

LOVE THAT WILL NOT LET ME GO

When one clicks on the web site for the King Center in Atlanta (<http://www.thekingcenter.org/>), the home page is accompanied by the voice of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. acclaiming the power of love: "You only need a heart full of grace, soul generated by love" to serve God. It was this love to which he gave testimony in his 1963 book "Strength to Love." It was this love that undergirded and enabled Dr. King's nation-altering pursuit of peace and social justice.

Dr. King personified the understanding that there is no peace without justice. His pursuit of empowerment for people of color, and for poor people of any color, is perhaps the most popularly recognized aspect of his career. But even more, it is Martin Luther King the peacemaker whom Peace Churches honor. His commitment to nonviolent resistance as a means of achieving social change began when he was a student at Crozier Theological Seminary in 1950. There he was exposed to the teaching of A.J. Muste, a founder of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and the preaching of Mordecai Johnson, both men profoundly influenced by the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. Nine years later, Martin and Coretta Scott King went to India to study first hand Gandhi's techniques of nonviolent social change.

As the Cold War and the Korean War gave way to yet another conflict, Vietnam, Dr. King stood, almost alone among U.S. civil rights leaders, in opposition to the prevailing militaristic zeitgeist. He saw clearly that hate begets only more hate, violence only more violence. The world recognized him as an iconic figure in the struggle for peace when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

in 1964. As Americans continue to face another ongoing war in Iraq, we must also continue to celebrate, as Martin Luther King did, the imperative of Christ-given love for those with whom we are in conflict as a nation and in our daily lives.

One of the ways in which "God is Still Speaking" in the UCC is manifest in the work of the Uprooting Racism Task Force, whose mission is "To uproot racism in ourselves, our churches, and our communities."

Helen MacLam, January 14, 2007

It is unfortunate that two years later we are still involved in the war in Iraq, and violence continues in Afghanistan, Somalia, and elsewhere throughout the world. Please pray for God's help in our struggle for justice and peace.

Betty Keller, January 14, 2009

