



NORTHWEST UNITED PROTESTANT CHURCH

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LOVING AND SERVING CHRIST IN OUR COMMUNITY AND WORLD

Dear NWUP members and friends:

On Monday, the U.S. observes a holiday to remember the life and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. We remember his struggles for justice in the civil rights movement. While King's life was cut short tragically, his work continues today. The ongoing task of justice continues. I'm going to stop right here and ask you, my dear reader, some questions?

A) Do you think the issue of justice for marginalized voices is: religious, political, both, none?

B) Do you think that racism is a problem in your community?

(In case you're wondering the answers are A) both and B) Yes.)

Unfortunately, here in the Tri-Cities, we have a history of racism built into the very fabric of the community. Richland was a segregated town from its very inception. Kennewick was a sundown community, i.e. no black people were allowed within its boundaries after dark, and East Pasco housed Black and Mexican/Hispanic workers who came to work at the Hanford site in the 1940's. During WWII and after, "African Americans could only find living spaces in the dormitories on the Hanford Site or in segregated East Pasco, literally "across the (railroad) tracks" and connected to Pasco by a dark underpass".¹

Do you think that this legacy still impacts our communities? Conversations on race are happening at the local and national level. This past summer we experienced unrest and protests because of the murder of George Floyd and other Black men and women.² The problems exist. The nation has not healed. Decades later we continue to honor Martin Luther King Jr. and his work, but change is slow.

¹ <https://www.tri-cityherald.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/article246072230.html>

² Please don't equate last summer's protests with recent events at the US Capitol. Protests and insurrection are two distinct events.

You may not agree with the need to have an ongoing conversation about race. Maybe you are privileged enough to not have someone judge you by the color of your skin.

(There are multiple ways we judge each other!)

Church, we need to do better! We follow Jesus (a brown skinned, Jewish man born in a town under Roman rule) who calls us to “love one another.” That’s hard work!

The work of Martin Luther King Jr. continues in our community and in our nation.

As Disciples of Christ we must be part of dismantling the systems that perpetuate racial inequalities.

I leave you with two more questions that only you can provide answers to:

What needs to change in your heart and in your mind to see others as equally loved by God?

What needs to change in our conversations and in our language so that we are not perpetuating racial inequalities?

Let’s begin with these questions.

I look forward to some good discussion and helpful conversations.

“Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.”

Blessings,

Pastor Miriam

Martin Luther King Jr. was born in Atlanta, Georgia on January 15th, 1929. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. He received his Doctoral degree in theology and pastored a church in Atlanta. He dedicated his life to the cause of civil rights. On April 4th, 1968 Dr. King was shot and killed in Memphis, Tennessee. He wrote many books, articles, and sermons. Here are some quotes from his speeches and books.

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.

Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.”

From his 1963 book, *Strength to Love*.

"True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice."

From his 1957 book, *Stride Toward Freedom*.

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

From his speech, *I Have a Dream*, - August 1963.