



The “God is Still Speaking Church” is Still Speaking: We Will Not Be Silent

Litany of Dedication for Martin Luther King, Jr., Sunday

In this 50th Anniversary Year, we remember that the United Church of Christ has been addressed by prophets of our time. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. addressed the Fifth General Synod in Chicago on July 6, 1965. This Litany takes his words and reminds us that his challenge to us is still vital.

LEADER: In the beginning, God brought cosmos out of chaos and spoke humanity into being with the words: “Let there be... !”

ALL: **O God, give us power to speak the words that will bring the positive possibilities of a new creation into existence.**

LEADER: And after God spoke the universe and humanity into existence, God spoke again and said: “It is good! It is very good!”

ALL: **O God, give us power to speak the words that will celebrate and affirm the wondrous virtue of your human and cosmic creation.**

LEADER: And in the fullness of time, God spoke again, and this time the Word of God became flesh; and the living Logos made a tabernacle among us.

ALL: **O God, give us power to speak the words that will abide in the hearts and minds of all people; words that will call each of us into your marvelous light.**

LEADER: And at the Fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ, God spoke to us through the prophet, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., saying:

Although the Church has been called to combat social evils, it has often remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows...How often the Church has been an echo rather than a voice, a tail-light behind the Supreme Court and other secular agencies, rather than a headlight guiding men and women progressively and decisively to higher levels of understanding.

ALL: **O God, we confess that our silence in the face of injustice is sin. Forgive us, and give us the power to speak the words that will challenge the systems of iniquitous inequity — represented in the principalities and powers of this world and in spiritual wickedness in high places.**

LEADER: And through the words of Christ, God spoke to us, saying:

ALL: **“If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”**

LEADER: And through the words of the Apostle Paul, God spoke to us, saying:

ALL: **“For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”**

LEADER: So we boldly and courageously speak the words: “Let freedom ring!”

ALL: **Let freedom ring! Our history and our destiny lie in our willingness to speak until the strongholds of prejudice and bigotry crumble before the new creations of justice and equality for all of God’s children.**

LEADER: We will not be silent. Let freedom ring until every shackle of racism, sexism, classism, militarism, nationalism and heterosexism is broken. Let freedom ring!

ALL: **We will not be silent: Let freedom ring!
For the freedom of every human being, let freedom ring!
For the salvation of the world, let freedom ring!
For the glory of God, let freedom ring!
Let freedom ring! Let freedom ring!**

All join hands and sing together

ALL: **We shall overcome, we shall overcome, we shall overcome today.
Oh deep in my heart, I do believe that we shall overcome today.
We shall not be silent, we shall not be silent, we shall not be silent today.
Oh deep in my heart, I do believe we shall not be silent today.
We are not afraid, we are not afraid, we are not afraid today.
Oh deep in my heart, I do believe, we are not afraid today.**

Litany prepared by Dr. Kenneth L. Samuel, Pastor, Victory for the World UCC, Stone Mountain, Georgia.

Words of Dr. King quoted from United Church of Christ, “Minutes Fifth General Synod, Chicago, Illinois, July 1-7, 1965.” Edited by Fred S. Buschmeyer. “Man in a Revolutionary World,” an address by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (6 July 1965) p. 236-244. Reproduced from the General Synod Collection, United Church of Christ Archives.

Additional verses to **We Shall Overcome** may be found in *The New Century Hymnal*, number 570.



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