

# **BIRMINGHAM, PRIVILEGE & POSSIBILITIES**

NF Conference  
Assembly  
April 16, 2016



**LETTER  
FROM  
BIRMINGHAM  
JAIL**

April 16, 1963

# WHY?

**Why are we talking about White Privilege and Anti-Racism today?**

**Ferguson. Baltimore. Staten Island. North Charleston. Cleveland.**

# IF CURRENT TRENDS CONTINUE..

- **One in Three black men are expected to spend time in prison during their lifetime.**
- **There are 1.5 million black men “missing” in America, because they are either dead or in prison.”**

- Post-recession median household wealth for a white family in 2014 was almost \$142,000, down from \$192,500.
- The median wealth for black households had fallen to \$11,000 from \$19,200.

“I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

-MLK Jr.

## **From the Synod Council Racial Justice Team:**

“People continue to be hurt by the sins of racism. As we acknowledge the sins of racism and how it continues to hurt our communities both black and white, we identify ways in which we are complicit through our action and non-action, and ultimately through repentance and the grace and love of God, we can begin acting in love towards all people transforming our communities. “



Known as a big dreamer Dr. King was committed to the idea of a just community. He sacrificed his freedom for his beliefs, being arrested upward of 25 times.



“When you go forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness" then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait.”

## Table Talk:

- Can you think of a text or story in the Bible when Jesus acknowledges the “somebodiness” of one who is unseen by community or family?
- Have someone in the group with a smart phone google: “First They Came” written by Pastor Martin Niemöller. Reflect and respond in your small group.
- For what are you willing to take a stand? What might you be willing to advocate for?

## 4 C's – Characteristics of MLK Jr.'s approach to social change, organizing, and life in general:

- Courage to see, speak, and hear the truth.
- Creativity to chart the needed often unseen course.
- Compassion for ourselves and our companions along the way.
- Call to conscience, a hope to engage in a deep and meaningful dialogue about race, racism, and structural inequality.



“Jesus Christ,  
was an  
extremist for  
love, truth and  
goodness, and  
thereby rose  
above his  
environment.”

**White skin privilege** is not something that white people necessarily do, create or enjoy on purpose.

- Unlike the more overt individual and institutional manifestations of racism, white skin privilege is a transparent preference for whiteness that saturates our society.
- White privilege provides perks, creates advantages, and shapes the world in which we live — the way that we navigate and interact with one another and with the world.

The Women of the ELCA wrote in a statement in 2009:

- We believe the gospel calls us to repel racism. We believe that the love of God revealed to us through Christ' death, burial, and resurrection made us one family of humanity. Our justification has reconciled us to God and to each other. Therefore, we must learn how to recognize, name, and reject racism.
- We believe the gospel calls us to dismantle racism. Racism divides God's people and is therefore, an assault on the very gospel of Jesus Christ and the family of God.
- We hope to capture glimpses of God's creation as God created it – in wholeness and diversity.

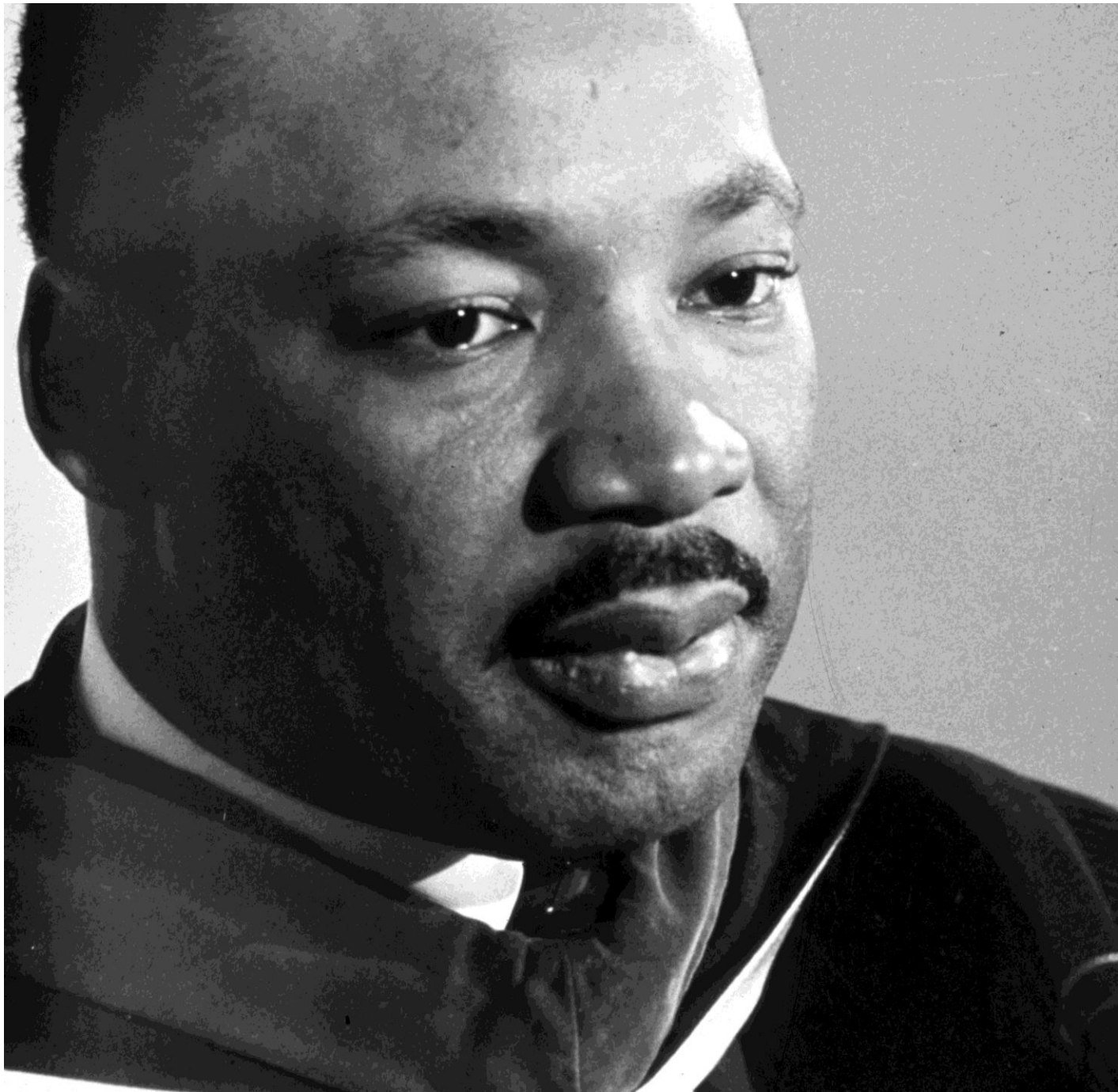
Why should one engage in this process of with your community concerning Racial Justice?

Because...

- Engaging in this process is good for the health of your faith community. As members who dialogue with one another, we begin to practice putting into speech the action of God's loving purpose for the world.

- We begin to create a more vibrant faith community truly reflective of God's diverse creation.
- We practice the skills of engaging the community members around us in a respectful grace filled way that allows our communities to deal with potentially conflict laden issues in healthier more productive ways.





WE  
SHARE A  
DREAM

## Next Steps:

- Read Michelle Alexander's, The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness in preparation for Synod Assembly.
- Ask your Rostered Leaders and voting members to synod assembly about their experiences and discussions.
- Receive and consider the Congregational Resource Packet which leads congregations in a seasonal discussion on racial justice and white privilege and includes concrete action steps congregations may follow.