



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

LESSON 48

MEN WHO STRUGGLED FOR JUSTICE

You may summarize the stories in order to tell about all three men in one lesson, choose just one man's story to tell, tell each one over three successive weeks, or decide on some other combination that works for your setting.

Summary of Today's Story

Over the years, the Episcopal Church has designated a number of men and women to be specially commemorated in the Church calendar. Many of these people are individuals whom the whole Church regards as "saints." Some of these people were martyrs, but many lived without persecution. Some are universally known, but some are known only in the Anglican Communion, and many are barely known to most people in the Church. Some were devout, all were faithful Christians, but none were perfect. All were models of the faith.

We call these saints "Easter people" because they lived and preached the Easter message of Christ's saving death and resurrection. "Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?" we are asked in our Baptismal Covenant. The three men we hear about in today's lessons—

Absalom Jones, Martin Luther King Jr. and Jonathan Myrick Daniels—Easter people all, fulfilled this promise to the end. Thus they proclaimed in their lives the Good News of God in Christ. Look for these special qualities in the lives of the people that we are studying today:

Absalom Jones: Courage, reconciling love, freedom for God's people.

Martin Luther King Jr.: Prophetic voice, love, liberty, mercy, singleness of heart.

Jonathan Myrick Daniels: Faithful witness, sacrificial love.

When the Church Celebrates Their Ministry

February 13: Absalom Jones, priest (died 1818)

April 4 or January 15: Martin Luther King, Jr., civil rights leader and prophet (died 1968). April commemorates his death, the date that the church traditionally uses for commemoration. January is the national holiday that commemorates his birth.

August 14: Jonathan Myrick Daniels, seminarian and witness for civil rights (died 1965)

In the book *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, now published as *Holy Women, Holy Men* (NY: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2010), you can find a short biography and Scripture readings, arranged by date, for these saints. The suggested Bible readings during this lesson's Prayer time are those included in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* or *Holy Women, Holy Men*.



Weaving Our Story with the Biblical Story

The lives of these three men—Absalom, Martin and Jonathan—cover a wide span of time. The struggle to

gain freedom and justice for African Americans has been a very long struggle, which continues to this day.

Absalom's journey from being an enslaved person to being the "Black Bishop of the Episcopal Church" begins early on, when he buys the freedom of his wife before he buys his own freedom. The power of his integrity, as he struggles to affirm the dignity of the African-American people in his diocese, affects everyone with whom he works. He leads his flock with such compassion mixed with righteousness that he lifts up the whole city. When God's justice and compassion are practiced, all of the children of God are raised up.

Jonathan was but a young seminarian when he lost his life to protect a girl from an angry man with a gun during the civil rights conflicts in the South. From his journals we learn of his profound commitment to furthering the reign of God by working to bring God's justice to society. At the end, he followed the example of his Lord, who told his disciples at their last supper together, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." (John 15:13)

Martin also laid down his life for his friends. And he counted the whole world as his friends, even when they vilified and hated him for his work towards a world of righteousness and justice for all people. Martin's unrelenting insistence on peaceful means and nonviolence to combat evil makes him a true prophetic voice in this world of violence. His speeches, sermons and writings are full of passion for the truth of God's reign, tinged with sorrow for those who cannot see that truth. They are full of reproach for those who refuse to follow the truth. And they are full of compassion for all of us for whom the reign of God and the Good News of Christ are so distant. His words of love combined with his insistence on justice are words that all of us should heed. And his dedication to living out his deep faith is a dedication that inspires us all.



The Episcopal Thread

Absalom initially was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, but he left when it rejected his people. Happily, we have mostly learned from his example, and we honor him, sometimes with special services on or near his feast day.

Jonathan was an Episcopal seminarian, but his witness is non-denominational. Still, we see in him the Anglican commitment to social justice.

Martin was Baptist, but he was a prophet for all of us, and his words call out the prophetic voice that Episcopalians commit to when we make our vows in our Baptismal Covenant.

In the Episcopal Church, we regard them as "saints" not because they performed any miracles or lived perfect lives without sin. We call them "saints" because of their fidelity to Jesus Christ and their lives of devotion to following his example. We call them "saints" because they are examples for us, not of earthly perfection, but of ordinary people living extraordinary lives dedicated to Christ. They all have special qualities that can teach

us how we too can be faithful Christians, following in his footsteps as they did.

The Episcopal Church, in its triennial General Convention, makes changes to the Church calendar, as more individuals are recognized as holy people for us. The calendar on pages 19-30 of the *Book of Common Prayer* lists, by date, the names of people who are commemorated as of the printing of the 1979 Prayer Book. Since then, many more people have been added. The companion book *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* is a resource for the special days to be observed in the Church, including the various “saints” as designated by the Episcopal Church. It was updated every three years to reflect the triennial changes made by General Convention, and in its last reprinting in 2010, its title was changed to *Holy Women, Holy Men*. Information in these books is arranged by date—usually the date of their death, not their birth. For each person or persons commemorated there is a special prayer, Scripture readings and a brief biography.

Where Holy Eucharist, Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer are held daily in a church, these saints are often remembered on their day of commemoration. The officiant or celebrant will use the opening collect and the readings for the day’s worship. Often a brief homily will offer thoughts on why this person is important to us and what we can learn from her or him.



Gathering

As the children enter the room, engage them in a simple activity that relates to today’s lesson.

Very young children may color a picture or work on a simple craft. See Gathering Activity Ideas in the Appendix (also downloadable) for suggestions.

Older children may need a few minutes for socializing with their peers.

After all the children have arrived and had a few minutes of activity or fellowship time, gather them together and say a simple opening prayer, such as this one:

- Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have brought us together today here in church. Open our eyes and our ears so that we can hear your Word and see your love in this room and in this world. Bless us all now, we ask in Jesus’ name. Amen.



Telling the Story

Stories about today’s saints are printed at the end of the lesson plan (pp. 7-10) for you to use for storytelling. If you know additional interesting stories about today’s saints, share them with the children.

There are several biographies of Martin Luther King, Jr. for children, including a children’s book of his famous “I Have a Dream” speech itself, with powerful and wonderful pictures by various artists illustrating the speech (*I Have a Dream* by Martin Luther King Jr., foreword by Coretta Scott King, New York: Scholastic Press, 2007).

You may use any of these enhancements to bring the story to life for the children:

- puppets: hand puppets, stick puppets, marionettes
- flannel board with felt or paper figures
- expressive voice
- drama (*Invite the children to act out the major roles.*)

Let the children hear the story without analyzing it for them or discussing it. For now, simply let the story sink into their minds and hearts. Later, while having snacks, you can bring up the story again and invite the children to talk about it and explore its message.



Prayer

Set up a small worship center in your room.

Materials:

- small table with a cloth to cover it
- 2 candles or a single large Christ candle
- matches
- Bible
- cross
- optional:* flowers (real, artificial or handmade by the children)

Have the children set up a simple altar with the materials listed above. Invite them to place on the altar any drawings or crafts that they created during Gathering time. Then light the candles.

Read a verse of today's scripture from a Bible. If working mainly with older children, you might expand the reading to several verses.

Suggestions for the reading:

Absalom Jones:

- Isaiah 42:5-9 (light to the nations)
- Isaiah 61:1-4 (Good news of deliverance)
- John 15:12-15 (Jesus' new commandment)

Martin Luther King Jr.:

- Exodus 3:7-12 (call of Moses at the burning bush)
- Luke 6:27-36 (love your enemies)

Jonathan Myrick Daniels:

- Luke 1:46-55 (Mary's song of praise)
- Galatians 3:22-28 (law replaced by faith)

Help familiarize the children with our liturgy by doing the reading as it is done in church. Read as follows:

Reader: A reading from the book of ____: (*Read the selected passage.*)

Reader: The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Invite the children to sit in a circle and join in prayer. Say a brief prayer yourself, then invite prayers from each child in the circle:

- Invite prayers of thanks for God's work in our lives during the past week. Encourage them to see how much God is at work in them.
- Welcome any prayers of concern or petition. Pray for the sick, the hungry and homeless and all those in need. Invite children to share any concerns for themselves or others.
- Ask if anyone has had a birthday or celebrated a special day during the past week and give thanks for these special times.
- End by praying together the Lord's Prayer.

Carefully extinguish the candles.



Sharing

As you pass out snacks, say a simple grace, such as:

- Bless this food we are about to eat. Give food to those who are hungry, and give justice to those of us who have plenty of food. *Amen.*

If you wish, have children share a favorite grace from home or church camp. If everyone knows the prayer, pray it aloud together.

This is an excellent time, while sharing a snack, to begin talking about the story that the children have just heard. Wonder with the children:

- What can we learn from the lives and beliefs of Absalom, Martin and Jonathan?
- Why is their work so important for us?
- What problems do we have in this country that we need to resolve to make it a better place to live? Are there still poor people? Are there still people who are treated unfairly?
- Do you know of children who are teased or bullied?

Very young children may see this issue more personally and may mention family contexts and how they are treated there. Older children can look at issues specifically related to injustice against African Americans or other ethnic minorities or religious minorities.



Activities: Arts, Crafts, Games, Drama, etc.

After Sharing, begin an activity to supplement and enhance today's story. While the children are doing an activity, talk about the story so that they make the connection.

Suggested story-related activities are provided at the end of this lesson on pages 11-25.

Additional activity ideas can be found on pages 3-6 in the Appendix (also downloadable) where we've provided suggestions and directions for a variety of general activities that can be adapted to any lesson. Also included are outreach and service projects that can be done at any time.

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS WEEK'S SESSION



THREADS Take-Home Paper

At the end of this lesson you will find a two-page take-home paper for families called *Threads*. *Threads* provides parents with a briefer version of the information on scripture and Episcopal faith found in the introduction to the lesson, as well as multiple suggestions for household activities and prayer. Parents can use *Threads* to continue each child's classroom experience at home throughout the week. We suggest duplicating and distributing these two pages to children and/or their parents at the end of each lesson.



Memorization

A good spiritual guidepost is Luke 6:27, one of the readings for

Martin Luther King Jr.:

- Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.

Suggestions for ways to help the children with their memorization can be found on page 15 in the Appendix (also downloadable).



Weaving the Family of God

As your time together draws to a close, take a few minutes to help

the children summarize the story and say what they learned today by asking questions such as:

- Who did we talk about today?
- What do you remember about something they did to help God and others?
- Who should be treated fairly? (The answer: "Everybody.")
- What did Absalom, Martin and Jonathan show and teach us about people?

Encourage the children to remember key words from the story, such as: *prophet, civil rights, freedom, justice, love.*



Closing Prayer

Before the children leave, say a closing prayer to send them into the church worship service or

back to their homes with God's love and blessing.

The prayer can be very simple, such as this one:

- Almighty God, we thank you for the love that you give us every day. We thank you for giving us people like Absalom, Martin and Jonathan as examples for us of how to follow Jesus. Send us out now to love and serve you, and to love our families, friends and neighbors. We pray this in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

End with a dismissal used in church, such as

- Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

The children respond:

- Thanks be to God!



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

MEN WHO STRUGGLED FOR JUSTICE

(Note: You may summarize the stories in order to tell about all three men in one lesson, choose just one man's story to tell, tell each one over three successive weeks or decide on some other combination that works for your setting.)

Today we are going to hear about three men who dedicated their lives to making the United States a more just and free country for everyone. They used the power of love and compassion and mercy, and the rightness of their cause, as the way to make changes.

These men were also important in our Church. Sometimes we call such people “saints.” We might also call them “Easter people.” When we say that somebody is a saint, it doesn’t mean that they are people with super powers. In our church, a saint is somebody who loves God and who tried to do what God wanted them to do. Some of these people are famous, and you may already know their names—St. Patrick, St. Nicholas, for example. But many saints are not famous at all. They didn’t do anything amazing that the whole world knows about, but they did God’s work. There may be saints like that whom you know—people like your grandmother who cared for her children when they were sick, your uncle who quietly gave his life savings to his church, or the stranger on the street who smiles and listens to homeless people and gives them hope and friendship. Saints are regular people like you and me who do God’s work. For the next few weeks in church school we will be hearing about some of the saints our Church wants us to know about.

* * * * *

In 1746, more than 250 years ago, Absalom Jones was born an enslaved person in Delaware. He taught himself how to read the New Testament and other books. When he was 16 years old, he was sold to a store owner, who let him go to a night school for African-Americans. When he was 20, he got married to another slave, and then he bought her freedom with the money he had been earning at the store. When he was 38, he bought his own freedom.

Absalom went to St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church. When he was there, he served as a lay minister for its black members. At that time, in this church, the black and white members worshiped together, sharing the same space, but the two groups did not interact as equal partners. That is why Absalom served the black members, and a white minister served the white members. Initially, there were only a few African-American members. But under Absalom's care, the black membership was growing larger and church leaders decided to separate the people—what we call “segregation.” So one day without warning, during the Sunday worship service, the ushers directed the black worshipers to move from their regular pews where they were sitting to a separate space upstairs all by themselves. Indignantly, the blacks got up in a group and walked out of the church.

These African-American Christians, under Absalom's leadership, soon built a church. It was the first African-American Episcopal parish, named St. Thomas African Episcopal Church. It was located in Philadelphia, in the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania...and still exists today! Eventually he was ordained a deacon, then a priest.

Absalom was a good preacher, who spoke often against slavery. He was beloved by his people because he was so kind and gentle, and he visited them often to take care of them. He became known as “the Black Bishop of the Episcopal Church.”



Jonathan Daniels was born almost 200 years later than Absalom, in 1939, but he lived and died for the same thing: dignity for the African-American people.

When Jonathan was young, he could not decide what he wanted to do. Maybe he wanted to practice medicine, be an ordained priest, be a lawyer, and write books. But one day, when he was in church, he had a powerful meeting with God, and his faith became strong. He decided to become a priest.

When Jonathan was 26 years old, he heard Martin Luther King Jr. ask everyone to come to Selma, Alabama, to help all people gain the right to vote. At that time in the United States, African-American people often were prevented from voting. So Jonathan went to his school and asked to be able to work in Selma for a while. Before he left, he went to Evening Prayer at church and heard the “Song of Mary” sung: “He hath put down the mighty...” Hearing these words, he became very sure that what he was about to do would be the right thing.

For us today it might be hard to imagine that working for voting rights for everyone was dangerous work, but it was. One hot day, August 14, 1965, Jonathan was part of a picket line for voting rights, and he, along with many other people, was put in jail. But then, suddenly, they were let out of jail. As they left, they knew they were in great danger. There were many people who hated what Jonathan and his companions were doing.

Four of them walked to a small store and began walking up the steps of the store entrance. When Ruby Sales, a 16-year-old girl, got to the top step, a man with a gun suddenly appeared and began to curse her. Jonathan quickly pulled her to one side to shield her from those awful threats. Just as he did this, the man opened fire with his gun, and Jonathan was hit. The gunshot wound killed him, but Ruby was saved.

Today we remember Jonathan as a martyr for Christ.



Martin Luther King Jr. was the pastor of an ordinary Baptist church in Montgomery, Alabama.

One day in 1955 a woman named Rosa Parks refused to ride in the back of the city bus, as all African-Americans were “supposed to do.” Her brave

act became the beginning of the Montgomery bus boycott, as thousands of African-Americans joined her in refusing to ride the buses until black people could be seated with dignity, wherever they wished. Martin became the leader of this boycott, and suddenly the whole nation knew who he was.

Martin then started a group that would lead peaceful, nonviolent rallies for justice and freedom for all people, especially African-Americans. Martin always insisted that there never, ever be any violence used against those who opposed them, even when those opponents used violence against Martin's people. The forces that wanted to keep the blacks down used sticks, guns, tear gas, fire hoses and dogs, but Martin and his people had only the power of truth and love.

Eventually, the government began to see that his cause was right, and Martin's work was thus very important in passing the country's Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s.

Martin was always in great danger. Many people were very angry at what he was trying to do for African-Americans, to make everyone free and equal. His home was bombed once. He was stabbed almost to death. He got many death threats. He was put in jail 30 times by the government. But he had deep faith in God and the work God called him to do.

Late one night, Martin received a really vicious death threat on the telephone. Alone in his kitchen, he cried and prayed to God. Then he heard the Lord saying, "Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness. Stand up for justice." And God promised never to leave Martin alone. "No, never alone." This late-night meeting with God reminded him of Jesus' Transfiguration on the mountaintop, so Martin called this night his "Mountaintop Experience."

One evening in Memphis, Tennessee, Martin stepped outside his hotel room onto the balcony. Someone shot him then, killing him. He was only 39 years old. The whole country mourned him greatly, for he truly was a prophet of this country, calling us to love, justice and dignity for every human being.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

TORCH FOR FREEDOM

for Preschool, Primary

Children make a torch from colored paper to symbolize the light of freedom that Absalom, Jonathan and Martin worked for. Their own handprints show that freedom comes from the work of our hands and hearts.

Materials:

yellow, orange and red construction paper
yellow, orange and red tissue paper
paper towel or toilet tissue tube
gray or brown construction paper
scissors
pencils
tape or glue

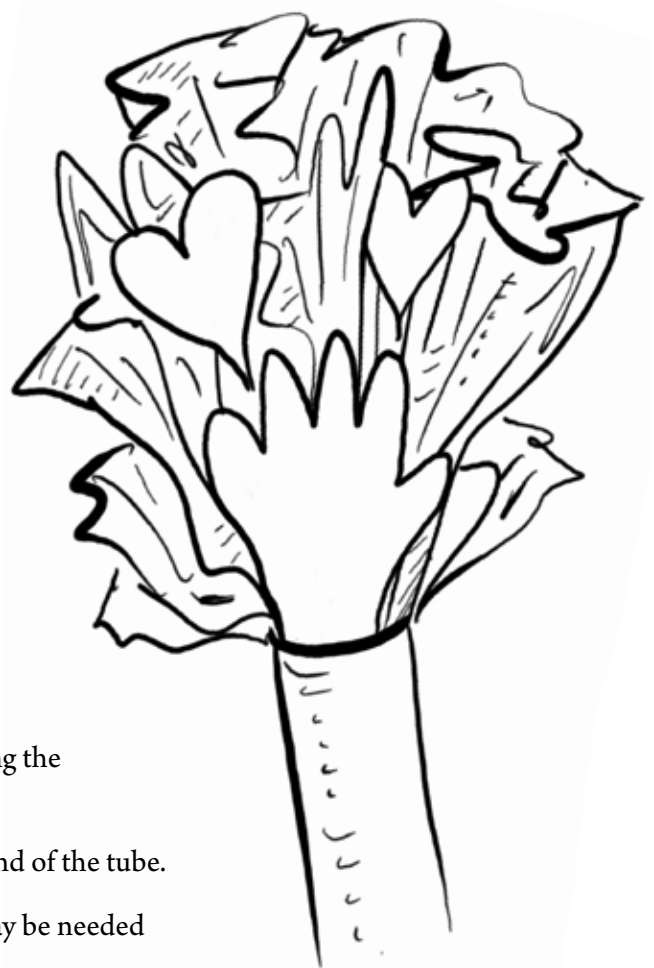
Preparation:

Cut some elongated hearts from red construction paper, at least one or two per child.

Directions:

Invite each child to make a torch as follows:

1. Cut a piece of gray or brown paper so that it will fit around the paper tube. Then use tape or glue to attach it to the tube.
2. Outline your hand on red, yellow and orange construction paper and cut out. You will then have three handprints.
3. Crinkle up some yellow, orange and red tissue paper by pinching the center and scrunching up the edges.
4. Tape the pointed ends of the tissue paper to the inside of one end of the tube.
5. Glue the handprints and the hearts to the tissue paper. Tape may be needed to hold these more securely.





WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

WORKING TOGETHER

for Preschool, Primary

Children carry balloon “friends” in this cooperative game that teaches children about caring for others.

Materials:

- 1 towel for every four children
- 1 balloon for every 4 children

Preparation:

Blow up the balloons and draw a face on each one.

Directions:

1. Help children to gather in groups of four at one end of the room.
2. Give each group a towel and a balloon. Each child will hold a different corner of the towel.
3. Put a balloon head in the center of the towel. “This is _____, who needs our help. Martin Luther King told us to work together to help each other. Can you work together to bring _____ to the other side of the room without dropping him on the floor?”
4. Then go to the other end, where you will greet the children and praise them as they accomplish their goal.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

MULTICULTURAL CROSS

for Preschool, Primary

Children make a collage of faces and arrange them in a cross shape, a reminder that everybody is welcome at Jesus' table.

Materials:

magazine pictures, with pictures of people of all races and nationalities
cross picture (p. 14)
scissors
glue
large construction paper, any color (12" x 18")
milky pens or markers

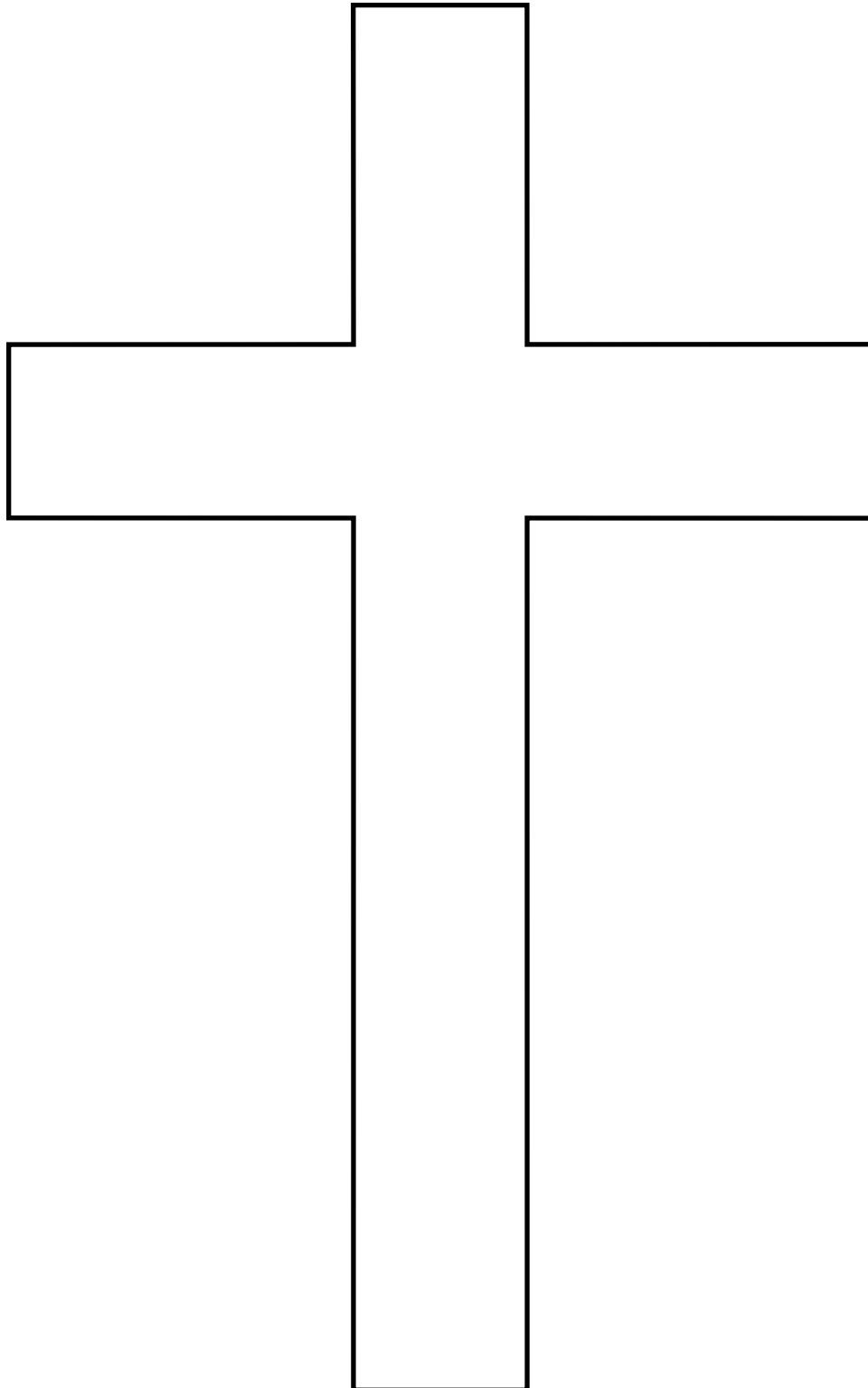
Preparation:

Make a copy of the cross for each child. If you wish, enlarge it.

Directions:

Invite each child to make a cross as follows:

1. Find pictures of people of every ethnic group. Cut these out and glue to the cross. You may cut off the edges to finish it, if you wish, or let the pictures make a jagged edge on the cross.
2. Glue the cross onto a piece of construction paper.
3. On the paper, write, *Everyone Is Welcome to Christ's Table*.





WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

WEAPONS OR LOVE?

for Primary

Children play a game of choices and action that reminds them of today's stories about the Civil Rights Movement and the choices Martin and Jonathan made.

Materials:

masking tape

Preparation:

Use masking tape to mark a line in the middle of the room.

Directions:

1. Invite the children to stand on one side of the line.
2. When you say, "To the streets!" have the children get ready to jump across the line.
3. When you say, "Fight with weapons!" everyone should jump to the other side of the line. When you say, "Win with love!" everyone should jump back to the original side. They should only jump back and forth when you say those exact words, "Fight with weapons" and "Win with love."
4. Keep kids on their toes by mixing up the phrases or using other words such as "Win with weapons" or "Fight with love" or "Stop the weapons."



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

“ALL GOD’S FAMILY” COOKIES

for Preschool, Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

Children make no-bake cookies from distinctive ingredients, each one tasty. They are like people—with all kinds of gifts and characteristics we make up God’s family.

Materials:

- plastic resealable sandwich bags
- 4 tablespoons, one for each ingredient
- peanut butter
- powdered sugar
- oatmeal
- raisins or chocolate chips

Directions:

1. Give each child a plastic bag. Explain that the ingredients used to make the cookies can be like the different gifts that God gives to each of us. As they are mixed together, they make a mixture that is better than if we have only powdered sugar in our cookies, or only oatmeal. All of the ingredients add to the cookie, just as all of us add to God’s family.
2. Have children add to their bags:
 - 1 spoonful of peanut butter (If any child has a peanut butter allergy, you can try leaving out the peanut butter.)
 - 4 spoonfuls of powdered sugar
 - 2 spoonfuls of oatmeal
 - 1 spoonful of raisins or chocolate chips

Add more sugar if the mixture is too sticky, more peanut butter if too crumbly.
3. Have children seal their bags and mix up the ingredients by squeezing the bag with their hands.
4. When the ingredients are mixed thoroughly, the “cookie” is ready to eat!



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

SCRATCH PICTURES

for Elementary

Children make a monochrome picture that reveals a colorful design underneath when the surface is scratched.

Materials:

white construction paper
crayons
black poster paint
paintbrushes
popsicle sticks
toothpicks

Directions:

Invite each child to make a picture as follows:

1. Cover your entire paper with large blocks of different bright colors of crayons. Make the colors nice and dark and thick. Do not make a design: Just apply the colors.
2. Cover over the crayon paper with black poster paint. Let dry.
3. Now use a stick or plastic knife, or some other fairly sharp instrument, to scratch a picture out of your black page. Scratch it lightly, and the black paint will come off, leaving multicolor lines from the crayons.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

SEED AND FELT PICTURE

for Elementary, Intermediate

Children use seeds of varied shapes and colors to make a design on felt.

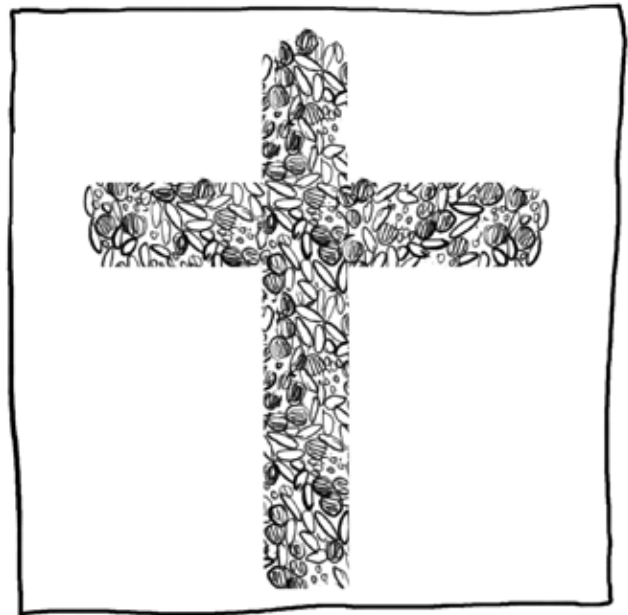
Materials:

- various kinds of seeds, of various colors
- dark felt fabric
- fabric scissors
- liquid glue
- chalk or other material for drawing on the felt

Directions:

Invite each child to make a picture as follows:

1. Cut felt to the size you want for your picture. 8" square is a manageable size.
2. Use the chalk to make a simple design on the felt.
Suggestions: a cross, a peace sign, a heart, a Christian fish symbol, a star.
3. Apply glue to a section of the design. Generously sprinkle one kind of seed onto that portion.
Let dry for a minute, then pour off the excess.
4. Continue to glue and then put seeds on the design until you have finished the picture.
Let the whole thing dry before taking home.





WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

“WE HAVE A DREAM” GROUP BOOK for Elementary, Intermediate

Children make a book or mural together that can be displayed in your church.

Materials:

- large white construction paper
- 2 colored pieces of construction paper for the book cover
- markers
- pencils
- hole punch
- ribbon or key rings

Directions:

1. Give each child a piece of paper. Explain about Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Invite them to think of a dream they may have for this country, for justice and for people everywhere. You can discuss these ideas together as a group, or have children think individually and privately about their own dream for people.
2. Each child then draws one of the dreams on paper and writes on the bottom of the paper what that dream is, beginning with "I have a dream that..."
3. Use the other two sheets of construction paper and decorate a cover for the book. You can have each child contribute a picture or words to this cover. Have everyone decide on the title, and then add that, too.
4. When you have all of the papers, punch holes at the side or top and put ribbon or key rings through, to bind the pages together into one book.

Variation:

Instead of making a giant book, use butcher paper and make a giant mural to put up in the hallway.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

TALENT COMES IN MANY COLORS

for Elementary, Intermediate

In this game children make a colorful picture although each person has only one crayon. They consider how that is like the unique gifts and talents God has given each of us.

Materials:

- paper
- crayons of assorted colors, including brown, gray and black

Directions:

1. Invite the children to sit around a table. Give each child a piece of paper and a crayon. Make sure that no two children have the same color of crayon, and that brown, black and gray crayons are included.
2. Give children five minutes to create the most original and well-developed pictures they can with the color of crayon they have been given.
3. After each minute, they will be told to pass the paper they have been drawing on to the child to their left, without discussion. They then have a minute to draw on the second paper, with their one color of crayon.
4. After five minutes, the papers will have gone through five children. Pass the papers back to their original owner and ask questions such as:
 - What do you think was the best thing you did to that paper?
 - Did the color you were given automatically tell you the value of what you were able to add to the picture?
 - If you have dull color, did you feel like you couldn't contribute anything valuable to the picture?
5. Then suggest to the children that the biggest difference in what someone drew was not the color of crayon but how the color was used. What does that tell us about the gifts that we have been given by God?



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

FREEDOM AND LIBERTY PAPER CHAIN for Intermediate

Children work together to make links in a freedom and liberty chain, made up of compassion, respect and mercy.

Materials:

construction paper
scissors
markers
stapler

Preparation:

Cut the construction paper into 1" wide strips.

Directions:

Invite the children to make a chain as follows:

1. On each strip of paper, write a value, gift, talent or deed that frees us and frees all people. This may include such things as earning enough money to live on, having enough food to eat, laws that protect our rights to free speech and to worship as we please, as well as more abstract things such as respect, compassion and tolerance for differences.
2. Share your ideas and thoughts with each other.
3. Staple to strips together to make a long chain, and hang it in your room as a reminder of our baptismal covenant promise to "respect the dignity of every human being."



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

DIVERSITY BEAN CROSS

for Elementary, Intermediate

Children use beans of various shapes and colors to make a cross.

Materials:

large white paper plate
various kinds of beans of different colors: garbanzo, kidney, small red, lima, etc.
thin markers
liquid glue

Directions:

Invite each child to make a cross as follows:

1. Use the marker to draw a wide cross on the inside of the plate.
2. Decide which bean or beans you want to use for the cross, and for outside the cross. You can use various beans, as long as you will be able to distinguish the cross when the picture is finished.
3. Use the black marker to draw—carefully—a tiny face on each bean. Then glue the beans in place.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

SOLIDARITY WITH THE NEEDY

for Elementary, Intermediate

In this game, children work together to free themselves from their knotty situation!

Materials:

optional: a timer

Directions:

1. Invite all the children to hold hands and stretch out in a line across the playing area.
2. At your signal, have the players at each end begin going in and out and under and around the others, to tie the group into a huge knot.
3. Then set the timer and see if they can work together to untangle themselves before the timer runs out. They will need to work together as they straighten themselves out!

Variation:

Assign one child to be “Martin Luther King.” That child turns his or her back while the group ties itself into a knot. Then set the timer and have the player work to “free the group” before time runs out.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

TOGETHER AND DIFFERENT

for Elementary, Intermediate

Children play a cooperative game that uses the diverse responsibilities of all.

Materials:

playground ball
masking tape

Preparation:

You will need a fairly large open space for this game. Put a line of masking tape down the middle of the room or playing area to establish a center line.

Directions:

1. Invite the children to form two teams. Have each team number off by threes. Assign the following roles for each number:
 - *ones* can only catch the ball
 - *twos* can only throw the ball
 - *threes* can only pick up the ball
2. Play the game like Dodgeball, trying to tag members of the other team with the ball. But each member of the group can only do what his or her number allows.
3. If a child is tagged, he or she must join the other group.
4. Play until there is only one person left on a side. If you play again, assign new numbers.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

SIX O'CLOCK NEWS

for Intermediate

Children make a television news program focused on events in the lives of the men in today's lesson, as well as other civil rights events.

Materials:

- video camcorder (or an audio tape recorder)
- fake microphone
- any props for the scenes you decide on

Directions:

Invite the children to put together the news program as follows:

1. Make up a script for each of the news items that you will report on. Review today's story to decide on scenes. Possibilities include the bus boycott at Selma, Martin's "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington, D.C., his assassination in Tennessee, and Jonathan's murder in Selma. There was no TV at the time of Absalom, but try to find a way to include in your news broadcast the story about those church members walking out of the church after the ushers tried to move them.
2. Choose your news anchor, your television reporter, and the main people: Absalom, Martin, Jonathan and other people involved in the events you choose to cover.
3. Tape your show, and then play it back for yourselves or for another group of children or for adults.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

STORY AND THREADS

This lesson relates a story not found in the Bible. You will need, therefore, to send today's story home with children along with *Threads*. For each child, print out the remainder of the pages in this lesson, which includes both the story and *Threads*



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

MEN WHO STRUGGLED FOR JUSTICE

(Note: You may summarize the stories in order to tell about all three men in one lesson, choose just one man's story to tell, tell each one over three successive weeks or decide on some other combination that works for your setting.)

Today we are going to hear about three men who dedicated their lives to making the United States a more just and free country for everyone. They used the power of love and compassion and mercy, and the rightness of their cause, as the way to make changes.

These men were also important in our Church. Sometimes we call such people “saints.” We might also call them “Easter people.” When we say that somebody is a saint, it doesn’t mean that they are people with super powers. In our church, a saint is somebody who loves God and who tried to do what God wanted them to do. Some of these people are famous, and you may already know their names—St. Patrick, St. Nicholas, for example. But many saints are not famous at all. They didn’t do anything amazing that the whole world knows about, but they did God’s work. There may be saints like that whom you know—people like your grandmother who cared for her children when they were sick, your uncle who quietly gave his life savings to his church, or the stranger on the street who smiles and listens to homeless people and gives them hope and friendship. Saints are regular people like you and me who do God’s work. For the next few weeks in church school we will be hearing about some of the saints our Church wants us to know about.



In 1746, more than 250 years ago, Absalom Jones was born an enslaved person in Delaware. He taught himself how to read the New Testament and other books. When he was 16 years old, he was sold to a store owner, who let him go to a night school for African-Americans. When he was 20, he got married to another slave, and then he bought her freedom with the money he had been earning at the store. When he was 38, he bought his own freedom.

Absalom went to St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church. When he was there, he served as a lay minister for its black members. At that time, in this church, the black and white members worshiped together, sharing the same space, but the two groups did not interact as equal partners. That is why Absalom served the black members, and a white minister served the white members. Initially, there were only a few African-American members. But under Absalom's care, the black membership was growing larger and church leaders decided to separate the people—what we call “segregation.” So one day without warning, during the Sunday worship service, the ushers directed the black worshipers to move from their regular pews where they were sitting to a separate space upstairs all by themselves. Indignantly, the blacks got up in a group and walked out of the church.

These African-American Christians, under Absalom's leadership, soon built a church. It was the first African-American Episcopal parish, named St. Thomas African Episcopal Church. It was located in Philadelphia, in the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania...and still exists today! Eventually he was ordained a deacon, then a priest.

Absalom was a good preacher, who spoke often against slavery. He was beloved by his people because he was so kind and gentle, and he visited them often to take care of them. He became known as “the Black Bishop of the Episcopal Church.”



Jonathan Daniels was born almost 200 years later than Absalom, in 1939, but he lived and died for the same thing: dignity for the African-American people.

When Jonathan was young, he could not decide what he wanted to do. Maybe he wanted to practice medicine, be an ordained priest, be a lawyer, and write books. But one day, when he was in church, he had a powerful meeting with God, and his faith became strong. He decided to become a priest.

When Jonathan was 26 years old, he heard Martin Luther King Jr. ask everyone to come to Selma, Alabama, to help all people gain the right to vote. At that time in the United States, African-American people often were prevented from voting. So Jonathan went to his school and asked to be able to work in Selma for a while. Before he left, he went to Evening Prayer at church and heard the “Song of Mary” sung: “He hath put down the mighty...” Hearing these words, he became very sure that what he was about to do would be the right thing.

For us today it might be hard to imagine that working for voting rights for everyone was dangerous work, but it was. One hot day, August 14, 1965, Jonathan was part of a picket line for voting rights, and he, along with many other people, was put in jail. But then, suddenly, they were let out of jail. As they left, they knew they were in great danger. There were many people who hated what Jonathan and his companions were doing.

Four of them walked to a small store and began walking up the steps of the store entrance. When Ruby Sales, a 16-year-old girl, got to the top step, a man with a gun suddenly appeared and began to curse her. Jonathan quickly pulled her to one side to shield her from those awful threats. Just as he did this, the man opened fire with his gun, and Jonathan was hit. The gunshot wound killed him, but Ruby was saved.

Today we remember Jonathan as a martyr for Christ.



Martin Luther King Jr. was the pastor of an ordinary Baptist church in Montgomery, Alabama.

One day in 1955 a woman named Rosa Parks refused to ride in the back of the city bus, as all African-Americans were “supposed to do.” Her brave

act became the beginning of the Montgomery bus boycott, as thousands of African-Americans joined her in refusing to ride the buses until black people could be seated with dignity, wherever they wished. Martin became the leader of this boycott, and suddenly the whole nation knew who he was.

Martin then started a group that would lead peaceful, nonviolent rallies for justice and freedom for all people, especially African-Americans. Martin always insisted that there never, ever be any violence used against those who opposed them, even when those opponents used violence against Martin's people. The forces that wanted to keep the blacks down used sticks, guns, tear gas, fire hoses and dogs, but Martin and his people had only the power of truth and love.

Eventually, the government began to see that his cause was right, and Martin's work was thus very important in passing the country's Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s.

Martin was always in great danger. Many people were very angry at what he was trying to do for African-Americans, to make everyone free and equal. His home was bombed once. He was stabbed almost to death. He got many death threats. He was put in jail 30 times by the government. But he had deep faith in God and the work God called him to do.

Late one night, Martin received a really vicious death threat on the telephone. Alone in his kitchen, he cried and prayed to God. Then he heard the Lord saying, "Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness. Stand up for justice." And God promised never to leave Martin alone. "No, never alone." This late-night meeting with God reminded him of Jesus' Transfiguration on the mountaintop, so Martin called this night his "Mountaintop Experience."

One evening in Memphis, Tennessee, Martin stepped outside his hotel room onto the balcony. Someone shot him then, killing him. He was only 39 years old. The whole country mourned him greatly, for he truly was a prophet of this country, calling us to love, justice and dignity for every human being.

LESSON 48: MEN WHO STRUGGLED FOR JUSTICE

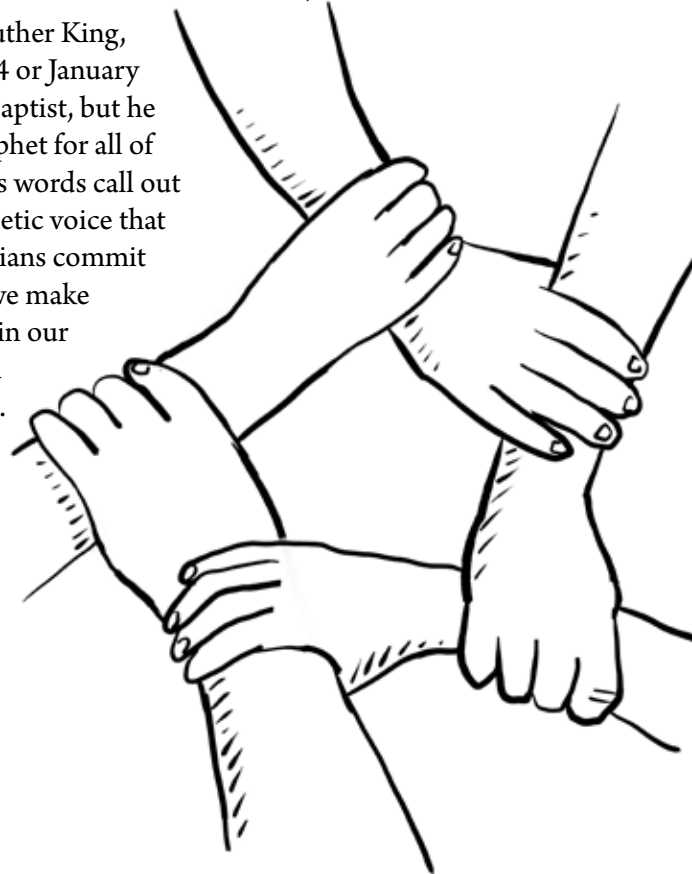


We Believe . . .

Absalom Jones (February 13) initially was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, but he left when it rejected his people. Happily, we have mostly learned from his example, and we honor him, sometimes with special services on or near his feast day.

Jonathan Myrick Daniels (August 14) was an Episcopal seminarian, but his witness is non-denominational. Still, we see in him the Anglican commitment to social justice.

Martin Luther King, Jr. (April 4 or January 15) was Baptist, but he was a prophet for all of us, and his words call out the prophetic voice that Episcopalians commit to when we make our vows in our Baptismal Covenant.



Today's Story

The lives of these three men—Absalom, Martin and Jonathan—cover a wide span of time. The struggle to gain freedom and justice for African Americans has been a very long struggle, which continues to this day.

Absalom's journey took him from being an enslaved person to being the "Black Bishop of the Episcopal Church." He leads his flock with such compassion mixed with righteousness that he lifts up the whole city.

Jonathan was but a young seminarian when he lost his life to protect a girl from an angry man with a gun during the civil rights conflicts in the South. From his journals we learn of his profound commitment to furthering the reign of God by working to bring God's justice to society.

Martin also laid down his life for his friends. And he counted the whole world as his friends, even when they vilified and hated him for his work towards a world of righteousness and justice for all people. Martin's unrelenting insistence on peaceful means and nonviolence to combat evil makes him a true prophetic voice in this world of violence.

The dedication of all three of these men living out their deep faith is a dedication that inspires us all.



Words of Faith

prophet – one who speaks God's truth, even in the face of danger

freedom – the ability to be oneself, as God intended

justice – the principle of living with dignity and rightness

love – self-giving of oneself to another

civil rights – the rights to liberty and equality for all persons, not just a few

Like Jesus and so many of his followers, we too are called to reconciling love, prophetic love, sacrificial love.





Sharing

Read the stories of Absalom Jones, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Jonathan Myrick Daniels, attached to this paper, or read from a storybook about one or more of them. If you know additional information about these faithful men, share this with family members.

Wonder together:

- What can we learn from the lives and beliefs of Absalom, Martin and Jonathan?
- What problems do we have in this country that we need to resolve to make it a better place to live? Are there still poor people? Are there still people who are treated unfairly?
- Do you know of children who are teased or bullied?

Very young children may see this issue personally and mention family. Older children can look at issues specifically related to injustice against African Americans or other ethnic or religious minorities.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children



This Week at Home

- **Find a book on Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" and read it aloud.** Here are two possibilities: *I Have a Dream* by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Kadir Nelson, illustrator (NY: Schwartz & Wade, 2012) or *I Have a Dream* by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Kathleen A. Nelson, illustrator (along with 13 others) (NY: Scholastic, 1997). Or find a recording of the actual speech and listen to it; you can both listen *and* watch on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smEqnnklfYs>. The entire speech lasts just under 18 minutes. What words or phrases stand out for you? Discuss as a family what gives that speech such power, and how pivotal it has been for American history.
- **What is your dream for the world?** Martin had a dream of a just and equal society where all love God and one another. What is your dream? Write down the words: "I have a dream..." on a piece of paper. Then draw your dream of a society that you believe in and describe it. Share your pictures and your dreams with one another. Or write up your own "I have a dream speech." Begin with "I have a dream..." then write a short essay, story or poem that describes your dream. Again, share what you write and your dreams with one another.
- **Research what life for African Americans was like in the mid-20th century.** How have things changed since then? How are they better? What do we still need to do to make a more equal society? Where do we see signs of continuing prejudice and strife? Where do we see signs of reconciliation, equality and cooperation?
- **Find the "Prayer for the Human Family" in the Prayer Book (#3, p. 815).** Also look up the prayer "for Social Justice" (#27, p. 823). Invite family members to read both of these aloud, in unison or with family members reading individual lines. What are the hatred, walls, barriers and divisions in this country today that we still struggle with? Whom do we continue to discount and dismiss?



Household Prayer

Almighty God, thank you for the love that you give us every day. Thank you for giving us examples like Absalom, Martin and Jonathan. Help us to love and serve you, and to love our families, friends and neighbors. We pray this in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

