

GIVE WITNESS...

HOPE, PEACE, COMPASSION

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had a dream of a nation and a world united together as one human family regardless of race, color, nationality, ethnic culture, belief, and way of life. Dr. King was a preacher of peace and hope. He believed that all of God's people could live together in a spirit of respect and trust. His life and legacy is a moving and powerful lesson for those of us who at times lose hope and become discouraged in life.

Despite the events that can weigh us down in life, every day we must recommit ourselves to becoming a people of hope, a people of peace, a people of compassion. Each one of us is called to stand up in the world and give witness to the dream of hope, peace, and compassion.

People of hope do their best to give support and encouragement to those who are lonely, abandoned, and brokenhearted. They look for good in others and affirm people's gifts and talents.

People of peace do their best to avoid useless conflicts and senseless arguments. They walk in the midst of the world with a nonviolent attitude. They make the effort to reconcile differences while respecting the dignity of each person.

People of compassion do their best to love everyone regardless of race, culture, and nationality. They do not judge others, and are willing to take the risk of walking in the shoes of their sisters and brothers.

We are connected to the vibrant vision and challenging call of The Dreamer to do the work of love. We must find a new way of living in harmony with people we may not understand at first, but who nevertheless are our sisters and brothers.

In commemorating the birth of Martin Luther King, Jr., we pledge ourselves to the undying mission to transform all that is unjust, all that deprives people of their human dignity, and all that is contrary to respect and reverence for life. We must sense the urgency in our world to stop fighting and arguing with one another, to live in hope, and to work for lasting peace.

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PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

- **Have I done my best to make Martin Luther King's dream of a unified human family a reality in my life... in my family... in my community... in my church?**
- **What is my dream and hope for the world? for my family? for children and youth?**
- **Do I give in to impatience, anger, violence, and prejudice? Have I refused forgiveness to someone who asked for it?**
- **Have I done anything to address social problems such as racism, prejudice, poverty, AIDS, homelessness, the death penalty, or violence?**
- **Do I help to bring about positive structural changes in the community — to strengthen families, to protect children, to educate and empower youth for leadership?**

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PRAYER FOR RACIAL HEALING

This prayer may be used for community prayer, family prayer, or individual prayer.

OPENING PRAYER

All: God of All, in the name of Jesus, our Redeemer, Liberator, and Divine Healer, we surrender our will and our lives to your care.

You who created us to be one united human family: open our eyes to see where we promote division instead of unity.

You who created us to care for one another: open our ears to hear the cry of the abused, oppressed, neglected, and rejected.

You who created us in love and for love: open our hearts to welcome and love all of our sisters and brothers with your unconditional Spirit of acceptance.

We are here in your presence, O Lord, willing to bring your hope, peace, and compassion to all of our sisters and brothers.

PRAYER OF SORROW

One: When I feel lonely and abandoned, I lose hope and cannot reach out to others.

All: Lord, fill me with your love and hope.

One: When conflict arises, I get defensive, hurt others, and lose my sense of well-being.

All: Lord, fill me with your love and peace.

One: When I see people I don't know, I prejudge them based on how they look and act.

All: Lord, fill me with your love and compassion.

PRAYER OF HEALING

All: God of mercy and healing, look with kindness on our troubled world.

Bless us with hope in your constant love and presence, and help us to trust in your vision of a unified human family.

Bless us with the peace that comes from freely surrendering ourselves to your divine will.

Bless us with the compassion that comes from knowing that we are all your precious children who long to love and be loved just as we are. In the name of

Jesus, we humbly ask you to hear us.
Amen.

THE WORD OF GOD ISAIAH 9:1-6

REFLECTION

Invite those present to share their experience, strength, and hope relevant to the passage from Isaiah. Some suggested topics:

- What circumstances have been a cause for darkness in our history and our present lives?
- Where and when have we experienced God's light leading us?
- How has God removed burdens that we have carried?
- What burdens do we still carry? Can we ask God for help with them?
- How has Jesus made a difference in our lives and history?
- Where do we find the peace of Jesus? How do we share the peace of Jesus?

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

One: For leaders who continue to show us the way to be one, unified human family, that we may follow their wise example.

All: Lord, have mercy on your people.

One: For people committed to practicing nonviolence at home, in schools, in the workplace, and in our communities, that we may live in peace and harmony.

All: Lord, have mercy on your people.

One: For all who suffer oppression, slavery, abuse, and rejection, that we may open our hands and hearts to help them.

All: Lord, have mercy on your people.

One: For all who seek the kingdom of God, that we may find it here among us, respecting each person we meet as a living icon of God.

All: Lord, have mercy on your people.

OUR FATHER

CONCLUDING PRAYER

All: Dear God, we are each created in your image of love and goodness. Let us each be an instrument of hope, peace, and compassion in the world. Grant us the courage to speak out against racism, prejudice, discrimination, and injustice in all forms. Help us to give patient, constant, and loving witness to the dream that our brother, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., envisioned. We ask this through Jesus our Lord. Amen.

**GIVE WITNESS...
PROMISING PRACTICES**

- Keep a daily journal of the times you consciously avoided or looked away from people because of their race, culture, or nationality.
- Find a quiet place and pray for ten minutes each day, praying for a change of heart that you might be more loving and accepting of the people around you.
- Confront people and situations that perpetuate racial stereotypes. Be proactive in eradicating racist behaviors. Challenge people to change their attitudes about people.
- Seek out some people willing to come together to dialogue and act on becoming an anti-racist community. Join other local groups that are dealing with the eradication of racism in the community.

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Martin Luther King Day

GIVE WITNESS



TO
THE

DREAM

A program of
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