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UNION  
CHAPEL  
1870-2020

*150 years of worship*

Interdenominational

“as a place of worship for the summer community”

Union Chapel is listed in  
the National Register of Historic Places  
55 Narragansett Avenue, Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

[www.unionchapelmv.org](http://www.unionchapelmv.org)

508-338-7089 | [contact@unionchapelmv.org](mailto:contact@unionchapelmv.org)

*Dr. Valerie Smith*

July 4, 2021



*Dr. Valerie Smith*

Valerie Smith, a distinguished scholar of African American literature, is the 15th president of Swarthmore College, where her priorities have included attracting more low-income and first-generation students, supporting curricular innovation, increasing the diversity of the student body, and strengthening relationships between the College and the region. Her efforts during the largest campaign in the College's history generated unprecedented support for students and for transformative facilities projects that provide new opportunities for collaboration and community building.

A native of Brooklyn, New York, President Smith is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Council on Foreign Relations and serves on the boards of the American Council on Education, the Consortium on Financing Higher Education, Fulbright Canada, and the National Museum of the American Indian. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Bates College, she earned her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in English at the University of Virginia. Prior to her arrival at Swarthmore, she was a professor of English and African American Studies at UCLA, and the Woodrow Wilson Professor of Literature, founding director of the Center for African-American Studies, and the dean of the college at Princeton University. She is the author of more than 40 articles and three books on African-American literature and culture.

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## *Welcoming Our 2021 Season Guests*

- July 4 President Valerie Smith, Swarthmore College
- July 11 \*Rev. Susan Sparks, Madison Avenue Baptist Church, New York, New York
- July 18 Rev. Dr. Deforest Soaries, First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens,  
Somerset, New Jersey
- July 25 Rev. Dr. Cynthia Hale, Hope Christian Church, Decatur, Georgia
- August 1 Rev. Arthur Jones, St. Andrew United Methodist Church, Plano, Texas
- August 8 Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III, Trinity United Church of Christ, Chicago, Illinois
- August 15 Rev. Dr. Howard John Wesley, Alfred Street Baptist Church,  
Alexandria, Virginia
- August 22 Rev. Dr. Kevin R. Murriel, Cascade United Methodist Church,  
Atlanta, Georgia
- August 29 Dr. Scott W. Sunquist, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary,  
South Hamilton, Massachusetts
- September 5 Rev. Dr. Aliya F. Browne, Vice President of the Union Chapel Board of  
Trustees, Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

*All services will be streamed and available for watching on  
Facebook, YouTube and through our website [www.UnionChapelMV.org](http://www.UnionChapelMV.org)*

*\*denotes virtual visit, available for viewing from Union Chapel*

# Announcements

Today's floral arrangements on the altar are placed by the Trustees of Union Chapel in salute of all Veterans and Front Line workers of Marthas Vineyard.

*If you are interested in putting flowers in the Chapel, contact Heidi Bryan 214-549-7235/508-687-9725 or email [contact@unionchapelmv.org](mailto:contact@unionchapelmv.org).*

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## Celebrating 150 Years

Stop by the kiosk after service or visit [www.unionchapelmv.org](http://www.unionchapelmv.org) for commemorative items now available.

Ornaments

Hats

T-Shirts

Commemorative Posters

Credit cards accepted.

# Sunday Morning July 4, 2021

PRELUDE	<i>An American Tribute</i>	Robert J. Powell
INTROIT	<i>This is My Song</i>	words: Lloyd Stone music: Jean Sibelius
TRUSTEE GREETINGS		Richard Taylor
*INVOCATION	“God of hope, we have sensed your spirit walking with us as we open a new door in our lives, felt your urging when we were reluctant to say yes to a new adventure. Come among us today. Open our eyes to truth wherever it may be found. Allow us to hear the siren song of knowledge and understanding.”	
LORDS PRAYER		
*HYMN	#68 <i>Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing</i>	Nettleton
SCRIPTURE	2 Corinthians 8:7-15	
ANTHEM	<i>American Anthem</i>	Gene Scheer
	David Behnke, baritone	
PRAYER		
*OFFERTORY	<i>Walk Together, Children</i>	African American Spiritual (arr. Moses Hogan)
	Ava Brown, soprano	
*DOXOLOGY	#34 <i>Old 100th</i>	
SERMON	“ <i>This Generous Undertaking</i> ” Dr. Valerie Smith President, Swarthmore College	
*HYMN	#727 <i>America, The Beautiful</i>	Materna
*BENEDICTION		
POSTLUDE	<i>Toccata on “Great Day”</i>	Adolphus Hailstork

William D. Peek, Jr., Organist and Director of Music

\*Please stand if you are able.

# History of Union Chapel

In the early days of Oak Bluffs, visitors travelled by steamboat to Lake Anthony (Oak Bluffs Harbor) and the campground area surrounding a large tent that was the site for Methodist revivals. The worshippers in the “camp meetings” had become very concerned about the influx of summer visitors who spent their time at the beach, walking on Circuit Avenue, relaxing and having a good time. To them, camp meetings were to be serious, highly religious and separate from the worldly influences.

In a 1958 history editorial in the Vineyard Gazette, it was reported that the new community of the Oak Bluffs Land & Wharf Co. was being called “ungodly.” To further prove the disdain felt by the worshippers in the campgrounds, in 1867, the camp meeting organizers erected a seven-foot picket fence around the campground that closed each evening at 10:00 PM.

As the summer population grew, the developer (Oak Bluffs Land and Wharf Co.) realized that vacationers were lacking a place to worship, and contracted to build a church. Union Chapel was built in 1870 as a non-sectarian worship space in an area dominated by the Methodist summer camp meeting known as Wesleyan Grove.

The architect commissioned for the project was Samuel Freeman Pratt, a renowned local architect. The chapel was built in a beautiful octagonal shape on a small rise of land called Chapel Hill at the intersection of Circuit, Narragansett, and Samoset Avenues. Mr. Pratt is estimated to have designed twenty-two structures in the young town of Oak Bluffs including the gateway to the Wharf and the Seaview Hotel.

The chapel took one year to build, completing in 1871, seating 800 with a spire reaching an altitude of 96 feet, and a final construction cost of \$16,000. The chapel was open to its first service in August, 1871.

## Union Chapel Organ

We are delighted to welcome back the Union Chapel Organ with this morning’s prelude! Over the course of the last two years, the 1924 Austin organ has been completely rebuilt by the Spencer Organ Company of Waltham, Massachusetts, thanks to the generosity of many members of the Union Chapel community. The organ will be formally dedicated on the evening of August 4 with a recital by Alcee Chriss III, widely regarded as one of the leading young organists of our time.

## Our Soloists This Morning

**David Behnke, baritone**, is a graduate of the Master’s Degree Opera Program at Yale. He was a resident artist with the Tri Cities Opera Company and performed with music festivals across New England. After a career on Wall Street, he moved full time to Martha’s Vineyard in 2013. David has appeared with the Island Theater Workshop (Beast in Beauty and the Beast and Emile in South Pacific), has been an active recitalist performing opera, art song and Broadway, and has appeared as a frequent soloist with various Island organizations. He performs regularly with the Wicked Good Music Revue at the MV Playhouse and (pre-COVID) sang opera on Sunday nights at La Soffitta.

**Ava Brown, soprano**, is currently a senior at Oberlin Conservatory of Music majoring in Classical Voice. Ava has a large repertoire and performs classical, spirituals, and even jazz music. In 2019, Ava performed with the Chicago Summer Opera program as a cover for the role of Susanna in “The Marriage of Figaro;” she also performed in several opera scenes. In February 2019 she performed with the Indianapolis Opera in Concert under the direction of Maestro John Schmid. In 2018, Ava earned 1st place in the National Schmidt Competition and also received the American Choral Directors Association Award. Ava has won multiple gold medals and performed in competitions and concerts in the Midwest and East Coast. During Ava’s high school years, she trained in Classical Voice at Indiana University with Jane Dutton and at Butler University with Mary Anne Scott. Ava has participated in Boston University’s Tanglewood Institute, Boston Conservatory’s Vocal Intensive Program, and Butler University’s Intensive.

## Music Notes

This morning’s prelude is the first three movements of Robert J. Powell’s **An American Tribute: A Suite of Patriotic Songs**. Robert Powell (b. 1932, Benoit Mississippi) is a prolific composer of organ music and music for worship. He studied at the University of Louisiana and Union Theological Seminary and was Music Director and Organist at Christ Church in Greenville, SC, for thirty five years. Gene Scheer’s **American Anthem** was composed in 1998 and was first performed by the celebrated mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves for President Bill Clinton and Hilary Clinton at the Smithsonian Institution. The song has been widely performed, and a version recorded by Norah Jones was featured in Ken Burns’ documentary *The War*. The song’s lyrics were referenced and recited by President Joe Biden in his Inaugural Address on January 20, 2021. Moses Hogan (1957 – 2003) was a composer, conductor, and arranger of choral music. He was best known for his settings of African American spirituals. Born in New Orleans, Hogan graduated from Oberlin Conservatory of Music. **Walk Together Children** is from his “*Deep River Collection*” of spirituals arranged for voice and piano.