

Where Do We Go from Here?

29th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Prayer Breakfast
Reed Conference Center – Midwest City, Oklahoma
January 19, 2026

Good morning.

To the Midwest City Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Prayer Breakfast
Committee: thank you for the honor of this invitation,
and for nearly three decades of steadfast work.

For 29 years, you have done more than host an event;
you have sustained a movement.

You created a space where faith informs action,
where remembrance leads to responsibility,
and where Dr. King's legacy is not simply recalled—
but renewed.

To our elected officials, clergy, educators, students, and community
partners: your presence matters.

Because the work before us requires all of us.

This gathering is more than an annual tradition. It is sacred. And it is necessary.

We come together under a powerful question: “Where do we go from here?”

Dr. King asked this not casually, but at a crossroads, when laws had changed, yet lives had not changed enough.

When opportunity had expanded, but access was still unequal.

When hope was alive, and hardship was too.

Today, that question is just as urgent.

We ask it in a nation where immigration reminds us that belonging is both a human need and a shared responsibility.

We ask it in communities enriched by diversity, where justice demands inclusion and equity.

We ask it as families navigate rising healthcare costs and the real challenge of finding care, especially in moments of crisis.

We ask it as schools and universities prepare students
for a future that demands knowledge, adaptability,
and a fair shot—no matter the zip code.

We ask it in an economy where innovation drives growth,
yet too many still struggle to find stability and a living wage.

We ask it as young people navigate anxiety, social pressures, and the
search for purpose in a digital age.

And we ask it as communities of faith wrestle with how to respond, not
just spiritually but practically, to the needs around them.

Dr. King understood something essential:

civil rights without economic justice leaves the work unfinished.

True freedom includes the dignity of work, a quality education,
and real opportunity.

But his vision reached further, toward the Beloved Community.

Not an abstract ideal, but a society where love and justice
are woven into the very fabric of our relationships and institutions.

Where poverty, hunger, and exclusion are not accepted as inevitable, but treated as moral failures we are called to correct.

In the Beloved Community, conflict is not denied, but resolved through understanding.

Differences are not erased, but honored.

And success is measured not by how far some rise but by how many are lifted.

The Beloved Community answers, “Where do we go from here?” by reminding us that the destination is not just progress. It is belonging.

And reaching that destination requires intentional work.

For nearly three decades, this Prayer Breakfast has embodied that work through scholarships, academic support, and public witness.

Many students right here in Mid-Del have felt your impact.

(And each year, your committee honors this legacy with scholarships and the Clara Luper Award highlighting students and celebrating service.)

At Oklahoma's HBCU, Langston University, we see this truth every day. First-generation students. Students working jobs, caring for family, serving their communities. Students who arrive with potential and leave with confidence, credentials, and purpose.

Dr. King once said, "Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education."

Education that sharpens the mind and strengthens the spirit.

Education that prepares students for leadership in the Beloved Community.

What does a Beloved Community look like in practice?

Right here in Oklahoma, we have tools to make this real.

Scholarships that open doors:

Programs like Oklahoma's Promise help families turn aspiration into access and recent updates expanded the window for high school seniors to apply. That means more students in our pews and neighborhoods can see college as a pathway, not a price tag.

Workforce pipelines that build dignity:

Our Career Tech system, community colleges, and universities are aligning skills with expanded workforce opportunities.

And in Midwest City, the connection is literal:

Tinker Air Force Base is building talent pipelines with area colleges, and Langston University is proud to have a partnership with the Air Force Sustainment Center which creates internships and careers not only in STEM, but also in business, supply chain, environmental science, and project management.

That's Beloved Community: education that leads to meaningful work and work that lifts families.

So—where do we go from here?

Let me offer a few clear commitments we can make together:

First—Champion education as a pathway to dignity.

- Faith leaders: host Oklahoma's Promise sign-up nights; mentor students; adopt a school; create safe spaces to study.

- Business and civic leaders: expand internships and apprenticeships; remove barriers in hiring; build bridges from classroom to career.
- Educators: teach content and also compassion and courage.
- Students: you are not only beneficiaries of the Beloved Community; you are builders of it.

Second—Strengthen partnerships across institutions and generations.

The Beloved Community isn't built in isolation. It's what happens when churches partner with schools, when universities partner with cities, when Tinker partners with Langston and when communities refuse to leave anyone behind.

Third—Recommit to moral leadership.

Leadership is not about titles; it is about service. It is choosing what is right when it is hard, and modeling love, integrity, and justice in a world that needs all three.

Fourth—Act with urgency and hope.

Dr. King reminded us, "The time is always right to do what is right."

The Beloved Community isn't built "someday."

It is built now, through daily decisions to show up, speak out, and serve.

So—where do we go from here?

We go forward together.

Anchored in faith.

Guided by justice.

Committed to action.

Building the Beloved Community—right where we are.

And when future generations ask what we did in our moment—

when the question is asked once again,

"Where do we go from here?" may we be able to say:

We chose courage over comfort.

We chose community over division.

We chose education, opportunity, and justice.

We chose to build a beloved community.

Thank you. God bless you. And may God bless the work still ahead of

us.