



Sankofa Dialogue/Litany (r)

L: God has created all people;

C: God be praised for all races, complexions, customs, and cultures!

L: We celebrate people of African Descent across the globe and in our land.

C: They are a mighty presence in the history of our Commonwealth
and in the life of our cities and towns!

L: We know the Church has been a blessed mixture of peoples from its origins—Jews
and Gentiles, slave and free;

C: One of the oldest churches in Christendom is the Coptic Church of Ethiopia.

L: The history of African Descent peoples tells of pervasive injustice and harm:
centuries of the Atlantic slave trade, millions of victims in our nation alone.

C: “The Almighty has no attribute which can take sides with us in [this practice of slavery].”
wrote Thomas Jefferson.¹

L: This sad history continued in segregated communities, schools, churches, South and
North.

C: “I am the American heartbreak—/Rock on which Freedom/ Stumps its toe—/ The
great mistake/that Jamestown / Made long ago.”²

L: Yet out of these sufferings God kept a people vital, with resistance leaders, significant
local cultures, beautiful music, huge commitment to education, prophetic social
conscience.

C: Thanks be to God, and so we may “lift every voice and sing.”

L: The history of people of African Descent is rich, complex, varied and close to home.
We Lutherans must remember before God Jehu Jones, Jr. (1785-1852):

C: The first African Descent Lutheran pastor founded one of the first African-American
Lutheran churches;

L: Add Rosa Young (1890-1971):

C: Born of slaves, she dedicated herself to founding Lutheran schools in the poor, rural South and helped birth even a college;

L: Let us include the Rev. Drs. Albert Pero, Kevin Dudley, Cheryl Pero, Beverly Wallace, James Echols, James Thomas, Nelson Strobert;

C: These contemporary Lutheran African Descent theologians and educators are helping to form our Church's future leaders!

L: Let the congregation recall and find and insert the names of African Descent liberators and freedom fighters:

C: **James Farmer, of Spotsylvania County, one of the original Freedom Riders, later a professor in civil rights history at the University of Mary Washington**

L: Let the congregation research and name some local heroes of African Descent:

C: **Dr. Shelley Fields, first team leader of the Virginia Synod African American Outreach Team**

[To generate local input for this section, consider, for example:

Jamestown 1619, the first African slaves arrive

What does HBCU stand for and which ones are in Virginia?

Where's the oldest African American museum in the country?

Who is Anne Spencer and where's her garden?

Where is Pocahontas Island and why significant to Af-Am history?

Who is Booker T. Washington and what's his Virginia connection?

Where is Gillfield Baptist Church, the 2nd oldest African American Baptist churches in the U.S.?

What Pulitzer Prize writer lives and teaches in central Virginia?

Which Freedom Rider lived in Spotsylvania County and taught at a nearby college?]

L: For strong examples of faith like

C: **Rev. Lawrence Davies of Fredericksburg, pastor, civil rights leader, former mayor**

L: And so we have named people of African Descent who influenced our world

C: so we may remember with thanksgiving.

L: We celebrate the African Descent lives that have come and will come

C: as a glorious part of God's creative whole.

L: We look and long for the day when all of God's people can live together in peace.

C: May God bring it to pass! Amen!

¹Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 1785

²Langston Hughes, "American Heartbreak," 1951