



National Park Service
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Birmingham Civil Rights
National Monument
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Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument

News Release

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National Park Service (NPS), St. Paul United Methodist Church (UMC), Scrollworks Music School, and Magic City Poetry Festival collaborate on FREE “Poetry in the Park” Event Saturday April 30 from 2-4pm

BIRMINGHAM, AL – [St. Paul United Methodist Church](#), a historic site critical to the civil rights movement and now a part of the [Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument](#) and the [Alabama African American Civil Rights Heritage Sites Consortium](#), will collaborate with NPS park rangers, a music education non-profit called [Scrollworks](#) Music School, and local Birmingham poets to deliver programming centered on civil rights history and the arts. The event is one of many launched by the [Magic City Poetry Festival](#) in honor of April being National Poetry Month. [Magic City Poetry Festival](#) is a non-profit founded by Ashley M. Jones, poet laureate for the state of Alabama and the first person of color to hold the position. The organization is a celebration of community through local poetry, history, nonprofits, craftspersons, and culture workers in Birmingham, Alabama. Core to their mission is the idea that poetry is for everybody.

“We are honored to collaborate with local poets, musicians, and educators in reflecting on our civil rights history,” said Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument superintendent Kristofer Butcher. “Spoken word and music encouraged civil rights activists to believe a better future was possible. Coming together through artistic expression is an important way of continuing that legacy.”

The free event will take place from 2-4pm on Saturday April 30. Participants will meet at St. Paul United Methodist Church at 1500 6th Avenue North, 35205, and can park in the lot adjacent to the church building. Masks that cover the nose and mouth are required for the indoor portion of the program at St. Paul UMC. The program will begin in the Fellowship Hall of the church, and then local Birmingham tour guides will lead participants to various

stops along the civil rights trail, where stationed poets will share their work. Local poets include Sanovia Muhammad, Liz Hughey, Kwoya Fagin Maples, and Caleb Calhoun. The event will conclude at St. Paul UMC with a performance by Scrollworks' musical students and a drum circle in which the audience will be encouraged to participate. Those who do participate will receive a free set of drumsticks! Scrollworks will have an Instrument Petting Zoo set up for the duration of the program, allowing all to pick up instruments to try them out for themselves. Scrollworks operates out of St. Paul UMC, yet another testament to the church's historic and ongoing commitment to youth. Poets, including Ashley M. Jones, will also have their work for sale at St. Paul UMC through the duration of the program.

Said Ms. Jones, "We are so honored to host a free poetry event in partnership with Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument, St. Paul's, and Scrollworks. In my own life, history and art have always been connected - growing up in Birmingham, I always knew I walked on hallowed ground. This event will serve to share that connection with our community - what a joy to bring poetry to the people in this way!"

St. Paul United Methodist Church is one of three churches affiliated with Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument. Dozens of Birmingham's Black churches joined the pursuit of civil rights through hosting mass meetings in the 1950s and 1960s. Founded in 1869, St. Paul UMC is 2 years older than the city of Birmingham itself. In 1956, just after the current church building was erected, St. Paul UMC served as a meeting site to integrate Birmingham buses. In the spring of 1963, St. Paul UMC hosted training sessions in nonviolent civil disobedience for demonstration participants. The Palm Sunday March in the spring of 1963 departed from St. Paul, leading over 500 protesters to the steps of city hall.

Reverend Richard Stryker of St. Paul UMC remarked, "We look forward to sharing our history and its impact on the civil rights story through spoken word and music!"

Children played a critical role in ending segregation. To honor the children who marched, and the role St. Paul UMC played in preparing youth for protests, a middle school parishioner named John Collins designed the stained-glass window featured prominently in the sanctuary today. Commitment to youth, then and now, is a pivotal feature of St. Paul's living legacy. St. Paul continues to lift up children through its collaboration with the musical education nonprofit, Scrollworks.

"Sharing the joys of music with young people in such a sacred and special place is something we are incredibly grateful for. Scrollworks is truly excited to participate in this program that celebrates the arts side-by-side with Birmingham's amazing civil rights legacy," said Jeane Goforth, founder of Scrollworks.

Scrollworks Music School is a non-profit, low-cost tuition music school. They have been serving Birmingham since 2007. They offer classes and private instruction, with a focus on orchestral instruments, including strings, woodwinds, and brass. They also offer lessons in piano, voice, and guitar/ukulele. New students are also welcome!

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In 2017, [Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument](#) was created to collaborate with local organizations in commemorating the nonviolent struggle to dismantle racial segregation and discrimination in Birmingham, AL, during the 1950s and 1960s. Budding direct-action movements, such as sit-ins and marches, inspired individuals such as Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth, a local Birmingham Reverend and civil rights activist. He invited Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to co-lead a similar movement in Birmingham during the spring of 1963, which they called Project C. Images of snarling police dogs unleashed against non-violent protesters and of children being sprayed with high-pressure hoses appeared in print and television news around the world. The episode sickened many, including President John F. Kennedy, and elevated civil rights from a Southern issue to a pressing national issue. These efforts paved the way to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a huge victory towards leading the nation to better living up to its promise of liberty and justice for all. Within the monument are several prominent historic places. Of these, only the A.G. Gaston Motel is directly managed by the National Park Service. The National Park Service owns one half of the motel complex and manages it in partnership with the City of Birmingham, which owns the other half. Other related and integral places to telling this civil rights story include the 16th Street Baptist Church, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, The Historic Bethel Baptist Church, St. Paul United Methodist Church, Kelly Ingram Park, and the Masonic Temple Building. Learn more at www.nps.gov/bicr/, and on [Facebook](#).

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