



The Rev. Dr. Arlene K. Nehring
Pastoral Message
February 2011

More Bridges to Cross

February is Black History month. It is a special time for us to celebrate the contributions of African Americans in our society, and to take stock of the advances and challenges that we have yet to overcome.

Many of the African American civil rights workers whom we honor this month were devout Christians, including the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In a time when most of the Christians portrayed in the national media scare and embarrass us, we ought to be proud of the distinguished role that Dr. King and his followers played in our nation's history.

There are many occasions that illustrate the courageous contributions of these African American civil rights workers. The march that Dr. King led over the Edmund Pettus Bridge on March 7, 1965 ("Bloody Sunday"), is one illustration that serves as a profound reminder of the challenges and triumphs experienced in earlier times. This illustration also offers us encouragement as we strive to follow in the footsteps of these faithful witnesses. In 1965 the challenge was to win the right to assemble, march, and protest—even on a busy thoroughfare—so that the cause of African American civil rights might be brought to greater public attention. That victory was won.

Now there are other bridges to cross. Some are very near to our church campus. One is the Supervisor's bridge on Grove Way which connects us with the rest of Cherryland, and another is the I-238 overpass on Mission Boulevard which serves as a gateway to Ashland.

The inequities that plague our nation today—particularly within a few miles of our church campus—are graphically illustrated in the proficiency ratings of our public schools and the US Census data. There is much to overcome. There are no simple solutions. But remembering that we were called to be instruments of God's justice, remembering that people of faith have made a huge difference in the quest for civil rights in the past, and daring to cross over and under bridges in our own neighborhood—these are steps in the right direction.

Arlene