Martin Luther King Jr.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
1929 - 1968

Drum Major For Justice
Beloved Community,

Whether you are the senior pastor of a congregation, an associate or youth minister, a church school teacher, a music director, a deacon, an elder or a trustee, or someone who sits in the pew regularly because you love your God and Church, I want you to be aware of our denomination’s unapologetic priority to be a Pro Reconciling and Anti Racist Church.

All of us who call ourselves Disciples celebrate January 15 of each year as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Dr. King is one of the best known Americans in history and only the second person to have his birthday declared a national holiday. He was motivated by the love of God, called to be a Pastor and Civil Rights Leader, and declared that any form of injustice is a threat to the justice of all.

He called all people to live on a higher level, developing relationships founded on the beauty of cultural and racial diversity. He also taught us that there is a vital connection between our Christian faith and social justice. You cannot have one without the other.

May the enclosed Historical Facts, Worship Litany, resources, poetry, Select Quotations from Dr. King, and the Glossary of Nonviolence serve as a guide to you and your congregation as you join with Disciples around the globe in celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr. Day on January 21, 2014.

Blessed to be a blessing to you,

Sheila P. Spencer

Sheila Spencer
Director of Christian Education and Faith Formation;
Assistant to the President
Disciples Home Missions

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### Historical Facts

1929  Born Martin Luther King, Jr. on January 15 in Atlanta, Ga.

1948  Graduates from Morehouse College, ordained a Baptist minister

1951  Graduates from Crozier Theological Seminary

1953  Marries Coretta Scott

1954  Becomes pastor at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, Ala.

1955  Receives PH.D. degree in Systematic Theology from Boston University; Rosa Parks, arrested for refusing to give up her seat on segregated bus sparks the Montgomery bus boycott; becomes president of the Montgomery Improvement Association; first child, Yolanda is born

1957  King founds the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); organizes the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom; awarded the NAACP Springarn Medal; second child, Martin is born

1959  Travels to India

1960  Becomes co-pastor at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta; imprisoned at Reidsville state penitentiary in Georgia

1961  Launches desegregation campaign in Albany, Ga.; third child, Dexter, is born

1962  King joins racial protests in Birmingham, Ala.

1963  Arrested at a demonstration in Birmingham; writes “Letter from Birmingham Jail”; delivers “I Have a Dream” speech at the March on Washington; fourth child, Bernice, is born

1964  King awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

1965  Joins the SCLC in Selma, Ala., for its march to Montgomery

1966  Launches the Chicago Freedom Movement; organizes the “James Meredith March Against Fear”

1967  Forms the Poor People’s Campaign

1968  Assassinated on April 4 in Memphis, Tenn.

1983  The U.S. Congress passed a bill declaring the third Monday of January each year as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. President Ronald Reagan signed the bill into law on November 2, 1983, fifteen years after King’s assassination.
Genesis 37:18-20
They saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. They said to each other, “Here comes that dreamer. Now is our chance; let us kill him and throw him into one of these pits and say that a wild beast has devoured him. Then we shall see what will become of his dreams.

Psalms 82:304
Give justice to the weak and the orphan; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy, deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Proverbs 21:3
Do what is right and just; that is more pleasing to God than sacrifice.

Isaiah 1:16-17
Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Isaiah 51:7
Hearken unto me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear not the reproach of people, and be not dismayed by their revilings.

Amos 5:21-24
I hate, I despise your feats, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me burnt offerings and cereal offerings, I will not accept them, and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts, I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like and overflowing stream.

Matthew 5:3-12
Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the realm of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the realm of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven, for so the prophets who were before you were persecuted.

Matthew 5:44
But I say unto you. Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.

John 15:11-16
These things I have spoken to you, that joy may be in your, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down one’s life for a friend. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard for God I have made known to you. You didn’t chose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so whatever you ask God in my name, may it be given to you.

Galatians 3:28
There is neither Jew or Greek, there is neither slave or free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ.

Colossians 3:12-14
Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving one another; as God has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

2 Peter 3:13
What we await are new heavens and a new earth where, according to God’s promise, the justice of God will reside.

I John 4:7-8
Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.
“Let My People Go”
A Litany of Commemoration of The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. January 15, 1929 – April 4, 1968

Leader:
In the grand order of the universe, Our Lord God wisely has chosen men and women to serve Him in each era. Such a servant of our Lord God was Martin Luther King, Jr., whose birth we now commemorate. We are thankful for the life of this 20th Century prophet of freedom, who joined the prophets of history in the cry:

Congregation:
In the name of freedom, let my people go.

Leader:
Martin Luther King, Jr., envisioned the ultimate freedom; the freedom achieved in struggle; the freedom reached in brotherhood; the freedom fired by the dream of a man; the freedom inspired by the lot of a people; the freedom free of hate; the freedom full of love.

Congregation:
In the name of the prophet, Amos, and in the name of...
suffering people, let my people go.

Leader:
The journey went to Montgomery, to affirm human dignity and courage; to Birmingham, to defeat the sickness of separating human life; to Selma, to ensure the equality of people in human affairs; to a hundred nameless communities, to remove painful shackles of oppression and light joyous torches of liberty.

Congregation:
In the name of this journey toward freedom, let my people go.

Leader:
When war was encountered, the leader of this journey sang with the people: “ain’t gonna study war no more.” When violence was met, he spurned it and said: “Hate is too great a burden to bear.”

Congregation:
In the name of peace, and love, let my people go.

Leader:
And even when death was confronted, as the journey reached Memphis, he could say in final triumph, that in the life he had found something worth dying for, something worth life itself. the Promised Land, a land of freedom with justice.

Congregation:
In the name of the Promised Land, let my people go.

Leader:
So we are thankful that the Spirit of the Lord anointed a man who preached good news to the poor, who rejected segregation and embraced liberation, who prophesied the greatness of his people in struggle for the deliverance of all people.

Congregation:
In the name of the Spirit of the Lord, let my people go.

Leader:
We praise the Lord God for sending us a man of peace who resisted tyranny, a man of nonviolence who fought for liberty, a man of God who worked for people. Thank you, Lord, for Martin Luther King, Jr., who inspired us with his dream, who walked into our lives and our hearts with his marches for justice, who demanded freedom with great courage in the face of grave danger, and who has now passed on into your Promised Land. Thank you for his noble legacy to continue the journey to that land here on earth, in life for all people. Thank you, God; You have sent us one who now causes us to say:

All:
In the name of Martin Luther King, Jr., let my people go.

This is the official litany of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Social Change; prepared and distributed by the Center for use in commemorative services.
To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies.

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.

A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual doom.

The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically.

Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education.

Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'

The time is always right to do what is right.

Almost always, the creative dedicated minority has made the world better.

The first question which the priest and the Levite asked was: 'If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?' But... the good Samaritan reversed the question: 'If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?'

Nonviolence is a powerful and just weapon, which cuts without wounding and ennobles the man who wields it. It is a sword that heals.
Resources

The following is a list of resources to assist those who would like to present a unit of study in anticipation of Martin Luther King, Jr., Day. These resources includes plans, activities, printable material, primary source documents, video documentaries, and so on.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial -- August 28, 2011, the 48th anniversary of the groundbreaking March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom witnessed the dedication of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial. It is fitting that on this date, reminiscent of the defining moment in Dr. King’s leadership in the Civil Rights movement; in the form of solid granite, his legacy is further cemented in the tapestry of the American experience. His leadership in the drive for realization of the freedoms and liberties laid down in the foundation of the United States of America for all of its citizens, without regard to race, color, or creed is what introduced this young southern clergyman to the nation. The delivery of his message of love and tolerance through the means of his powerful gift of speech and eloquent writings inspire to this day, those who yearn for a gentler, kinder world. His inspiration broke the boundaries of intolerance and even national borders, as he became a symbol, recognized worldwide of the quest for civil rights of the citizens of the world. [www.nps.gov/mlkm/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/mlkm/index.htm)

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change -- A nonprofit organization that educates the world about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s philosophy of nonviolence. Established in 1968 by Mrs. Coretta Scott King, (“The King Center”) has been a global destination, resource center and community institution for over a quarter century. Nearly a million people each year make pilgrimage to the National Historic Site to learn, be inspired and pay their respects to Dr. King’s legacy. [www.thekingcenter.org](http://www.thekingcenter.org)

Teaching Resources for Martin Luther King, Jr. -- There are numerous resources and links at this site [www.42explore2.com/king.htm](http://www.42explore2.com/king.htm)

Books by Martin Luther King, Jr.

*Strength to Love.* New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1963. This is a collection of Dr. King’s most requested sermons.


*Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1967. An assessment of America’s priorities and a warning that they need to be re-ordered.


Books by Family Members


King, Rev. Bernice A. *Hard Questions, Heart Answers:* Three Rivers Press


King, Dexter Scott. *Growing Up King: An Intimate Memoir:* Grand Central Publishing


King, Yolanda Denise; Elodia Tate. *Open My Eyes, Open My Soul: Celebrating Our Common Humanity*  

Watkins, Angela Farris. *My Uncle Martin’s Big Heart:* Abrams Books for Young Readers
Activities

Hands together:
Share with children how Dr. King believed in unity and harmony. Make the classic paper chains using black, white, red, yellow, and brown construction paper to represent the various skin tones found across our nation. Show kids the symbolism behind the craft: “Each link represents a hand, and our chain reminds us that Dr. King joined hands with people of all colors when he marched for freedom.” A variation on this theme: Children can trace their own hands, then color them in using different skin-tone shaded crayons.

Living the Dream:
Martin Luther King, Jr. had a dream that people would not be judged by the color of their skin, but the content of their character. Brainstorm and discuss what dreams you have for your home, community and world. Use cloud shaped paper – and write and illustrate the dreams. Create a dream collage. The Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Social Change website includes a section where you can share your dreams and post them on a dream map along with dreams from all over the world. You can also share your dreams online at www.thekingcenter.org/dreams/share

Listening to History:
There is wisdom among us. If there is an elder in your community who lived during the Civil Rights Movement, there is a wealth of wisdom. Assign a team to interview the person, asking them to share their memories and the lessons that they learned. This can be an intergenerational activity, when you have a younger person as the reporter.

Do you want to share activities that you have done within your community to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. King. Email to ChristianEd@dhm.disciples.org and put MLK Activities in the header.
Wife Coretta Scott King; Clockwise: Martin Luther King III; Bernice Albertine King; Dexter Scott King; Yolanda Denise King and Martin.

Martin Luther King, Jr. looks on as President Lyndon Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in the East Room. July 2, 1964.

King receives Nobel Peace Price

Mother: Alberta King; Father: Rev. Martin Luther King, Sr; Grandmother: Jennie Celeste Parks Williams; Brother: Alfred Daniel King; Sister: Willie Christine King and Martin on the right.
AGAPE — Overflowing unconditional love for all, including adversaries, needed for nonviolent conflict-resolution. Dr. King called it "love in action... love seeking to preserve and create community...love which is purely spontaneous, unmotivated, groundless and creative."

AHIMSA — The Hindi word for non-injury, or nonviolence made popular by Gandhi as the central value of his beliefs and leadership.

ARBITRATION — Hearing of a dispute and determining its outcome by a mutually-agreed-upon third party. Can be binding or non-binding.

BELOVED COMMUNITY — Term coined by philosopher Josiah Royce to denote an ideal community, used frequently by Dr. King to describe a society of justice, peace and harmony which can be achieved through nonviolence.

In his sermon at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala., on April 2, 1957, Dr. King said, "The aftermath of nonviolence is the creation of the beloved community."

BOYCOTT — A campaign of withdrawal of support from a company, government or institution which is committing an injustice, such as racial discrimination. As Dr. King said, "There is nothing quite so effective as the refusal to cooperate with the forces and institutions which perpetuate evil in our communities."

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE — The act of openly disobeying an unjust, immoral or unconstitutional law as a matter of conscience, and accepting the consequences, including submitting to imprisonment if necessary, to protest an injustice.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION — Ending of conflict, disputes or disagreements by nonviolent means with intent to achieve a "win-win" outcome for all parties.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION — A refusal to participate in military service because of moral beliefs.

CREATIVE TENSION — In his “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” Dr. King said, "Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue...I must confess that I am not afraid of the word, tension. I have earnestly worked and preached against violent tension, but there is a type of constructive tension that is necessary for growth... the purpose of direct action is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation."

DEMONSTRATIONS — Gatherings and protest activities organized to build support for peace, justice or social reform.

DIRECT ACTION — Nonviolent resistance to injustice. More than 250 forms of nonviolent direct action have been identified, including marches, boycotts, picketing, sit-ins and prayer vigils, to name a few. (see six steps of nonviolence)

FASTING — Refusing to eat as a method of self-purification to be spiritually strengthened for nonviolent action, or as a protest.

GANDHI, MOHANDAS K. (1869-1948) — Leader of India’s nonviolent independence movement, who forced the British to quit India. Dr. King studied Gandhi’s successful campaigns and adapted some of Gandhi’s strategies in the American Civil Rights Movement. As Dr. King said of the role of Gandhi’s teachings in the Civil Rights Movement, “Christ furnished the spirit and motivation, while Gandhi furnished the method.” Dr. King said "Gandhi was the guiding light of our technique for nonviolent social change."

LAWS, JUST VS. UNJUST — A distinction made in deciding to engage in civil disobedience. A just law is created by both a majority and minority, and is binding on both. An unjust law is created by a majority that is binding on the minority, when the minority has no voice in creating the law. Dr. King said, “A just law is a man-made code that squares with moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with moral law...One who breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly and with a willingness to accept the penalty ."

MASS MARCH — A large number of people walk in a group to a place of symbolic significance to protest an injustice.

MEDIATION — intervention in a dispute by a neutral third party with expertise on a particular issue for the purpose of securing a compromise, an agreement or reconciliation. A mediator can not impose a binding agreement.

MORAL SUASION — Appealing to the moral beliefs of an adversary or the public to convince the adversary to change behavior or attitudes.

NEGOTIATION — Process of discussing, compromising and bargaining with adversaries in good faith to secure a resolution to a conflict and reconciliation of adversaries.
(see six steps of nonviolence)

**NONCOOPERATION** — Refusal to participate in activities of or cooperate with individuals, governments, institutions, policies or laws that result in violence or injustice.

**PACIFISM** — A philosophy based on an absolute refusal to engage in violence because it is morally wrong.

**PASSIVE RESISTANCE** — Challenging an injustice by refusing to support or cooperate with an unjust law, action or policy. The term “passive” is misleading because passive resistance includes pro-active nonviolence, such as marches, boycotts and other forms of active protest.

**PERSONAL COMMITMENT** — The spiritual and psychological decision to participate in nonviolent action to eliminate an injustice. Prayer, meditation and sometimes fasting are used to deepen one’s spiritual understanding.

**PETITION CAMPAIGNS** — gathering of massive numbers of signatures in support of or opposed to a policy, proposal or law.

**PICKETING** — A group of individuals walk with signs bearing protest messages in front of a site where an injustice has been committed.

**PURIFICATION** — The cleansing of anger, selfishness and violent attitudes from the heart and soul in preparation for a nonviolent struggle. (see six steps of nonviolence)

**RECONCILIATION** — The end goal of nonviolence. Bringing together of adversaries in a spirit of community after a conflict has been resolved. (see six steps of nonviolence)

**REDEMPTIVE SUFFERING** — A willingness to accept suffering without seeking revenge or retribution. When an individual or group experiences injustice and abuse for a good cause, it will help produce a greater good.

**SATYAGRAHA** — Hindi for "soul force," a term coined by Gandhi to emphasize the power of unadorned truth and love in a social struggle.

**SAVING FACE** — Offering an adversary an alternative course of action which spares him or her embarrassment.

**SELECTIVE PATRONAGE** — The flip side of a boycott. Making a point of purchasing a product or service from a company that supports justice.

**SIT-INS** — Tactic of nonviolence in which protesters sit down at the site of an injustice and refuse to move for a specified period of time or until goals are achieved. Examples include Flint, Mich., sit-down strike of 1936-37 in which auto workers sat down on job for 44 days in protest for union recognition and the student sit-ins to desegregate lunch counters in Greensboro, N.C., in 1960.

**SIX PRINCIPLES OF NONVIOLENCE** — Fundamental tenets of Dr. King’s philosophy of nonviolence described in his first book, “Stride Toward Freedom.” The six principles include: (1.) Nonviolence is not passive, but requires courage; (2.) Nonviolence seeks reconciliation, not defeat of an adversary; (3.) Nonviolent action is directed at eliminating evil, not destroying an evil-doer; (4.) A willingness to accept suffering for the cause, if necessary, but never to inflict it; (5.) A rejection of hatred, animosity or violence of the spirit, as well as refusal to commit physical violence; and (6.) Faith that justice will prevail.

**SIX STEPS OF NONVIOLENT SOCIAL CHANGE** — A sequential process of nonviolent conflict-resolution and social change based on Dr. King’s teachings. “The Six Steps of Nonviolence” developed by The King Center include: (1.) Information gathering and research to get the facts straight; (2.) Education of adversaries and the public about the facts of the dispute; (3.) Personal Commitment to nonviolent attitudes and action; (4.) Negotiation with adversary in a spirit of goodwill to correct injustice; (5.) Nonviolent direct action, such as marches, boycotts, mass demonstrations, picketing, sit-ins etc., to help persuade or compel adversary to work toward dispute-resolution; (6.) Reconciliation of adversaries in a win-win outcome in establishing a sense of community.

**STOCKHOLDER'S CAMPAIGN** — Individuals or groups purchases a small amount of stock so they can have introduce resolutions at stockholder meetings, vote as stockholders and lobby corporations to correct an injustice.

**STRIKES** — Organized withholding of labor to correct injustice.

**TEACH-INS** — An organized event or series of events, including public hearings, lectures, panel discussions, theatrical presentations, showing of films, role-playing and scenario exercises and other educational techniques, to inform public about a particular issue.

**TRADE SANCTIONS** — A nation levies import taxes on products from another nation, or bans importation of a nation’s products altogether.

**UNEARNED SUFFERING** — See REDEMPTIVE SUFFERING.

**UNCONDITIONAL LOVE** — See "AGAPE."

**VIGILS** — A form of protest in which individuals and groups stand, sit, walk, or pray at a site linked to an injustice or symbolically associated with principles of freedom, justice or peace.
A day to celebrate the life and dream of Martin Luther King, Jr.

A day to reaffirm the American ideals of freedom, justice and opportunity for all.

A day for love not hate, for understanding not anger, for peace not war.

A day for the family: to share together, to reach out to relatives and friends, and to mend broken relationships.

A day when the community rids itself of the barriers which divide it and comes together as one.

A day when people of all races, religions, classes, and stations in life put aside their differences and join in a spirit of togetherness.

A day for our nation to pay tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr., who awakened in us the best qualities of the American spirit.

A day for nations of the world to cease all violent actions, seek nonviolent solutions, and demonstrate that peace is not just a dream, but a real possibility, if only for one day.

If for only one day, each of us serves as a drum major for justice and peace, then we will bring to life the inspiring vision of freedom which Martin “Dreamed”.

**Living the Dream**