

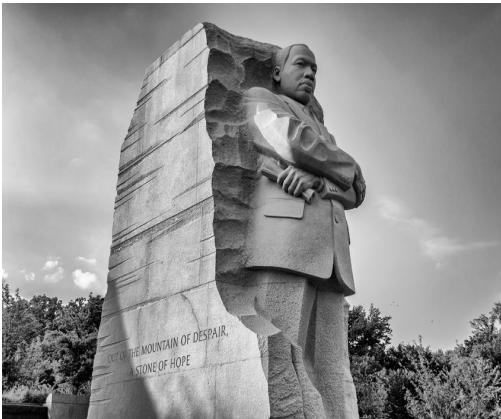
Bishop Staccato Powell

Presiding Prelate Western Episcopal District AME Zion Church



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DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. *Celebrating the Legacy of a Life Well Lived*



"Love is creative and redemptive. Love builds up and unites; hate tears down and destroys. The aftermath of the 'fight with fire' method which you suggest is bitterness and chaos, the aftermath of the love method is reconciliation and creation of the beloved community. Physical force can repress, restrain, coerce, destroy, but it cannot create and organize anything permanent; only love can do that."

—Martin Luther King, Jr., 1957

Dear Beloved of God,

As we pause today to observe and remember the life, legacy and contributions of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on this his 90th birthday, let us be reminded of the ideals and principles on which he stood. Dr. King taught us that love is the ultimate and supreme gift of God. If we are to stamp out injustices, hatred and darkness in our society, we must do so with love. *"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only **light** can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that,"* stated King.

King's message of nonviolence, peaceful protest and equality is as pertinent now as it was in his lifetime. Pertinent also is the truth and power behind that message, and the need we still have for it in our society today.

We only need to listen to the news and look at our communities to see that we still have a significant racial divide in our country. The marches, protests and even divisions among

friends and families show that racism and discrimination did not end with the Civil Rights Movement. Indeed, there is still much work to be done.

Today, all across the country, we remember and honor Dr. King's legacy in various ways with commemorative parades, programs and speeches in schools and churches. But this was not always the case during his time in which King was not always so popular. He was not seen as a hero by many people during his lifetime. He was seen by some as an agitator and an activist who made trouble.

King did not accept the status quo. He stood up to authority and faced down fire hoses and attack dogs, tear gas and police batons. He was arrested 29 times, according to the King Center in Atlanta as he worked with many other Civil Rights leaders of his time to lead marches and strikes. He and his followers blocked traffic, for instance during the fifty-four mile March from Selma to Montgomery. They fought to destroy segregation, racism, lynching, voter suppression, job discrimination and more. And they paid for their actions with their lives.



Today, as you celebrate the legacy of Dr. King, commit to do more. Educate yourself about our history. Read books and essays from perspectives that are new or different from yours. Stand up for justice and against injustice and racism. Speak truth to power and be bold and brave in your own actions to stamp out racism and inequality.

Dr. King and the other leaders of the Civil Rights Movement helped to bring about massive change in America, but their work was not finished. Here we are years later and much that existed then, still persists today.

As a country, as a people, we need to continue to work to ensure equality, opportunity and justice for all. This is our work. The time is now, right now! We must not shy away. We must not depend on anyone else to do it. This is our mission and if we are courageous and steadfast, we can move forward together as one people. ***We dare to believe!***

As followers of Christ, let us pledge today to be the light that drives out darkness. Let us pledge to make a difference in our own lives and that of our families, communities and the larger society. We know that no matter what we are facing in life, we can overcome. We must be the light that King spoke of and work consistently to build the beloved community of which he spoke.

Dr. King clearly stated with conviction, *“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”*

Remember this quote as you go forward. Remember to stand up against injustice and speak out for what is right. Listen to the perspectives of people of other racial and ethnic groups and be open minded. Remember to keep learning and challenging yourself as you go. And remember to do your part to ensure that hatred and injustices end NOW!

Let’s not grow weary from well doing, but rather stand firm and resolute in making this world a better place, beginning with you. We must, following the word of our Savior, who also set the example saying, *“I am the **light of the world**. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the **light** of life. John 8:12.*

Anointed to Serve,

Staccato Powell
Episcopal Servant of the Most High

