devotional!

To get a print copy, or a daily email with each day's devotional, you need to register for it at [this link](#).

A \$5 donation is requested for one copy; there's a lower per-devotional cost for 10 or more.

Print copies will be available to those who have registered for them on Sunday, March 2. Lent begins the following Wednesday, March 5.

# Foundry's Stephen Ministry

JOSIANE BLACKMAN

Stephen Ministry is part of Foundry's Care Ministry. However, unlike many of the diverse short-term forms of support provided by the care ministry, Stephen Ministers are qualified to engage in longer-term relationships with individuals experiencing stressful life events.

To prepare for this Christ-centered ministry of presence, Stephen Ministers initially receive 50 hours of training, a mixture of lectures, videos, group discussions, skill practice, and spiritual growth. At the conclusion of training, the Stephen Ministers are commissioned. Then, for the duration of their service, they receive support through supervision and continuing education.

This past June, four Stephen Ministers were commissioned at Foundry. Of these, two are ready to serve, Barbara Cambridge and Audrey Hallett. They are now able to provide one-on-one spiritual and emotional care to women\* experiencing a difficult time, due to a wide range of life situations, such as chronic or terminal illness, divorce, grief, job loss, or relocation, to name a few. As part of this completely confidential relationship, Audrey and Barbara will provide, through a weekly visit with their care receiver, compassionate listening in a safe environment.

You may know someone who has been struggling with life's challenges. Our Stephen Minister can provide them with the focused care they need to make it through their crisis. If you would like to get help for a loved one, or even for yourself, please contact Pastor Ben Roberts, and he will connect you with our referrals coordinator.

Do you feel called to this type of ministry? Are you curious to know more? I invite you to visit our information table in the Commons during the month of February, or e-mail Josiane Blackman at [Josiane.blackman@gmail.com](mailto:Josiane.blackman@gmail.com).

*\*Because care receivers are matched with same-gender Stephen Ministers, at this time, we are not able to offer this ministry to men.*

# Special Music for Black History Month

STANLEY THURSTON

Join us each Sunday this month to enjoy Music and Worship Arts offerings from our Black Composers Series. We will explore the riches of this history, as it connects with our worship. Don't miss any of our featured artists:

## FEBRUARY 2

**At the 9 am service, we will hear the music of Nolan Williams, Jr.**, music editor of the *African American Heritage Hymnal*, award-winning composer and lyricist, playwright, filmmaker, musicologist and producer. He attended St. Johns College High School, graduated from Oberlin College, and holds a Master of Divinity degree from Howard University.

**And at the 11:15 am service, we will enjoy the music of composer & arranger Cedric Dent**, a Detroit native who went south after college to join "a motley crew of singers," who became the ten-time Grammy-winning group TAKE 6. We will hear his arrangement of *He's Got the Whole World in His Hands* in our worship service. Dent also won an individual Grammy for his musical arrangements in **Handel's Messiah: A Soulful Celebration**.

## FEBRUARY 9

**Our featured composer at the 11:15 am service is Adolphus Hailstork**, born and raised in New York State, and a graduate of Howard University, whose *Fanfare on Amazing Grace* was performed by the United States Marine Band at the inauguration of U.S. President Joseph Biden Jr. and Vice President Kamala Harris in 2021. We will hear his adaptation of *The Cloths of Heaven*, with text by William Butler Yeats.

## FEBRUARY 16

**Our featured artist at the 9 am service is Moses Hogan**, a New Orleans native who is considered one of the greatest choral arrangers of Negro Spirituals. A graduate of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and a highly acclaimed concert pianist, he also studied at the Juilliard School of Music and Louisiana State University.

**And at the 11:15 am service, we will enjoy the work of Diedre Robinson**, a native of Chicago, Illinois, who, after receiving the Bachelor of Arts degree in music theory and composition from the University of Memphis, has written compositions for piano, voice, wind ensemble, chorus, and string orchestra.

## FEBRUARY 23

**At the 9 am service, we will hear the music of Richard Smallwood**, born in Atlanta, raised in Washington, DC, a renowned gospel recording artist who formed the Grammy-winning Richard Smallwood Singers. He was educated at Howard University, where he founded its first Gospel Choir, and in 2006, was inducted into Gospel Music Hall of Fame.

**The 11:15am service will include music using the words of Paul Laurence Dunbar, the first nationally recognized Black American poet and novelist.**

Born in Dayton, Ohio, he spent much of his short life in Washington, DC where he attended Howard University and worked at the Library of Congress. His poem "Sympathy" is the source of the famous line, "I know why the caged bird sings." This service will also feature **music by composer & arranger Stacey V. Gibbs**, known for his ability to infuse new energy into familiar Spirituals, while preserving their unique power. His arrangement of *Way Over in Beulah Lan'* was performed at the 2013 Inaugural Service for President Barack Obama. We will hear his arrangement of *Get Away, Jordan* in our worship service.

# Foundry Forward

FEBRUARY 2025 ACTION ITEMS

Sunday, February 2

## Continue to Remember!

Drawing strength and wisdom from remembering, today Pastor Ginger reminds us that "The Only Way is Through." Drawing on texts from the first chapter of Jeremiah, verses 4-10, as well as 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13 and Luke 4: 21-30, we are reminded that working our way through hard times can teach us valuable lessons, and leave us better than before. Our featured black composers today are Nolan Williams Jr. and Cedric Dent.

## Sign Up for ASP!

Registration for our ASP Mission Trip opens TODAY! This year's trip will take place June 21st-29th and is open to all youth who will have completed 9th, 10th, 11th or 12th grade by June. For more information, please contact the Director of Family Ministries

Tuesday, February 4

## Register to Receive 2025 Lenten Devotional!

Register today if you wish to receive this year's Lenten Devotional in print – or delivered each day to your personal email. Here's the link to do either, or both <https://foundryumc.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2641238>.

Wednesday, February 5

## Valentine Cookies!

Parents and family members: Help us make sure your Foundry student or service member gets a Valentine's cookie box this year. **Today is the deadline** to give us their names and mailing addresses. We must receive that information for all box recipients, **even if they have received a box in the past**. Submit that information at [foundryumc.org/cookies](https://foundryumc.org/cookies). Questions? Contact Shelley Jessee at [valentinecookies@foundryumc.org](mailto:valentinecookies@foundryumc.org)

Sunday, February 9

## Don't Quit Before the Miracle!

Pastor Ginger preaches on that topic today, using texts from 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11 and Luke 5: 1-11. Harriet Tubman reminded us to "Remember that you are called and anointed, God-led and empowered to do hard things...as you are faithful, wondrous things will happen; Remember our ancestor Paul (Saul), remember our ancestor Simon (Peter), who began feeling unable and unworthy, but became the leader of the apostles and many fish/people were gathered in. When things are messy and hard and you don't know how to get through, remember God's presence and guidance and provision for you." Our special music today is composed by Adolphus Hailstork.

## Bring Valentine's Cookie Contributions!

Valentine cookies have been mailed to Foundry's college-aged students and service members for nearly 60 years! Help us continue to fulfill this Baptismal promise by baking cookies and treats and bringing them to Community Commons between services TODAY. Don't bake? Candy and postage donations are also appreciated. **Questions? Contact Shelley Jessee at [valentinecookies@foundryumc.org](mailto:valentinecookies@foundryumc.org)**

## Discipleship Idea Session

We are gathering today at 12:30 to brainstorm topics for our next year's classes and events. Bring your best ideas to help shape our community's discipleship journey. Lunch will be provided, so come hungry and ready to collaborate. Let's work together to create an impactful year of learning and growth! Register at [foundryumc.org/ideation-meeting](https://foundryumc.org/ideation-meeting)

Sunday, February 16

## Confirmation Classes Begin!

We are excited to begin Confirmation class today, from 10:10 to 11:30 a.m. in the Youth Room. This 15-week course invites youth to explore their Methodist faith and traditions in a supportive and communal learning environment. Confirm your youth's participation by contacting Director of Family Ministries Natalie Harvey at [nharvey@foundryumc.org](mailto:nharvey@foundryumc.org). We look forward to growing together in faith! And don't miss our worship services at 9 and 11:15 this morning: Natalie will be preaching! Our featured black composer/arrangers today are Moses Hogan and Diedre Robinson.

Friday, February 21 – Sunday, February 23

## Women's Retreat: Awakening!

Foundry's Annual Women's Retreat will be held this weekend at Pecometh's Riverview Retreat Center. Rev. Dr. Lydia Muñoz is our keynote speaker on the topic **The Awareness of God's Presence in Us!** Rev. Dr. Munoz served as a Foundry guest preacher during the 2022 Lenten Season. More information at [foundryumc.org/womens-retreat](https://foundryumc.org/womens-retreat)

Friday, February 21

## Ignite!

Today is the last day to register for the Ignite Youth Conference, happening March 7-9 in Ocean City, MD! This is an incredible opportunity for our youth in grades 6th-12th, to grow in faith and connect with one another. Register online at [igniteforyouth.com](https://igniteforyouth.com). Once registered, please let us know so we can finalize housing and transportation plans. For more details, reach out to the Director of Family Ministries, [nharvey@foundryumc.org](mailto:nharvey@foundryumc.org)

Sunday, February 23

## The Cure for Contagion

Hatred is a disease in the human spirit that leads to violence. Pastor Ginger preaches about the way in which hatred's antidote is love – of the bravest kind, of the strongest kind, the love that God has for us and for all.

Howard Thurman and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. insisted that Jesus' teachings of love in Jesus were quite simple at their core but altogether radical in their socio-ethical implications. "The religion of Jesus," wrote Thurman, "makes the love-ethic central." The love-ethic demands that we resist the near-irresistible and altogether natural tendency to become angry, to hate, to retaliate, or to exact revenge; it also entreats us to love our enemies.

Today's featured black composers and musicians are Richard Smallwood, Poet Paul Laurence Dunbar and Stacey V. Gibbs.

Tuesday, February 25

## Foundry Board Meeting

Foundry's Board convenes its monthly meeting at 7 pm. Interested Foundry members can attend, using [this Zoom link](#).

To print a copy of this issue of the Forge, go to [foundryumc.org/forge](https://foundryumc.org/forge).

Share your thoughts and ideas by emailing [ForgeNewsletter@foundryumc.org](mailto:ForgeNewsletter@foundryumc.org).