

MLK Invocation

We come together today
at the start of a new year, and a new semester,
to invoke anew the life of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,
and the struggle for justice for which he lived and died.

The question for us is how to honor his memory—
how not to smooth out the rough edges of his ministry.
How do we remember not only the crowd-filled soaring
of his “I have a dream”,
but also the daring risks he took,
when the dictates of his conscience made him a lonely moral voice,
preaching against the intersecting “triple evils”,
as he called them, of poverty, racism, and militarism,
and for the power of love as, in his words,
“the key that unlocks the door to ultimate reality”?

We call this history to mind,
King’s lifelong self-understanding as a black theological voice,
not because we imagine we can return to his time,
or know what he would say about ours,
but because King’s witness still calls each of us
to turn inward,
look inside ourselves,
name our spiritual poverty in an age of uneven abundance,
build up our capacity to love,
and join the movement of imagining a world otherwise.
This is our calling today,
how we can invoke his memory and make it a blessing.

—Rev. Sam Speers