

# BCC: A SOCIAL JUSTICE CHURCH

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The foundational scripture for the Beloved Community Church's focus on Social Justice comes from Luke 4:18-19 (NIV):

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

At the Beloved Community Church, we believe that Social Justice and the Gospel Ministry of Jesus Christ are one in the same. From the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, He was abundantly clear what His mission and vision for ministry was all about. According to Luke 4:18-19; Jesus' mission was about radically inclusive love, service and justice for the "least of these," or how acclaimed theologian Howard Thurman coined it, *the Disinherited*. From the very start of His public ministry Jesus took stock of the world around him, specifically His own community; recognized the injustices of the disenfranchised and then took radical, counter-cultural action to address the inequities the community faced in an unjust world. Like Jesus, that's what the Beloved Community is called to do. But who, you may ask is the Beloved Community?

"The Beloved Community" is a term that was first coined in the early days of the 20th century by the philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce, who founded the organization called the Fellowship of Reconciliation. However, it was the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., also a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, who popularized the term *Beloved Community* and invested it with a deeper meaning, which has captured the imagination of people all over the world and was the

inspiration for the naming of this church—the Beloved Community Church, UCC.

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Dr. King's Beloved Community is a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated; racism, sexism, classism, homophobia and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood.

One expression of agape love in Dr. King's Beloved Community is justice, not for any one oppressed group, but for all people. As Dr. King often said, "*Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.*" He felt that justice could not be parceled out to individuals or groups, but was the birthright of every human being in the Beloved Community. He stated: "I have fought too long and hard against segregated public accommodations to end up segregating my moral concerns....justice is indivisible."

In keeping with Dr. King's teachings, The Beloved Community Church embraces the conviction that the Beloved Community can be achieved through an unshakable steadfastness to *an open and affirming Christian Community that is committed to sharing the unconditional love of Christ by serving others with compassion, integrity, moral courage, divine discipline and intelligent faith.* It is through this vision and our mission of *Transforming Hearts, Restoring Spirits, and Empowering Minds* that we vow to create a world of lasting compassion, justice, liberation and peace. This is the Beloved Community.