

The Village View

January 12, 2022

Elizabeth Jarrett-Jefferson
Editor

Coming Up—
Women's Gathering-
Saturday, January 22, 10:00am, Zoom
Third Age - Friday, January 28,
7:00 pm

An MLK Chapel Reflection: *Dr. King's Three Dimensions of a Complete Life*

JANUARY 13, 2017

by J ROSS PETERS EXCERPTED

*"This is my faith, and I choose to go on through my days with this faith and I tell you if you catch it, you will be able to rise from the fatigue of despair to the buoyancy of hope. Love yourself, you are commanded to do that—that is the **length** of life. Love your neighbor as you love yourself, you are commanded to do that—that's the **breadth** of life. But never forget that there is a first and even greater commandment, Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart with all thy soul, and with all thy mind—that is the **height** of life. And when you do this, you'll live the complete life."*- The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Good morning! The words that I just read were from a sermon given by Dr. Martin Luther King in 1960. On the last day of February that year, Dr. King gave this sermon at the Friendship Baptist Church in Pasadena, California. It was the latest version of a sermon he first gave in 1954,



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An MLK Chapel Reflection: Dr. King's *Three Dimensions of a Complete Life* - continued

and indeed he would continue to deliver updated versions of it over the course of the eight years he had left before his assassination in April of 1968.

I became fascinated with it when I spotted a meme on Twitter with this brief quotation: “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, “What are you doing for others?”

In my brief research, I found out that the words were indeed from Dr. King and came from a sermon called: *“The Three Dimensions of a Complete Life.”*



Finding it was a good reminder for me of the benefits of looking deeper, of not simply allowing pithy quotations to stand in for careful reading of complex material. Without taking the step beyond the original quotation, I would have missed something uniquely powerful.

Reading and re-reading the sermon reminded me of what a brave and brilliant thinker Dr. King was. At the time he delivered this sermon he was only thirty years old, yet he commanded the room with his intellect, his faith, and his force of character. He was also unafraid to call out injustice even when it rested at the feet of the powerful and influential, when it rested at the feet of those he called his “white brothers”.

Additionally, he didn’t hesitate to call out a hard truth of our nation when he said, “America cannot remain a first-class nation so long as she has second class citizens.” With a recognition that I am inadequate to capture its full nuance and complexity, I want to share a few of the key ideas from the sermon as I believe it has a great deal of relevance to us. Its centerpiece is his assertion of the three dimensions of a complete life. Here are Dr. King’s words:

“There are three dimensions of any complete life to which we can fitly give the words **length**, **breadth**, and **height**. Now, the **length** of life, as we shall use it here, is not its duration, not how long it lasts, not how long you live, but it is the push of a life forward to achieve its inner powers and ambitions. It is the inward concern for one’s own welfare. The **breadth** of life is the outreach, the outward concern for the welfare of others, and the **height** of life is the upward reach for God. If life is to be complete, these three must be together, in other words, life at its best is something of a triangle. At one angle stands the individual person, at the other angle stands other persons, and at the tip top stands the supreme infinite person—God. If your life is to be complete, all three must work harmoniously together and be properly cultivated, for the complete life is the three-dimensional life.”

Dr. King's Three Dimensions of a Complete Life - continued

The **length** of life, Dr. King asserts is not about how long our life is but rather it is embodied in this idea: “that before you can love other people adequately you got to love your own self properly.” I am interested in the word “properly” here as Dr. King makes an explicit case against those who “live life as if nobody lived in the world but themselves.” In expounding on the characteristics of such a person he goes on to say, “other people become mere steps by which they climb to their personal ends and ambitions. And if they manage to get around to loving, it becomes a utilitarian love—they love only those people that they can use.”

The **breadth** of life is the dimension “in which we are concerned about others.” He provides intriguing perspective regarding the **breadth** of life saying: “an individual hasn’t begun to live until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all of humanity.” This is worth hearing again...“an individual hasn’t begun to live until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all of humanity.”



And finally, the **height** of life is our connection God where we: “reach-up beyond self-interest and beyond humanity.” In this part of the sermon he admonishes us not to let, “big cars”, “bank accounts”, beautiful homes”, the “man-made lights of the city”, “skyscrapers”, and “television” get in the way of looking up and thinking about the divine light of God. And he asserts that “if life is to be complete, we must discover God.”

His conception of the three dimensions is helpful for us, as I believe we are surrounded by cultural messages that create the illusion that the first dimension is the *only* dimension, and in a sermon given long ago, Dr. King continues to call us to higher purpose.

We can be so self-obsessed that we not only fail to “love ourselves properly”, but we miss the other two dimensions completely. This was a danger when Dr. King shared this sermon, and it is at least as much of a danger now. (Editor’s emphasis.) While the first dimension is vital and necessary, we have to remember we are called to far more. Our lives take on meaning as we live toward all three dimensions.

Dr. King's Three Dimensions of a Complete Life - continued

We live in connection with others; we should strive to live in communion with them, and Dr. King's challenging question—"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, **What are you doing for others?**"—should remain before us like a like a gentle and divine push on our backs directing us where to go.

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As an orator, Dr. King understood the power of endings, and given our celebration of Dr. King's legacy, as well as our commitment to the Day ON rather than a day off on Monday's MLK Day, I think it appropriate to finish this morning with the words he used to finish his sermon that day long ago—almost fifty-seven years ago: "I say to you this morning that my faith is in the eternal *God*, whose purpose changes not, so I can cry out:

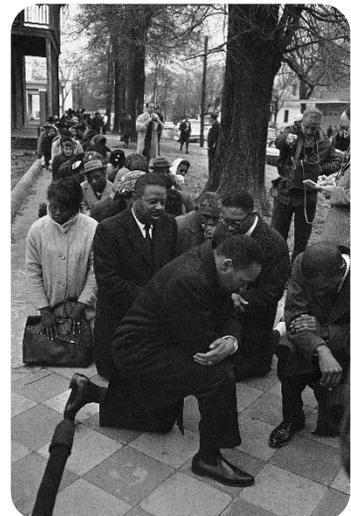
Oh God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home. Before the hills in order stood, or earth received her frame, from everlasting Thou art God, to endless years the same.

This is my faith, and I choose to go on through my days with this faith and I tell you if you catch it, you will be able to rise from the fatigue of despair to the buoyancy of hope. Love yourself, you are commanded to do that—that is the **length** of life. Love your neighbor as you love yourself, you are commanded to do that—that's the **breadth** of life. But never forget that there is a first and even greater commandment, Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart with all thy soul, and with all thy mind—*that* is the **height** of life. And when you do this, you'll live the complete life."

Amen

J ROSS PETERS. [READ HIS CREDENTIALS HERE](#)

[Read more about the church were Dr King was ordained and delivered his first sermon - Ebenezer Baptist Church \(Atlanta, Georgia\) – and where President Biden recently spoke on Voting Rights](#)



Intentions for the New Year

I am reprinting this important article (edited very slightly) from the January 6 Village View, with Colette as contributor and editor. Thank you, Colette! – Elizabeth.

As I was preparing for this issue on the power of intentions set in the new year, my friend Pam Jefferson reminded me of a model taught to us by John Hoff titled The Phases of Our Core Social Process. At the heart of this model is the word *tend*. The word *tend* is from the French and has two primary meanings. One is to listen with anticipation, and the other is to extend attention and energy. **To tend is to serve from the heart.** The model breaks down the larger process of caring and providing for in communal life into five sequential phases: pretending, attending, intending, extending, contending.



Pretending: The First Phase. In pretending, we visualize ourselves ahead in time at a place where our task is finished, the project is completed and we are experiencing our life as an accomplishment. Often when we begin to design an event we ask ourselves how do we want to feel when this is over? What do we want to have learned? Living into the future, we find ourselves reflecting back on how it was we accomplished this future.

Attending: The Second Phase. In the pretending phase, it is crucial to tell the truth to each other about what is happening inside and among us as we visualized a future. We found that some people paid attention to problems and barriers and were slowed in their effort. Others, however, chose to pay attention to where the energy was, to what was working—and they moved more quickly. We began to know that we needed to learn more about our successes than to pay attention to our failures. The more we went with our energy and paid attention to what was working, the more quickly people gathered around the effort and picked up the task.

So the second phase of the community process involves experimenting with various options for moving into the future. Almost always the first step is to develop alternative paths and to experiment with each of them, attending to which options present us with the fewest problems and give us the most energy and satisfaction. This phase of attending to our life is one in which we are watching for energy and for people who keep their energy.

Intending: The Third Phase. When we see that our energy is mostly invested in a certain combination of alternatives, we realize the time has come to decide on a specific approach, a specific method for a specific set of purposes. This third phase of community accomplishment relies on our knowledge about *intention*.

To *intend* something is to will it. To “make it so” as they used to say on “Star Trek.” To intend something is to experience one’s self as causal, powerful, knowledgeable, willing, active force. The phase of intending involves carefully communicating and claiming the goal or goals we want to achieve and our consensus as to the general method of achieving it. Putting this in writing is important. We also find it is important to gather information about the task at hand.



Extending: The Fourth Phase. Extending: The Fourth Phase. Someone once said that it is impossible to will more than one thing. This is because real life is complex and because we live within systems that reside within systems, and so forth. As we care for the process that unfolds, we must recognize how our current project connects to other things. A truly good idea can have vast implications during the phase of extending. We are simply being responsible for the impact of our intentions on other people and their concerns. And. . . we are *tending* their needs and aspirations in the same way we are carrying on our own business. Mostly, we are extending in awareness, responsibility, service, and love.

Contending: The Continuing Work of Community Life. Contending is the final phase of a community’s central process. Contending has to do with developing stamina. It has to do with learning to stay with our energy and with the process of ever deepening, clarifying, and expressing what is important to us. In the phase above we found ourselves impacting others in unforeseen ways, we are therefore we are needing to explain our intention and contend for our vision and mission. Contending does bring a quality of contentiousness which makes it important to be peaceful in our manner and to seek the good of all as our largest purpose.

Consider using this model to develop your intentions and goals for 2022. Pretend you have an idea of what you want and can pretend the outcome as options are being attended to prior to applying intention and extend the outcome to include others while helping individuals to hold their energy and maintain their perspectives.





Mindful Mike's Blog: Adversity

Mike de Anguera

Flood! Well, that's what lots of rain does since there is only so much water the Tahuya River basin can hold. Winter storms not only here but all across the nation with motorists getting stranded in Virginia for several days.

As you can see, we have great flood pictures. A nice lake to canoe in. It need not be all bad. These photos were taken during a sunny spell following the great rain.

We all get tested by adversity during a mortal lifetime. This is what it takes to make a story which we are all creating. I feel within my bones this is the place for me. It stretches my character role thus enabling me to be more real and resilient.



Yesterday Bruce Perler helped me select a new pair of boots. Those boots had to fit my feet and I was the only one who could determine that. Store employees carefully measured my feet and I tried on five pairs of boots. These boots are much better than the old ones which hurt my feet after a lot of snow shoveling.

It is important our lives fit us well. The gender roles we were all expected to occupy remind me of the story of the one size shoe.

There once was a land where the ruler determined the best size shoe for everybody. Folks all had to fit into this one size. Cobblers could only make one size since that was the right size. They could not measure your feet. If your feet were too big, just cut off parts of your foot until the shoe fit. Of course, I would be condemned to a life of pain but that was the price I had to pay to live the right way.

Until yesterday I never realized just how important it was to get the right fit. I even had to get all new socks. My crew socks were unkind to my feet. I wonder if the same is not true for the spiritual world. It seems rather cruel for the Divine to demand everyone do everything the same way. It makes me feel like livestock like nobody cares to hear my story.

I am valuable just as I am. I do not have to justify my existence to anyone. I have a place. There is always work to be done that I can do. I have a right to decent food and shelter. No city should

have any people living on the streets. Medical care should be accessible to all. This will make it safer for everyone.

A community is best able to meet any crisis. No politics and certainly no rich people determining the agenda. A small community is best because it knows it can't afford the luxury of poverty. It must by necessity develop every last ounce of its human resources.

Crisis is part of this lifetime. I do admit I am not very good at preparing for them. It seems like so much work. Like buying new shoes I needed help for friends of mine. Also, incentive. Silverdale is over an hour from here and that's where we had to go to get me a new pair of boots. Bruce knew the right questions to ask. A good guide is essential to getting the right gear with the right fit.

The Swamp didn't get swamped. Usually, this building has survived floods. Thank you to whoever protects it.



Ebenezer Baptist Church (Atlanta, Georgia)

*Bob Fitch photography
archive, © Stanford
University Libraries*

In the fall of 1947, Martin Luther King delivered his first sermon at the pulpit of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta.

Ebenezer's congregation voted to license King as a minister soon afterward, and he was ordained in February 1948. King went on to serve as Ebenezer's associate minister during his breaks from **Crozer Theological Seminary** and from his doctoral studies

at **Boston University** through early 1954. He returned as co-pastor with his father, Martin Luther **King, Sr.**, serving from 1960 until his assassination in 1968.



The church was founded in 1886 by its first minister, John Andrew Parker. In 1894 Adam Daniel **Williams**, King, Jr.'s maternal grandfather, became Ebenezer's second pastor. Under Williams the church grew from 13 members to nearly 750 members by 1913. Williams moved the church twice before purchasing a lot on the corner of Auburn Avenue and Jackson Street and announced plans to raise \$25,000 for a new building that would include an auditorium and gallery seating for 1,250 people. In March 1914 the Ebenezer congregation celebrated the groundbreaking for its new building. After the death of Williams in 1931, King, Sr., who had married Williams' daughter Alberta in 1926, became pastor.

With King, Sr., as pastor and his wife, Alberta Williams **King**, serving as musical director, the King family spent much of their time at Ebenezer. King, Jr., later described how his earliest relationships were formed at church: "My best friends were in Sunday School, and it was the Sunday School that helped me to build the capacity for getting along with people" (*Papers* [1:359](#)). While in seminary, King often preached at Ebenezer. He delivered some of his most enduring sermons for the first time at Ebenezer, including "The Dimensions of a Complete Life," "What Is Man?" and "Loving Your Enemies."



Programs and Events of the Goodenough Community

Announcing Winter and Spring Dates

Community is about adapting to change, and that has been the case with the pandemic as we have adapted many of our ways to connect, most of which are held on Zoom.

Throughout the year we intend to offer programs that help you participate in your own development, learn about relating well with others, and help you discover your potential for having a good time in life and with others. Information about programs and upcoming events can be found on our website: www.goodenough.org



Human Relations Laboratory, August 7 – 13, 2022 – Mark your calendars now

This intense and joyous week-long event is a communal experience of personal growth and relational development within a rich culture with art, music, dance, song, drama and more. Next summer in 2022 we will celebrate 53 years! Contact: Colette Hoff or Elizabeth Jarrett-Jefferson, hoff@goodenough.org, elizabeth.ann.jarrett@gmail.com



The Goodenough Community's governing body, the General Circle, meets monthly on Monday evenings, 7:00 PM

Winter and Spring Dates

- January 24, 2022
- February 21
- March 21
- April 25
- May 23
- June 20

For additional information, contact [Elizabeth Jarrett-Jefferson](#)



The Women's Program is a long-established and ever-growing way for women to enjoy each other's company, learn about themselves as women, and even perhaps to experience the Divine Feminine.

Saturdays, 10AM to 1:00 PM via Zoom:

Winter and Spring Dates:

- January 22, 2022
- March 26
- April 29 – May 1 - *Annual Weekend for Women*

For more information, contact [Hollis Ryan](#).



The Third Age - Those age 60 and older have been gathering monthly, Friday evenings, 7PM. Contact [Kirsten Rohde](#) for more information

Winter and Spring 2022 dates:

- January 28, 2022
- February 25
- April 15



The Men's Program - Our Men's Circle is an expression of brotherhood and practice with wisdom, gathered from our own lives, other men's work, advocates, and the founders of this circle.

For information, contact [Norm Peck](#)



Pathwork, a Program of Convocation: A Church and Ministry – Pathwork offers you a spiritual home in which to rest and to share your heart and mind as you move through these unpredictable times. Participants come together under the leadership of Pastor Colette Hoff and find support and encouragement, gaining wisdom from the world's faith & wisdom traditions. All are welcome to join.

Meetings are held via Zoom on alternate Sundays: 7pm to 9pm. Contact Colette

Hoff: hoff@goodenough.org for Zoom information.

Winter and Spring Dates:

- January 9 and 23
- February 6 and 20
- March 6 and 20
- April 10 and 24
- May 8 and 22
- June 5 and 19



Work and Play Parties throughout the Year. Traditionally, the Goodenough Community sponsors work parties over Memorial Day weekend as well as other times to express gratitude for the presence of our beloved retreat center, Sahale, and to experience the satisfaction of playing and working together. Please email hoff@goodenough.org with questions.

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Quest: A Counseling and Healing Center

Our belief is that mental and emotional health is a prerequisite for spiritual well-being, collaboration, and the expression of compassion. Quest's counseling and education programs, open to all interested individuals, focus on empowering individuals, couples, and family groups to be happier and more effective in relationships. Call Colette Hoff (206-755 8404).