

It's so good to be with you - in service to our democracy.

We come together with different images of the holy, of what God is or what God is not, but the beauty of our diversity mustn't hinder us from coming together in service to a purpose that is greater than any one of our lives.

It is in this spirit that I invite you into a space of prayer.

And we begin our prayer with gratitude -

Gratitude for the opportunity to gather and exercise our freedom.

Gratitude for all who came before, carving the space that we now inhabit -

the space that asks us to raise our own voices, to listen to our own conscience, and to direct our nation as our will decides.

I hold in my heart all the women who came before - first, the women I know as my senior colleagues in ministry,

Those who remind me in solemn moments, that they - with their bravery and through their struggle - carved my path.

We hold in our hearts all the women and men who walked arm in arm, decided that the vote should not be reserved for the few - but offered to the many - our suffragists, our civil rights activists -

We hold in our hearts all the children whose lives will follow our own - both here and abroad, with names like Sue, John, Mary, or Malala Yousafzai - who either will, or won't know the free and responsible

exercise of freedom - who either will or won't know the privilege of conscience, the privilege of voice.

May we, as we gather today, be vigilant in our witness, aware that our freedoms are not common - but profound.

My faith tells me that, amidst our diversity - we are held by a unity, that we are all children of God, inherently worthy and deserving of respect. My faith tells me this, and so does my nation - when it invites us to exercise our freedom for the good we understand.

Amen and May it be so.