



Martin Luther King Jr. Day - President's Message

January 18, 2021

As our nation anticipates a pharmaceutical cure for COVID-19, Bethel University re-commits to strengthen the soul under a three-year discipleship agenda, generously funded by a valued alumnus. And we re-affirm, on this day – commemorating the message of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. – the need for cure of the nation's soul by racial healing and equity.

We are now fulfilling promises made public last year:

- Our Board of Trustees made public commitments for Biblical engagement on this topic;
- Faculty voted to install in all syllabi an aspirational statement on Biblical vision for racial equity;
- The percentage of new employees of color increased over the prior year, including leaders;
- 300 employees and students joined discussion groups on a book about healing racial pain;
- Student leaders will annually attend a fully funded Civil Rights Immersion Tour in the American South, to increase awareness and advocacy for racial equity;
- With Chapel as our most centering community experience, students now hear six keynote addresses on race and Christian faith by consequential figures, an agenda to continue.

Finally, a personal note: I recently read a collection of essays by Toni Morrison, the late Pulitzer and Nobel Prize winning novelist, professor at Princeton University, and first black female editor of fiction at Random House. She told a gathering at Johns Hopkins University in 2004:

I have never lived, nor has anyone, in a world in which race did not matter. Such a world, free of racial hierarchy, is usually described as Edenesque or a condition possible only if accompanied by the Messiah.

Yes, Professor Morrison. We join you in hope of a new heaven and new earth, under influence of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. We pray, come, Holy Spirit! Fall fresh on our nation and this University,

Gregg A. Chenoweth, Ph.D.
President