

BUILDING  
BeLOVED  
CoMMuNiTy



**THE**  
**BeLOVED**  
**CoMMuNiTy**  
**TOOLKIT**

***C. ANTHONY HUNT***

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# ***THE BELOVED COMMUNITY TOOLKIT***

## ***The Search for Beloved Community (Beloved Community Defined)***

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s singular vision was for the realization of *Beloved Community*. Kenneth Smith and Ira Zepp, Jr. in their seminal 1974 work entitled, *Search for the Beloved Community*, suggest that King's perspective on the Christian love-ethic provides critical insight into understanding his persistent search for the *Beloved Community*. For King, it was rooted in the biblical notion of *Agape* (God's unconditional love), and was the ultimate goal for society.<sup>i</sup>

In King's conception of *Beloved Community*, faith and action were interrelated. In this regard, theology and ethics were inextricably connected. Theology – what we believe and comprehend about God (how we talk about God), could not be separated from ethics – how we behave as the human family. Our creed and our deed have to be in concert. Our talk and our walk have to correspond.

This faith-action (creed-deed) dialectic found its ultimate expression in the notion of *Beloved Community*. For King, there were two steps involved in the movement towards *Beloved Community*. First, *desegregation* would lead to the removal of legal barriers to equality. But desegregation was a short-term goal – and it alone was not enough. Desegregation had to be followed by *integration*. *Integration* advocated and facilitated the inclusion of all persons in a just society. King defined integration as genuine inter-group, interpersonal living. Integration was the long-term goal as a means toward realizing the vision of *Beloved Community*.

King asserted that “all life is interrelated.” One of his fundamental beliefs was in the kinship of all persons. He believed all life is part of a single process; all living things are interrelated; and all persons are sisters and brothers. All have a place in the *Beloved Community*. Because all are interrelated, one cannot harm another without harming oneself. King said:

To the degree that I harm my brother, no matter what he is doing to me, to that extent I am harming myself. For example, white men often refuse federal aid to education in order to avoid giving the Negro his rights; but because all men are brothers they cannot deny Negro children without harming themselves. Why is this? Because all men are brothers. If you harm me, you harm yourself. Love, *agape*, is the only cement that can hold this broken community together. When I am commanded to love, I am commanded to restore community, to resist injustice, and to meet the needs of my brothers.<sup>ii</sup>

When the Montgomery Bus Boycott ended, Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke at a victory rally on December 3, 1956. He spoke words of hope for the future. He pointed out that the goal of the boycott had not been to defeat other persons, but to awaken the conscience of others to challenge the false sense of superiority that persons might harbor. Now that victory had been achieved, King said, it was time for reconciliation. “The end is reconciliation; the end is the creation of *Beloved Community*.”

The *Beloved Community* was to be an integrated community in which persons of all races and creeds lived together harmoniously as sisters and brothers in peace. It was the Kingdom of God on earth. King stated, “I do not think of political power as an end. Neither do I think of economic power as an end. They are ingredients in the objective we seek in life. And I think that end, that objective, is a truly brotherly society, the creation of *Beloved Community*.”<sup>iii</sup>

## ***THE BELOVED COMMUNITY TOOLKIT***

### ***Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Beloved Community***

In the work of Martin Luther King, Jr., at least nine features of beloved community can be identified.

1. **Beloved Community** is rooted in the biblical notion of Agape Love (God's unconditional love), and is to be ultimate goal for the world (creation). It, according to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is the love of God operating in the human heart, and seeks to "preserve and create community."
2. In **beloved community**, power is always to be expressed within the context of love. According to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, "Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love."
3. **Beloved community** recognizes and honors the image of God in every human being. It understands everybody as somebody, and offers radial hospitality to everyone; as a part of an inclusive family, the world house. It exhibits true respect, and validation of others.
4. **Beloved community** seeks peace with justice, righteously opposes oppression and injustice and takes direct action against racism, poverty and violence. Peace is always to be connected with justice. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated that "true peace is not merely the absence of tension; true peace is the presence of justice."
5. **Beloved community** affirms the efficacy of Satyagraha (soul force) as the most effective way to enact real change in human hearts and society. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated, "We must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force (Satyagraha)."
6. In **beloved community**, faith and action are interrelated. Theology and ethics are inextricably connected. Theology – what we believe and comprehend about God (how we talk about God), cannot be separated from ethics – how we behave as the human family. Our creed and our deed have to be in concert, and our talk and our walk have to
7. **Beloved community** affirms that all of humanity is an inescapable network of mutuality among the human family. King reminded us that "all life is interrelated." One of his fundamental beliefs was in the kinship of all persons. He believed that all of life is part of a single process; all living things are interrelated; and all persons are sisters and

brothers. All of us have a place in the beloved community. Because all of us are interrelated, one cannot harm another without harming oneself.

8. **Beloved community** depends on collaborative effort of cross-sections of people with common interests for a just society. The sentiments of Dr. King's friend Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel resonate, "Morally speaking, there is no limit to the concern one must feel for the suffering of human beings; indifference to evil is worse than evil itself, and in a free society, some are guilty, but all are responsible." Archbishop Desmond Tutu stated that "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor." Similarly, German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer intimated that (for all of us), "not to speak is to speak is to speak and not to act is to act."
9. **Beloved community** seeks to build increasing levels trust among people across difference. It works to overcome fear of difference and fear of others through authentic human engagement and a striving toward community-building and peace-making.

# ***PUBLIC WITNESS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP***

## **A Rule of Life for Martin Luther King, Jr. and those who were a part of the Civil Rights movement:**

- Meditate daily on the teachings and life of Jesus.
- Remember always that the nonviolent movement in Birmingham seeks justice and reconciliation, not victory.
- Walk and talk in the manner of love, for God is love.
- Pray daily to be used by God in order that all might be free.
- Observe with both friend and foe the ordinary rules of courtesy.
- Seek to perform regular service for others and the world.
- Refrain from violence of fist, tongue, or heart.
- Strive to be in good spiritual and bodily health.
- Follow the directions of the movement and the captain of a demonstration.

**(from Marjorie Thompson's *Soul Feast*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995, 2005, p. 148)**

**Nonviolence played a critical role in the thinking and practice of Martin Luther King, Jr., and was integral to the Montgomery Movement. This philosophy had several elements that King would continue to develop throughout his life, and which were codified into a set of principles in his book *Stride Toward Freedom* in 1958. An analysis of King's thinking indicates six general characteristics of nonviolent resistance as a means of protest and community-building.**

1. It must be emphasized that nonviolent resistance is not a method for passive cowards.
2. It does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win his friendship and understanding.
3. The attack is directed against forces of evil rather than against persons who happen to be doing evil.
4. There is a willingness to accept suffering without retaliation, to accept blows from the opponent without striking back.
5. It avoids not only external physical violence but also internal violence of the spirit.
6. It is based on the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice.

### **Martin Luther King, Jr. on the Criteria for Protest (Nonviolent Direct Action/Civil Disobedience)**

1. Is there a just grievance?
2. Has there been the use of every normal means to address the problem/injustice through negotiation, petition, and appeals to authorities?
3. Having found these channels useless/closed, is there a willingness by the protestors to accept punishment?
4. Is there a program to relieve injustice that does not inflict injustice on others?

### **Principles for Toward Beloved Community (based on Gandhian and King principles of Non-violence/non-injury)**

1. Imperative
2. Inspiration
3. Introspection
4. Imagination
5. Intentionality
6. Invitation
7. Innovation
8. Interaction
9. Interpretation
10. Integration

*(Excerpted from "Blessed are the Peacemakers: An Analysis of the Thought of Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr., by C. Anthony Hunt, 2005)*

# ***BELOVED COMMUNITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT***

## ***Social Problems Facing/Challenging Community***

*There are essentially seven sets of social problems that are at the root of social disparities in urban areas.*

- Education
- Employment
- Healthcare
- Housing
- Safety (Public Safety/Policing)
- Technology
- Transportation

***Eight key interwoven areas of community engagement upon which the churches should focus (Ron Peters, “Urban Ministry”)***

- Economic Life
- Educational Systems
- Family Life
- Public Health
- Ethnic/Racial Relations
- Religious Culture
- Restorative Justice (Civil/Political Rights)
- Environment (Environmental Justice)

***The Leading Causes of Life (Gary Gunderson, “Leading Causes of Life”)***

***Focuses in on five powerful concepts asw keys to life-giving community:***

- Connection
- Coherence
- Agency
- Blessing
- Hope

***Community Engagement as Covenant Community (Roger Gench, “Ministry in the Trenches”)***

- The Cruciform Covenant*
- Creating Covenant Community*
- Engaging Covenant Community*
- Deepening Covenant Community*



**A Collaborative Approach to Restoring the Village (Robert Franklin, *Crisis in the Village*)**

- **Focused Conversation**
- **Collaborative Leadership**
- **Vision and Planning**
- **Accountability and Action**
- **Sustaining and Fundraising**
- **Documenting and Celebrating Progress**

## ***COME GO WITH ME – HOWARD THURMAN AND A GOSPEL OF RADICAL INCLUSION***

### **Eight Preliminary Observations:**

1. Praxiologically and epistemologically, ministry and theology are to be understood as acts of both “head and heart”, mind and spirit (both/and). Thus, Thurman has been variously viewed as a mystic/prophet (Luther E. Smith) and Pastor-Theologian.
2. Thurman’s work (pastoring, teaching and writing) speaks to the perennial concern of persons in ministry across denominations, faith perspectives and other forms of difference as to how to lead from a spiritual center, and to integrate matters of the “head and heart.”
3. His search for community is intricately connected to the yearning for an irreducible essence as rooted in his own search for a Christ-centered spirituality and sense of connectedness with God.
4. Thurman’s conception of Christian love (a Christian love-ethic based on the teachings of Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount) was rooted in the example of the unconditional love of Christ. The practice of unconditional love is essential to the breaking down of social barriers such as racism, classism and sexism (and other forms of difference).
5. Thurman resonated with the thoughts of the likes of Josiah Royce who argued that humanity, by nature, perfected (and saved) in solitude. Only in *Beloved Community* can we find ourselves (individually and communally), to stop being individuals and to start being the totality we are as God’s people. This is to be understood as a theological imperative.
6. Teleologically, *Beloved Community* is that which brings together the totality of all persons, both individually and collectively, and provides for them a genuine identity in a disingenuous world. We require some venue through which we can experience and develop the integrated self and community.
7. For Thurman, there was no possibility of *Beloved Community* (*peaceful community*, *Radically Inclusive Community*) without careful and constructive attention to the disinherited (see *Jesus and the Disinherited*). He proclaimed that the mistreatment of America’s disinherited and acceptance of “the will to segregate” are betrayals of American and Christian ideals of community-building.
8. Reconciliation, as a spiritual discipline, and the actualization of *Radically Inclusive Community* (or *Beloved Community*) occurs through intentional acts of seeking to build community across forms of difference. Thurman highlights not only the search for unity in a broken human community, but also the desire to remedy the lack of harmony within the individual. All this seeks out a state of wholeness which is the natural state of life as intended in the creation (*Disciplines of the Spirit*, p. 105). He affirms this concept in this excerpt from his work, *The Search For Common Ground*, “the (person) who seeks community with his own spirit, who searches for it in his experiences with the literal facts of the external world, who makes this his formal intent as he seeks to bring order out of the chaos of his collective life, is not going against life but will be sustained and supported by life.” (p. 6)

## **GANDHIAN PRINCIPLES OF SATYGRAHA AND AHIMSA**

1. Mohandas Gandhi was convinced of the power of nonviolence as the key to achieving the aims of peace. In 1926, he wrote, “Nonviolence is the greatest force humanity has been endowed with. Truth is the only goal we have. For God is none other than Truth. But Truth cannot be, never will be reached except through nonviolence.”
2. In 1907, Gandhi devised the Sanskrit term *Satyagraha*, with *Satya* meaning “Truth”, and *graha* meaning “firmness, tenacity, holding on.” For Gandhi, this is Force that is born in truth and love, or non-violence.” He thus gave up the use of the phrase “passive resistance.” On other occasions, Gandhi called *Satyagraha*, “Soul Force,” or “Love Force,” or “Truth force.”
3. The conception of *Satyagraha* became fundamental to Gandhi’s life and activity. It is “truth-taking” or “the taking of vows of truthfulness.” Its root and meaning is “holding on to truth” and, by extension, resistance to evil by nonviolent means.
4. This “truth force” is possible because it excludes the use of violence, because humans are capable of grasping the truth (but not in an absolute sense) and are not competent to punish. Theologically, “Truth” in an absolute sense is God or Ultimate Being.
5. A related concept used by Gandhi in the discussion of the meaning of nonviolent action was the principle of *ahimsa* (non-injury). This term is borrowed from the Jains. Jainism, founded by Mahavira, is one of the oldest personally founded religions in India.
6. For Gandhi, *ahimsa* was the basic law of being. It can be used as the most effective principle for social action, since it is ingrained deeply in human nature and corresponds to humanity’s innate desire for peace, justice, freedom and personal dignity. *Himas* (violence or injury) is just the opposite – it degrades, corrupts and destroys.
7. For Gandhi, *Satyagraha* was a primary technique for social action. It is not intended to overwhelm one’s opponent. It should not be used in an arbitrary way to rectify a situation. *Satyagraha* must be a last resort in an unbearable situation that merits the commitment of unlimited suffering.
8. *Satyagraha and ahimsa* were critical tools for Gandhi in the fight against what he called the seven social sins, which served ultimately to divide society into the powerful and the powerless. He identified these sins as: (1) politics without principle, (2) wealth without work, (3) commerce without morality, (4) pleasure without conscience, (5) education without character, (6) science without humanity, and (7) worship without sacrifice.
9. Gandhi’s concept of *Satyagraha*, or truth-force, was understood almost immediately as “love-force” by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. King saw a direct connection between Truth and Love, and like Gandhi, essentially equated the two. He saw in Gandhi the means by which the love-ethic in the teachings of Jesus – especially in the Sermon on the Mount - could become effective for social transformation. King stated, “As I read I became fascinated by (Gandhi’s) campaigns of nonviolent resistance.... The whole concept of *Satyagraha*...was profoundly significant to me... I came to feel that this was the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom.”

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## ***THOUGHTS ON UBUNTU (ZULU)***

1. *Ubuntu* runs through the veins of Africans, and speaks in essence to the quality of being human.
2. For Africans, *Ubuntu* is embodied in the oft-repeated proverb, “A person is a person through other people.”
3. As expressed by Dr. John Mbiti, *Ubuntu* means “I am because we are. *We are, therefore, I am.*” In essence, a person is a person through other people.
4. According to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, “You might have much of the world’s riches, and might have a portion of authority, but if you have no *Ubuntu*, you do not amount to much.”
5. According to Lente-Louise Louw, “while this African proverb reveals a world view – a metaphysics – that we owe our self-hood to others, that we are first and foremost social beings, that if you will, “no man is an island,” or as the African might state, “One finger cannot pick up a grain” – *Ubuntu* is at the same time, a deeply personal philosophy that calls us to mirror our humanity for each other.
6. *Ubuntu* is seen that as Stephen Covey points out in the *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Interdependence is a higher value than independence.
7. *Ubuntu* is expressed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his assertion that “*all life is interrelated.*” One of Dr. King’s fundamental beliefs was in the kinship of all persons. He believed that all of life is part of a single process; all living things are interrelated; and all persons are sisters and brothers. According to Dr. King, “*We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.*”

## ***(SIX OFTEN UNOBSERVED) OBSERVATIONS OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT***

1. **Urban** – The movement was largely based in cities of the south undergirded by a vision of the “New South” (Examples are Montgomery, AL, Birmingham, AL, Albany, GA, Jackson, MS, Atlanta, GA)
2. **Young Adult and Youth Leadership** – Many of the key visionaries and leaders of the Civil Rights movement were youth and young adults as the time of their emergence as leaders. (Examples are Martin Luther King, Jr., John Lewis, Andrew Young, Dianna Nash, Wyatt T. Walker, James Lawson, and Stokely Carmichael)
3. **Women** – Woman played key roles in leadership, administration, organization, education and fund-raising over the course of the movement. (Examples are Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, Jo Ann Robinson, Septima Clark, Ella Baker, Diane Nash, Amelia Boynton)
4. **Smaller Churches** – Smaller churches played prominent roles throughout the movement. (Examples are Dexter Avenue, Brown Chapel, Sixteenth Street, Bethel Baptist Church)
5. **Interfaith/Interdenominational Engagement** – The movement was marked by interfaith/interdenominational (ecumenical) engagement throughout, with significant Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim involvement, along with persons from numerous other faith traditions.
6. **Interracial Involvement** - Although rooted in the Black community/church, there was significant involvement and engagement across races. For instance, Stanley Levison was a key advisor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and Rev. Robert Graetz participated in protests marches, and Viola Liuzzo, James Reeb, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner were murdered while participating in the movement.
7. **Collaboration** – There was a general insistence and practice of collaboration across organizations such as the NAACP, SCLC, CORE, SNCC

## ***BELOVED COMMUNITY AND WOMEN OF THE MOVEMENT***

**Here are seven women who impacted the Civil Rights movement. They are representative of many others who made a difference through their tremendous contributions and sacrifice.**

1. **Rosa Parks** is widely considered to be the “mother” of the American Civil Rights movement. She was an activist in the Civil Rights movement beginning in best known for her pivotal role in the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The United States Congress has called her “the mother of the freedom movement.” Her refusal to surrender her bus seat to a white passenger in 1955, spurred the Montgomery boycott, and she was subsequently involved in other efforts to end segregation, which continued throughout her life.
2. **Coretta Scott King** was an activist, Civil Rights leader, and the wife of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. She was an advocate for African-American and human equality in her own right, serving throughout her life as an advocate for several human rights causes including the anti-apartheid movement, world peace and the struggle for LGBTQ equality.
3. **Ella Baker** helped found two major Civil Rights organizations – the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). She graduated from Shaw University in 1921, and was considered to be the “Midwife of the Civil Rights Movement”, living her life with ongoing concerns for racial uplift and social responsibility.
4. **Septima Clark** believed in empowering local people, and was one of the leading proponents and practitioners of education for citizenship which could be seen through the development of “Citizenship Schools” across the south. She took courses at North Carolina A&T and Columbia University, and received a certificate to teach at the end of the seventh grade.
5. **Fannie Lou Hamer** lived her life as an example of human community, the potential (though unrealized) of democracy and perseverance through struggle. One of the most outspoken leaders in the struggle for human and civil rights in Mississippi and across the south, she was one of the founders of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, and gave one of the best known speeches of the Civil Rights movement at the 1964 National Democratic Convention in Atlantic City, NJ. She ran for Congress in 1964.
6. **Diane Nash** was born in 1938 and grew up on the southside of Chicago, Illinois. She entered the Civil Rights movement in response to “being offended and feeling repressed by Southern racial traditions” in 1959 when she studied at Fisk University. She was known for her influence in grassroots efforts in direct action and voter registration, and especially in helping to organize freedom rides in the early 1960’s.
7. **Amelia Boynton Robinson** was a leader of the **American Civil Rights Movement** in **Selma, Alabama**, and a key figure in the 1965 **Selma to Montgomery marches**. On March 7, 1965, in the event that became known as **Bloody Sunday**, Boynton was beaten unconscious when county and state police stopped and beat demonstrators after they crossed the **Edmund Pettus Bridge** seeking to march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama to demand voting rights. A photograph of her lying on Edmund Pettus Bridge went around the world.

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# **TEN WAYS TO BUILD BELOVED COMMUNITY**

C. Anthony Hunt

A universal human striving is for authentic community. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was among those who framed the conception of community in what he termed the *Beloved Community*. King asserted that “all life is interrelated.” This interrelatedness was rooted, for King, in the fundamental belief in the kinship of all persons. He believed that all life is part of a single process; all persons are sisters and brothers, and that we all have a place in the *Beloved Community*. Because all of us are interrelated, one cannot harm another without harming oneself.

King also said “everyone could be great because everyone could serve.” In these uncertain times, churches and our broader society must make a sincere commitment to engaging in acts of compassion and justice as means of living out our faith and loving our neighbors. Individuals, churches, groups, organizations, institutions and even governments can continue to pursue Dr. King’s vision of the *Beloved Community* by making a sincere commitment to community-building and social engagement.

Here are ten ways that individuals, churches, and other organizations can promote peace with justice.

1. Support and develop community-wide plans aimed at expanding economic opportunities for racial-ethnic persons and women specifically in the areas of housing, banking, and employment practices.
2. Actively participate in programs that reach out to help those in the most need – the hungry, the homeless, and the unemployed.
3. Do your part to assure that every inner city and rural young person can look forward to an adequate education. Adopt an inner-city or rural school. Offer your skills where appropriate.
4. Encourage schools, colleges, and universities in your area to include the teachings of Dr. King and other freedom fighters in their curricula and programs.
5. Take specific actions to deal with the problems of drugs, alcohol dependency, teenage pregnancy, and family violence in your community.
6. Advocate for the removal of all weapons from our streets, homes, and schools. Support causes that promote freedom, justice, and peace abroad.
7. Help extend human rights, dignity, health, and economic well-being to all persons.
8. Actively oppose groups that promote hatred and violence. Vigilantly oppose racism, homophobia, xenophobia, and other forms of hatred in our communities.

9. Sponsor and participate in programs that encourage interracial, intercultural, and inter-religious goodwill and unity.
10. Read the Social Principles of your denomination and strive to make them an integral part of your life and the life of your church and community.



***BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS***  
***TEN PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPIING***  
***THE BELOVED COMMUNITY***

- ✚ IMPERATIVE
- ✚ INSPIRATION
- ✚ INTROPECTION
- ✚ IMAGINATION
- ✚ INTENTIONALITY
- ✚ INVITATION
- ✚ INNOVATION
- ✚ INTERACTION
- ✚ INTERPRETATION
- ✚ INTEGRATION

(These 10 Principles are developed and explicated in *Blessed are the Peacemakers: A Theological Analysis of the Thought of Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr.*, by C. Anthony Hunt, Wyndham Hall Press, 2005.)

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# **MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**

## **AND A MODEL FOR PROPHETIC LEADERSHIP**

(This is an adaption of “I’ve Seen the Promised Land: The Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Prophetic Preaching” in *Stones of Hope: essays, Sermons and Prayers on Religion and Race*, 2017, by C. Anthony Hunt.)

Over the course of his life and ministry, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke to the divine and moral imperative that the church and society share in seeking to eradicate racial hatred, economic oppression and social disintegration, and advanced the appropriation of the Christian love-ethic as foundational for constructively moving toward the realization of authentic community – *Beloved Community*. King asserted that God’s intent is for the human family to live in community as interrelated members. In the final analysis, King’s prophetic leadership, preaching and praxis offer insight for the contemporary church and its leaders - and has implications and application in at least four principle areas: ***Call, Conviction, Courage and Commitment***.

1. ***Call*** - During King’s thirteen year public ministry, it became clear that his praxis of ministry in the public sphere was ultimately rooted in a deep sense of a call by God. This sense of calling is what ultimately spawned his action. Early in his ministry, King came to the conclusion that it was indeed a part of his vocation and calling to become one of the prophetic public voices of the Civil Rights movement, first in Alabama, and then beyond. Likewise, it is incumbent upon leaders today to clearly discern as to if and how they may be called by God to engage in ministry in the public and address prophetic concerns as they emerge in and for the church and society.
2. ***Conviction*** - For King, his sense of calling was acted upon within the context of his convictions. King’s convictions were largely rooted in his understanding of God and people. King believed that all persons were created by God with inherent worth, and that all people were therefore privy to the moral prerogative of human dignity and social justice. King consistently affirmed what he deemed to be the “Somebodiness” of all people regardless of race, class or other categories. Ultimately, it was these convictions that led to his prophetic witness. Likewise, it is incumbent upon leaders who might engage in ministry in the public square today to be equally as clear about their convictions, and what they we believe about God, God’s people and God’s will for peace with justice.
3. ***Courage*** - Courage serves as the measure of the human will to act on our call and convictions – and to say and do what we believe to be just and right. Interestingly - among the books that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. carried with him as he travelled and provided leadership to the Civil Rights movement was Paul Tillich's *The Courage to Be*. Courage to act on one's call and convictions means one is willing to risk much of oneself - one's popularity, promotion and associations for the sake of the causes to which one feels called and convicted to prophetically address.

4. **Commitment** - In the midst of the 381 day Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955-56, King made a statement that would become a signature of his prophetic witness when he said that “True peace is not merely the absence of tension, it is the presence of justice.” He would later state that “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” These two statements speak clearly to King’s commitments to promote racial equality and social justice, his strivings to help eradicate what he deemed to be the “triplets of evil” - racism, poverty and war - and to help move the church and society toward becoming *Beloved Community*. It was out of his sense of calling, conviction and courage that his commitments to do justice derived. Today, prophetic leadership, preaching and praxis likewise call for clear and consistent commitment in light of calling and conviction to do justice, and the courage that we can muster to carry this out.

## ***THE BELOVED COMMUNITY IN A MULTI-FAITH WORLD***

*(These observations are a part of a message delivered at the Central Maryland Ecumenical Council's Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfast on Monday, November 20, 2017.)*

On the brink of the observance of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination on April 4, 1968m here are seven things that he might have to say to the church and society today:

- (1) He might remind us that his singular vision was that the ***“Beloved Community”*** would be realized. This is the ultimate goal for the world.
- (2) He might remind us that ***God has created all of us with inherent worth (somebodiness)***, and we are all welcome in “Beloved Community”.
- (3) He might share that ***we are all inextricably connected as sisters and brothers*** as a part of God’s family. Ours is an “inescapable web of mutuality”. “We will either learn to “live together as sisters and brothers, or we will perish together as fools”.
- (4) He might have us recall that ***ours is to be a constant striving for peace with justice***. “True peace is not merely the absence of tension, but the presence of justice”.
- (5) He might want us to remember that ***the work for righteousness and justice is not to be confined to any one group of people*** (e.g. Black, White, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, left or right).
- (6) He might encourage us to ***never give up hoping***. “Hope is the refusal to give up despite overwhelming odds.”
- (7) And he might remind us that ***the striving for “Beloved Community” must continue until it is realized***. We must never stop dreaming and striving for it. Dr. King dreamt a world where his “children would be judged not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”

# ***THE SOCIAL GOSPEL***

According to Rev. Dr. Walter Rauschenbusch, one of the major adherents of the Social Gospel, “the Kingdom of God is not a matter of getting people to heaven, but of transforming the life in earth into the harmony of heaven.” (*A Theology of the Social Gospel*, 1917) Adherents of the Social Gospel Movement, beginning in the mid-19th Century, through the 20th Century, promoted a progressive form of Christianity, which sought to address concrete spiritual and material needs of people.

Here are seven general tenets of the Social Gospel -

1. God is on the side of the oppressed. The most vulnerable are to be given preference.
2. Salvation is a material concern, as much as it is a spiritual concern. The Gospel beckons believers to work for improved housing, education, health care as other benefits for the less fortunate.
3. Salvation is a communal as much as an individual concern. To honor God, people must put aside their own earthly desires and help other people, especially the needy. It is rooted in social-ethical teaching of Christ (Like 4:18-19; Matthew 5). People must emulate the life of Jesus Christ.
4. There is an interest in the redistribution of power and resources (social, economic, politically).
5. There is a concern for the redistribution of wealth. In the Social Gospel, the purpose of wealth is not to accumulate and hoard it, but to share it with other, less fortunate people.
6. The prophetic voice is equally important as the priestly, and Christians (ministers and laity) should be engaged in the public square.
7. The church is not a servant of the state, but a critic of the state. Dr. King stated that “the church must be reminded that this is not the master or servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and critic of the state, and never its tool.”

# **TEN WAYS TO STRENGTHEN CHURCH, COMMUNITY AND POLICE RELATIONS**

C. Anthony Hunt

*(This article was published in Leading Ideas by the Lewis Center for Church Leadership in March 2017.)*

One key to a church's vitality is the quality of the relationships it establishes with a broad spectrum of leaders and institutions throughout its community. One of the most important set of relationships a church can develop is with police and other public safety officials. Recent well-publicized police-involved shootings and deaths, and the shootings and deaths of a number of police officers around the nation have stained police-community relations and resulted in unrest in many communities.

Working proactively rather than reactively to strengthen a church's relationships with its surrounding community and with police and other public safety officials engenders trust. These strengthened relationships also help improve the quality of life for persons living and working in particular communities. It is a part of the theological task of churches to "seek the welfare" (shalom, peace, well-being) of all people in their respective communities (Jeremiah 29:7). Individuals, churches, groups, organizations, institutions, and even government entities can promote the well-being of communities by making a sincere commitment to strengthening the relationship between the church, the community and the police.

Here are ten ways that individuals, churches, and other community organizations can work toward strengthening these relationships.

1. Pray for the police serving your community.
2. Pray for and publically affirm the police and other public safety officials who are members of your congregation.
3. Know your community police officers by name, and keep their contact information readily available. Schedule regular meetings with community police officers to establish and strengthen relationships.
4. Participate in periodic ride-alongs and community walks with police and community leaders.
5. Invite police to community events held by the church, such as back-to-school events, community meals, and food giveaways.
6. Include local police on the distribution lists for the church newsletter and email communications.

7. Seek to collaborate with community entities like the Chambers of Commerce, NAACP, community associations, PTAs, other churches in the community across denominations, and other faith traditions to address common interests and concerns regarding policing and public safety.
8. Invite community police to speak to youth and young adults in the church.
9. Educate youth and adults on appropriate conduct if stopped by police.
10. Assist police departments in the recruitment of qualified persons in the congregation and community who would serve well as uniformed police officers, especially women and minorities who may be underrepresented.

## ***SOCIAL JUSTICE READING LIST***

*The New Jim Crow* - Michelle Alexander

*Rules for Radicals* – Saul Alinsky

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*The Cost of Discipleship* – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

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*A Black Theology of Liberation* – James Cone

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Angela Davis

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*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* – Paulo Freire

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*Strength to Love - Martin Luther King, Jr.*

“Suffering and Faith” in *The Christian Century* (1966) - Martin Luther King, Jr.

*Why We Can't Wait – Martin Luther King, Jr.*

*Where do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community? – Martin Luther King, Jr.*

*The Autobiography of Malcolm X – Malcom X*

*Where have all the Prophets Gone?: Redeeming Prophetic Preaching in America*

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*Pulpit and Politics: Separation of Church and State in the Black Church*

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*Prophecy Deliverance* – Cornel West

*Race Matters* – Cornel West

*Bonhoeffer's Back Jesus: Renaissance Theology and an Ethic of Resistance*

Reggie Williams

*No Difference in the Fare: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Problem of Racism*

Josiah U. Young

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<sup>i</sup> Kenneth Smith and Ira Zepp, Jr., *Search for the Beloved Community* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press), see pp. 129-156.

<sup>ii</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., “Loving Your Enemies,” *Strength to Love* (New York: York: Harper, 1963), pp. 41-50.

<sup>iii</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., “Suffering and Faith” in *The Christian Century* (Chicago, IL: Christian Century, July 13, 1966).