



Sacred Conversation on Race

The journey **continues**

Creating the Beloved Community: Invocation, Confession and Assurance of Pardon For Martin Luther King, Jr. Weekend January 15-17, 2011

*Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls
as well as a quantitative change in our lives.*

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

INVOCATION

O God, all people are your Beloved,
across races, nationalities, religions, sexual orientations
and all the ways we are distinctive from one another.
We are all manifestations of your image.
*We are bound together in an inescapable network of mutuality
and tied to a single garment of destiny.*
You call us into your unending work
of justice, peace and love.
Let us know your presence among us now:
 Let us delight in our diversity
 that offers glimpses of the mosaic of your beauty.
 Strengthen us with your steadfast love and
 transform our despairing fatigue into hope-filled action.
Under the shadow of your wings in this hour
may we find rest and strength, renewal and hope.
We ask this, inspired by the example
of your disciple, Martin Luther King, Jr.,
and in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O God, we long to co-create with you the Beloved Community
which looks to the common good; privileges all equally,
and creates societal systems
which celebrate the humanity and the gifts of all.
And yet we focus on our differences, envy each other's gifts,
devalue manifestations of you, O God, that are not like our own.

Perhaps our sin is a slow wait for justice:
 We allow the voices of brothers and sisters
 who do not look like us, love like us, or worship like us
 to be silenced.

We have told them to wait for freedom, justice and equality.
We foster in them *a denigrating sense of nobodiness.* **Lord, have mercy.**

Or perhaps we have kept silence ourselves
in the face of their struggle for full human life.
For it is not solely hateful words and actions,
but also appalling silence that follows the path of oppression. **Christ, have mercy.**

Perhaps our sin is to give in to weariness, discouragement, bitterness:
You have called us to be *drum majors for justice, peace and righteousness,*
Yet the work of peace and justice overwhelms us at times,
To build with God the Beloved Community seems impossible,
and we grow weary.
We cry, "Peace, peace,"
but there is no peace within us or around us.
We find ourselves on the path
of hatred and oppression, violence and war. **Lord, have mercy.**

ASSURANCE OF PARDON (*Isaiah 62:1-5*)

Sisters and brothers, God is at work in us and with us!
God has promised:
"I will not keep silent and I will not rest
until the vindication of my beloved people
shines out like the dawn and their salvation like a burning torch.
My people shall no more be termed 'forsaken'
and their land shall no more be termed 'desolate.'"
We remember that you have given your Beloved people a new name:
"My delight is in them."

**Thank you, God for delighting in us even now,
for forgiving us our slow action, our silence and our weariness,
for empowering our work
and inviting us once again
to create with you the Beloved Community you long for.**

*Phrases from the speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr. have been woven into the prayer texts. They are identified by italics. Texts of King's work are available in **A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.**, edited by James M. Washington; © 1986 Coretta Scott King. A brief essay on King's understanding of the term "Beloved Community" is available at <http://www.wilpf.org/mlk/sbelovedcommunity>.*

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God is still speaking,
**UNITED CHURCH
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