



Urban Ministry Letter

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary METRO-URBAN INSTITUTE

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Connecting to the Legacy of King

By Marvin Miller, PTS Master of
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Presenting a vision and promise for the future that should resonate in every human heart, Johnny B. Hill, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Theology at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, delivered the 2009 Kelso Lecture in Honor of Martin Luther King Jr. at Pittsburgh Seminary. Using a concept inspired from Dr. King's last work, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*¹, Dr. Hill spoke on "The World House: The Beloved Community as a New Global Vision for Peace and Justice." This vision of a World House,² according to Dr. Hill, is one where King envisioned a family of different races, religions, ideas, cultures, and interests learning to live together as brothers and sisters or perish together as fools.³ Although this prophetic vision was pronounced more than 40 years ago, the three major threats to human survival – racism, poverty/materialism, and war – are manifesting themselves as a present day reality. The attacks of September 11, 2001, the world financial crisis, and unprovoked wars today, make King's 40-plus year old predictions seem eerily prescient and King's vision may be the key to survival during the 21st century.



Dr. Johnny B. Hill of Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, speaking at PTS's Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Lecture, February 9, 2009.

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Strategies for Change Issues of Violence and Crime

March 19, 2009 – Urban Church Network Meeting

On Thurs., March 19 from 6:00-8:00 p.m. and Sat., March 21 from 8:30 a.m.-noon, the Urban Church Network (UCN) of PTS's Metro-Urban Institute will present Tim Stevens, Black Political Empowerment Project, and Valerie Dixon, Center for Victim of Violence and Crime, leading dialogue on strategies and initiatives that address urban violence and crime in Allegheny County. UCN is an association of more than 85 Pittsburgh area churches and community organizations working together to strengthen the safety and quality of life in urban communities. The public is invited to come join the conversation about efforts to challenge and reclaim the community *by any peaceful means necessary*. Mr. Stevens and Ms. Dixon will discuss strategies underway by the *Coalition Against Violence*, a broad cross-section of community stakeholders. This dialogue will focus on how people of faith can help in this effort. Mark your calendar, RSVP your attendance, and join the working group to review the existing strategies. Call 412-441-3304 ext. 2163.

Also Mark Your Calendar for
April 2—Organizing on Holy Ground, 6:00 p.m.
April 5—Praise the Presence: 14th Annual Palm Sunday Celebration, 3:30 p.m.
May 22—Celebration of Education, 6:00 p.m.

King Lecture *(Continued from page 1)*

Dr. Hill discussed King's April 4, 1967 message entitled "Beyond Vietnam – A Time to Break Silence," given exactly one year before his assassination. According to Dr. Hill, in this speech King dared to compare America's poor to all poor people globally, including those considered political enemies. "We are called to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for victims of our nation and for those it calls enemy, for no document...can make these humans any less our brothers."⁴ This audaciously inclusive stance, declaring enemies as "brothers/sisters," went beyond society's goals to limit King's role to U.S. blacks and poor people. Dr. King also brought analysis and critique of economic injustice in the United States as well as global practices that exploited the poor, even questioning the very nature of our economic system.

Dr. Hill noted that King saw no separation of religion from politics. "Religion is political and politics involves the religious." According to Dr. Hill, religious language necessarily creeps into political discourse because religious values influence public behavior. Religious

rhetoric and values, for example, were articulated on all sides of debate prior to the recent election of President Barack Obama. Future human survival rests in the ability of all people of this World House to be radical in the way of peace and justice through faith. Can you imagine all of us dwelling in this World House in where all are considered family and treat each other as children of God? King's global vision, embracing Jesus' simple command "love your neighbor as yourself," was without distinction of race, nationality, religion, country, gender, or class. "Beyond the calling of race, nation, or creed... I believe... (God) the Father is deeply concerned especially for his suffering and helpless and outcast children, (and) I come tonight to speak for them."⁵

End Notes:

1. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).
2. Based on King's Nobel Peace Prize lecture, delivered at the University of Oslo on December 11, 1964.
3. King (1968), 171.
4. "A Time to Break Silence" Speech delivered by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4, 1967, at a meeting of Clergy and Laity Concerned at Riverside Church in New York City.
5. *Ibid.*