



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Dear Friends in Christ:

I am writing to you to convey an important date and even more important ministry in which we, as the church, are engaged. This coming April 4 will be the 50th anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I believe it important that we stand together as Christians in a clear response against racism and violence in all its forms. Furthermore, I believe the tragedy of this great leader's death offers us a special time and opportunity to remember his legacy of racial justice and mercy. In pausing to remember, may we rededicate ourselves to a fully inclusive society that honors and loves all of God's children.

I write now to ask that you and your congregation consider in some way recommitting to the call for racial justice and the end of violence in our society on or around April 4th. We live in a nation that has been ripped asunder by deeply imbedded lingering racial divides. I need only mention events like the demonstration in Charlottesville, the mass shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church and the tragedy of violence over shootings of young African American males and police officers. These events cry out to us to be a people of Christ who stand for racial justice in a way that honors all.

I realize that Easter this year is April 1st and that most pastors and churches have appropriately gone "all out" over Holy Week and Easter to walk in the footsteps of Christ to the cross and beyond in the celebration of His resurrection. In most congregations, the Sunday after Easter is one of the lowest attendance Sundays of the year. I further realize that for most pastors it can be difficult to summon a lot of energy to do anything the week immediately following Easter. Thus, I write inviting you at an appropriate time this Spring to lift up, celebrate and remember Dr. King's witness and legacy to us as a Christian saint and the call of Christ that claims all of us to be people at work for justice and mercy in our communities, society and wider world.

It is my hope that pastors and laity will come together lifting the cause of racial justice remembering Dr. King's great Christian witness. I leave it to your best prayerful good judgment on how to best respond and honor this fiftieth anniversary of his death.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Mike Lowry