

Call to Worship for Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday

The Prophet Micah told us that the LORD requires us to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God. As we celebrate Martin Luther King's witness, let us be called to worship by some of the prophets of the Civil Rights Movement.

In 1963, in his challenging letter to complacent white clergy in the South, Dr. King wrote, "We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people. In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

O God, we pray, transform our silence into action, our fear into courage.

President John F. Kennedy in an address that led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 said, "The heart of the question is whether all Americans are to be afforded equal rights and equal opportunities; whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we want to be treated."

O God, we pray, help us to love you and to love others as ourselves.

Rosa Parks said, "You must never be fearful about what you are doing when it is right. I have learned over the years that when one's mind is made up, this diminishes fear; knowing what must be done does away with fear."

O God, we pray, remind us that you did not give us a spirit of fear.

Ann Braden, a white Southern activist and ally of the Civil Rights movement wrote, "In every age, no matter how cruel the oppression carried on by those in power, there have been those who struggled for a different world. I believe this is the genius of humankind, the thing that makes us half divine: the fact that some human beings can envision a world that has never existed.

O God, we pray, help us to envision and struggle for a world where justice will roll down like water, righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (adapted from a quote from Dorothy Day)

God of justice, we confess that in the pursuit of our own dreams and desires, we have not always been civil, not always humane, not always right. Guided by your Spirit, what we would like to do is change the world – make it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves as You intended them to do. Help us to be your witnesses, by fighting for better conditions, by crying out unceasingly for the rights of the workers, the poor, of the destitute – the rights of the worthy and the unworthy poor, so that we can, with your help, change the world. Enlarge our hearts to love each other, to love our neighbor, and to love our enemy as our friend.

This Call to Prayer was written by former MLP Board Member Rev. Eric Thomas. Eric serves as Director of Christian Education at First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn and is a Ph.D. student at Drew University.

