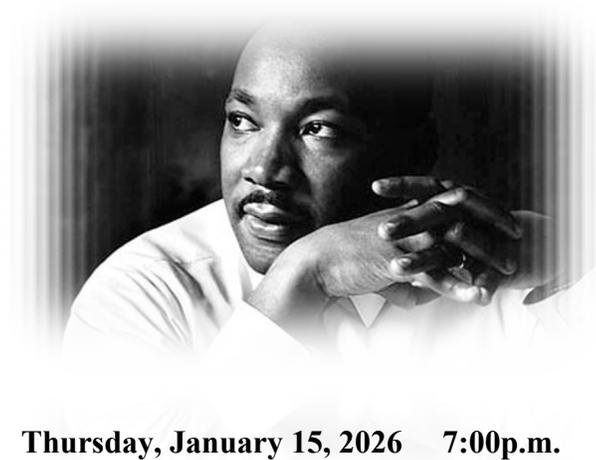


**18<sup>th</sup> Annual Interfaith  
Service of Celebration**

**Keeping the Dream Alive:  
Why Dr. King's Message Still Matters**



**Thursday, January 15, 2026 7:00p.m.**

**Sacred Heart Cultural Center  
1301 Greene St, Augusta, GA 30901**

**Dr. Stacey Floyd-Thomas, Keynote Speaker**  
E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Professor of Ethics and Society,  
Vanderbilt Divinity School  
Graduate Department of Religion,  
Vanderbilt University



**Sponsored by  
The Progressive Religious  
Coalition Of Augusta.**



The Progressive Religious Coalition is proud to sponsor its 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Interfaith Celebration of the Life and Legacy of Dr. King. We thank all of the participants and acknowledge that participation is not indicative of full agreement with the PRC. The Vision and Mission of the PRC can be found at [www.prcaugusta.com](http://www.prcaugusta.com); please visit us on Facebook.

**This service bears honor for our brother,  
Andy Clare Reese, Ph.D. (1942-2025), scholar, humanist, and philanthropist,  
a stalwart trailblazer and tireless leader in the establishment of both  
the PRC and the Interfaith Fellowship of Augusta (IFFA)**

Special thanks to **Pat Knox-Hudson**, her generous donation,  
and everyone who assisted to make this event possible.  
A very special thanks to the Sacred Heart Cultural Center  
for hosting this year's service.

*Thank you for silencing your electronic devices.*

*There will be no audience filming of the  
Memorial Address. Still photography is allowed.*

The PRC logo is an original design by Luna Godsey.

# 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Interfaith Service of Celebration

*“No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace  
among the religions without dialogue between the religions.”*  
*Hans Küng, Roman Catholic theologian (1982-2021)*

## **Processional**

Trumpet Tune

*Jeremiah Clarke*

## **Opening Hymn**

Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing

*Lift Ev'ry Voice*

*Please rise in either body or spirit.*

Lift ev'ry voice and sing, till earth and heaven ring,  
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty; let our rejoicing rise  
High as the list'ning skies, let it resound loud as the rolling sea.  
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,  
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;  
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,  
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod, bitter the chast'ning rod,  
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died; yet with a steady beat,  
Have not our weary feet come to the place for which our fathers sighed?  
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered.  
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,  
Out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last  
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,  
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;  
Thou who hast by Thy might, led us into the light,  
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.  
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,  
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;  
Shadowed beneath Thy hand, may we forever stand,  
True to our God, True to our native land.

*James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson*

**Progressive Religious Coalition Welcome**

LTC (Ret.) Joyce G.D. Law, USA  
PRC President

**Call to Worship and Invocation**

The Rev. Henry Holt III

## An Interfaith Litany

Introduction of the litany

The Rev. Erwin Veale

*“If we do not act we shall surely be dragged down the long dark and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.”*

*“We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”*

—Martin Luther King, Jr. April 4, 1967

This year's excerpts can be found in pages 209 and 243 in *A Testament of Hope, The Essential Writings and Speeches: Martin Luther King Jr.*, edited by James M. Washington, 1986. Some words in Dr. King's speeches and writings may now have a contemporary rephrasing. Our presenters have kept this in mind while composing their overlaid perspectives.

Jacquelyn Jones, Baha'i Faith

Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Augusta, Founding 1934

(Presented by Rev. Karen Romestan on behalf of Jacquelyn Jones)

Baha'u'llah has declared that difference of race and color is like the variegated beauty of flowers in a garden. If you enter a garden, you will see yellow, white, blue, red flowers in profusion and beauty - each radiant within itself and although different from the others, lending its own charm to them. Racial difference in the human kingdom is similar. If all the flowers in a garden were of the same color, the effect would be monotonous and wearying to the eye. Therefore, Baha'u'llah hath said that the various races of humankind lend a composite harmony and beauty of color to the whole. Let all associate, therefore, in this great human garden even as flowers grow and blend together side by side without discord or disagreement between them.

The Rev. Nic Filzen, Unitarian

Unitarian Universalist Church of Augusta, Organized 1954

**Love** is the power that holds us together and is at the center of our shared values. We are accountable to one another for doing the work of living our shared values through the spiritual discipline of **Love**.

Inseparable from one another, these shared values are:

**Interdependence:** We honor the interdependent web of all existence. With reverence for the great web of life and with humility, we acknowledge our place in it.

We covenant to protect Earth and all beings from exploitation. We will create and nurture sustainable relationships of care and respect, mutuality and justice. We will work to repair harm and damaged relationships.

**Pluralism:** We celebrate that we are all sacred beings, diverse in culture, experience, and theology.

We covenant to learn from one another... We embrace our differences and commonalities with Love, curiosity, and respect.

**Justice:** We work to be diverse multicultural Beloved Communities where all thrive.

We covenant to dismantle racism and all forms of systemic oppression...

**Transformation:** We adapt to the changing world.

We covenant to collectively transform and grow spiritually and ethically.

**Generosity:** We cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope.

We covenant to freely and compassionately share our faith, presence, and resources. Our generosity connects us to one another in relationships of interdependence and mutuality.

**Equity:** We declare that every person is inherently worthy and has the right to flourish with dignity, love, and compassion.

We covenant to use our time, wisdom, attention, and money to build and sustain fully accessible and inclusive communities.

#### **A Musical Reflection**

I Want Jesus to Walk with Me  
*Joshua Benson, Evan Larsen,  
and Ana Cortinez, soloists*

*Traditional Spiritual  
arranged by Moses Hogan*

*I want Jesus to walk with me.  
I want Jesus to walk with me  
All a long my pilgrim journey.  
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.*

*In my trial, Lord, walk with me.  
In my trials, Lord, walk with me.  
When my heart is almost breaking, Lord,  
I want Jesus to walk with me.*

*When I'm troubled, Lord, walk with me.  
When I'm troubled, Lord, walk with me.  
Lord, when my head is bowed in sorrow, Lord,  
I want Jesus to walk with me.*

#### **Interfaith Litany, continued**

Imam Hamza Ragab, Islam  
Masjid, Islamic Society of Augusta, Founding 1976

#### **Verses will Recite Sūrat al-Mā'idah (5:8–10)**

***Yā ayyuhā alladhīna āmanū kūnū qawwāmīna lillāhi shuhadā'a bil-qisṭ***

“O you who believe, stand firmly for God as witnesses to justice.”

***Wa lā yajrimannakum shana'ānu qawmin 'alā allā ta 'dilū***

“Do not let hatred of a people cause you to abandon justice.”

***I 'dilū huwa aqrabu lit-taqwā***

“Be just! that is closer to righteousness.”

***Wallāhu khabīrun bimā ta 'malūn***

“And God is fully aware of what you do.”

These verses establish justice as a sacred responsibility, not a social preference. The Qur'an commands people to stand for justice for God, meaning moral integrity must come before emotion, identity, or self-interest. Even hatred, fear, or historical grievance is not allowed to corrupt fairness.

This is a radical moral standard: justice is required not only for those we love, but even for those we oppose. The Qur'an teaches that righteousness is measured by how consistently we uphold justice when it is most difficult.

The passage closes by reminding us that no act of fairness or injustice is unseen. Human dignity is protected when morality governs power, and when justice is abandoned, the damage spreads far beyond one group or moment.

## **A Dramatic and Musical Reflection**

The Augusta Junior Players

A choral reading from *North Star* by Gloria Bond Clunie

“Stand Up” from the film *Harriet*, by Cynthia Erivo and Joshua Campbell, arranged by Mac Huff.

## **Interfaith Litany, continued**

The Rev. Jenny Anderson, United Methodist  
St. John United Methodist, Founding 1801

Following the calling and gathering of the disciples in the Gospel of Matthew, we encounter a powerful moment. John the Baptizer, imprisoned and uncertain, sends word to Jesus asking, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?”

Jesus responds not with a simple answer, but with evidence:

“Go and tell John what you hear and see. The blind receive their sight. The lame walk. Those with leprosy are cleansed. The deaf hear. The dead are raised. And good news is proclaimed to the poor. Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”

As those called by Christ to be the light of God's love in the world, we are called to bear witness in both word and deed. What Jesus reports to John is not theory; it is lived reality. Faith is something we speak, but it is also something we embody with our whole lives.

In the Methodist tradition, we look to John Wesley for guidance in living out this call. Wesley challenges us with these words: “Let your words be the genuine picture of your heart.” What we say and what we do must reflect the grace we claim.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. reminds us that we are bound together in this creation. We are not meant to live only for ourselves, but for our neighbors. Loving our neighbors means learning to love well and holding one another accountable in love. That responsibility belongs to the whole community.

So when someone asks what this gathered community in Augusta is doing, we pray we can answer clearly: we are offering grace, love, forgiveness, food, clothing, and honest care. We are helping with rent when we can, calling leaders to act justly, gathering peacefully, and doing our very best to love one another.

As Wesley urged, may we do all the good we can, in all the ways we can, for as long as ever we can.

Rabbi Seth F. Oppenheimer, Jewish  
Congregation Children of Israel, Founding 1846

We each grow from our own particularity, our own individuality.

Each of our religions and wisdom traditions has its own deep roots. Without these foundational identities, we would each be lost, shifted and blown about by each passing wind. Yet, if we only turn inward and isolate ourselves; Oh! The richness and we will lose.

We must come together, not merely in toleration, but in openness, recognizing that the Other has not only their own unique beauty and wisdom, but something to offer us, something we may be missing or might enrich our lives; Understanding, that while there are many wells, there is but one river (Fr. Matthew Fox). We must come to see that each tradition is like an organ in the body of humanity (R' Zalman Schacter-Shalomi) and all are necessary for a healthy humanity.

Furthermore, to build a world of hesid and Tzedek, loving-kindness and justice, we must work together, as a braided cord, each strand maintaining its identity while strengthening all the others in mutual striving. Alone, each community can be destroyed. Together, we are invincible. Indeed, the only way we can get it together is together. (R' Zalman Schacter-Shalomi)

**Introduction of Keynote Speaker**

The Rev. Dr. Sid Gates  
PRC Co-founder

**King Memorial Address**

**“No More Kings  
In the World House”**

**Dr. Stacey Floyd-Thomas**

*The Progressive Religious Coalition has designated*

## **Valor Station**

*as recipient of a portion of the proceeds from this evening's offering.*

*If you are writing a check, please make it out to:*

*'The Progressive Religious Coalition of Augusta'*

*and on the 'Memo' line write: 'MLK 2026.'*

*On-line donations may be made at [prcaugusta.com](http://prcaugusta.com)*

### **Offertory**

i thank You God for most this amazing day

*Words: e.e. cummings*

*Music: Eric Whitacre*

*i thank You God for most this amazing  
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees  
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything  
which is natural which is infinite which is yes*

*(i who have died am alive again today,  
and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birth  
day of life and of love and wings: and of the gay  
great happening illimitably earth)*

*how should tasting touching hearing seeing  
breathing any—lifted from the no  
of all nothing—human merely being  
doubt unimaginable You?*

*(now the ears of my ears awake and  
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)*

### **Going Forth: Blessing**

Presented by Rev. Dr. Sid Gates on behalf of The Rev. Marc Trimm

### **Closing Hymn**

*Please rise in body or spirit.*

We Shall Overcome

*We Will Overcome*

We shall overcome, we shall overcome  
We shall overcome some day  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe  
We shall overcome some day

We'll walk hand in hand, we'll walk hand in hand  
We'll walk hand in hand someday  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe  
We'll walk hand in hand some day

We shall live in peace, we shall live in peace  
We shall live in peace someday  
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe  
We shall live in peace some day

*Civil Rights Movement Anthem*

**Dismissal**

The Very Rev. Billy Alford

Following the service, Dr. Floyd-Thomas will be available to sign her books,  
which are graciously provided by David Hutchison of the Book Tavern.

Special thanks to Mark Albertin, videographer

### **Service Participants**

- \* LTC (Ret.) Joyce G.D. Law, President, Progressive Religious Coalition, SGI-USA Augusta  
Chapter Member Care Advisor
- \* The Rev. Henry Holt, III, BBC, Director of Spiritual Care, Augusta University Health, Beulah  
Grove Baptist Church
- \* The Rev. Erwin Veale, Assisting Priest, St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
Jacquelyn Jones; Vice-President, IFFA; Baha'i Faith, Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Augusta
- \* The Rev. Nic Filzen, Unitarian, Unitarian Universalist Church of Augusta  
Imam Hamza Ragab, Islamic Society of Augusta, Masjid  
The Rev. Jenny Anderson, Pastor, United Methodist, St. John United Methodist  
Rabbi Seth F. Oppenheimer, Congregation Children of Israel
- \* The Rev. Dr. Sid Gates, Co-founder PRC, Reid Memorial Presbyterian Church
- \* The Rev. Dr. Lynn Tyson, Deacon, Church of the Good Shepherd (Episcopal)
- \* The Rev. Marc Trimm, Pastor, Metropolitan Community Church of Our Redeemer
- \* The Very Rev. Billy Alford, Preceding President, PRC; Dean Emeritus, Augusta Convocation,  
Episcopal Diocese of GA

*\*Members of the Progressive Religious Coalition*

### **Musicians**

The Davidson Chorale  
*Mr. Phillip Streetman, Director*  
*Mr. Paul Hennessy, Accompanist*

\*Mr. James E. Nord, Organist and Choirmaster  
St. Augustine of Canterbury Episcopal Church

## August Junior Players

Roy Lewis, Director  
Celena Smith, Music Director

Antonia Wright  
JeMeria Murray  
Ariel Hernandez  
Nathaniel Millings  
Sa Jules  
Christopher Dennis  
G Le'on Scott

Darius Patterson  
Celena Smith  
JaShawn Boles  
John Plowden  
Kay Gross  
Monique Gold  
Jalisa Phillips

Zy'Aisa Joiner  
Jahkiem Mills  
Sophia Herz  
Abi Pendley  
Sean Moton  
Josiah Jones  
Olle Lindstrom

### Additional Reflections are graciously Presented on the following pages

The Rev. Erwin Veale, Episcopalian  
St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Founding 1751

This Summer my wife and I traveled to Montgomery and Selma. It was a moving pilgrimage for us and I'm glad we went. In museums and in our car, I found myself painfully aware of air conditioned comfort and the ease with which we moved about. It caused me to remember how indescribably difficult it was for Dr. King, Congressman Lewis, and all the brave souls who marched and suffered for a cause. It's a cause that we still fight for and hope to see come to fruition. If we are comfortable, I fear we are doing it wrong.

The Rev. Karen Romestan, New Thought Christian  
Unity of Augusta, Founding 1976

Unity cofounder Charles Fillmore said, "No man liveth unto himself alone". A core principle of Unity is that we are made in the image and likeness of Source, which is Divine Love. We believe that we are interconnected in the exquisite web of humanity and that no one is left out of this love. While the world shows us division and separation, we hold to the Divine Truth of our oneness with Source and with one another. Any separation is only in our thinking. Through the power of our thoughts, words, and actions, we co-create our world with Source, with one another, and with all of creation. When we realize this as our truth, we move and speak and think from the indwelling goodness that is divine love. Mr. Fillmore goes on to say, "Being in service to the world, to all forms of life, is the other half of the equation for healing and wholeness". We turn to the Bible, our guiding text, and read Galatians 5:13. It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a life of freedom. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows. Let it be so.

Rashmi Karanth  
Hindu Temple Society of Augusta, Founding 1979

The Bhagavad Gita calls humanity to act selflessly for loka-sangraha, the welfare of all beings, warning that inaction in the face of adharma is itself a form of violence. Swami Vivekananda echoes this call, teaching that service to humanity is worship of the Divine present in every soul and that those who live only for themselves are "more dead than alive." These ideals illuminate the warning proclaimed by Dr. King that if we do not act, we are dragged down the dark corridors of history reserved for power without

compassion and strength without moral vision. No suffering is truly “someone else’s problem,” for whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. To act with love, courage, and responsibility, seeing the same divine light in all, is thus not optional spirituality but our highest duty to God and one another.

The Rev. Dr. Luther B. Felder, II, United Methodist  
Paine College, Organized 1882

Do we read the same Bible, or worship the same God? Why do we respond so differently to God’s command? Listen:

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward. Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day: and the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.” Isaiah 58:1-12 KJV

Douglas K. Pryor, PhD., Nichiren Buddhist  
SGI-USA Augusta Chapter, Founding 1956

Dr. King’s impassioned messages of universal oneness reverberates in this address excerpt by Daisaku Ikeda at Harvard University on September 24, 1993.

“Among the many images in the Lotus Sutra, one that I find particularly compelling is that of an impartial rain that compassionately moistens the vast expanse of the land, bringing forth new life from all the trees and grasses, large and small.

This scene, depicted with a vividness, grandeur, and beauty characteristic of the Lotus Sutra, symbolizes the enlightenment of all people touched by the Buddha’s Law of great and impartial wisdom. At the same time, it is a magnificent paean to the rich diversity of human as well as all forms of sentient and insentient life, each equally manifesting the inherent enlightenment of its nature, each thriving and harmonizing in a grand concert of symbiosis.

Buddhism uses the term “dependent origination” to describe symbiotic relations. Nothing—no one—exists in isolation. Each individual existence functions to bring into being the conditions that in turn sustain all other existences. Reality is understood more in terms of relationality and interdependence than in terms of discrete individualities. All things, mutually supportive and related, form a living cosmos, what modern philosophy might term a semantic whole.

This is the conceptual framework through which Mahayana Buddhism views the natural universe. [Great literature also observes this concept of symbiotic coexistence.]

Speaking through Faust, Goethe gives voice to a similar vision. ‘All weaves one fabric; all things give/Power unto all to work and live.’”

Bishop Greer Godsey, OSFoc, Old Catholic  
Saint Francis Parish and Outreach

As Christians gathered in an ecumenical spirit, we confess our shared faith in the Triune God, revealed in Jesus Christ, who calls the Church to truth, holiness, and love of neighbor. In honoring Martin Luther King Jr., we receive his warning that when power is separated from compassion and morality, it becomes a corridor of shame, and we renew our resolve to act justly, not merely to speak of justice. We repent of our complicity in racism, violence, and indifference, and we ask for the grace to use whatever authority we hold for service, not domination.

We also affirm with Dr. King that all life is interrelated, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, so that what harms one harms all. United at Christ’s table, we recognize that communion with God entails communion with one another. Therefore, we commit ourselves across denominations to defend the dignity of every person, to seek reconciliation, and to pursue the common good, trusting that God can turn our shared repentance into shared witness, and our shared witness into faithful action.

The Rev. Mark Deaton, Presbyterian Church U.S.A.  
Christ Presbyterian Church

The cure for our pandemic of post-Covid loneliness lies in King’s call to belong in “the beloved community.” More and more of our citizens claim to feel distant from involvement with communities of faith even as they wrestle with issues they identify as spiritual. King reminds us that people separate themselves from religion when religion separates itself from justice. Our children need not inherit an earth too scorched for shelter or too tyrannical to hear the voices of the vulnerable. Icecapped cliffs are cascading into the seas as our armies inflict injuries on algorithm designated adversaries. Drones detect infra-red human figures while our religions fail to identify people needing human warmth. It is too easy in our national affluence to numb our need for neighbors. The temptation of religion is to ease ourselves into isolation in “separate but equal” enclaves of indifference, and desert the justice only beloved community sustains. We must remember our lives are woven together in mysterious ways, and what affects one affects all. Today Christ calls those sensitive to suffering to choose compassion that resists prejudice toward the poor. The small group of women and men who gathered around Jesus of Nazareth resisted imperialism to realize real and realistic relatedness where the impoverished are protected, the earth respected and justice leaves children the inheritance of creative continuity. That is one inspiration for the Rev. Dr Martin Luther King Jr. whose life we celebrate today.

*Printed by*



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