

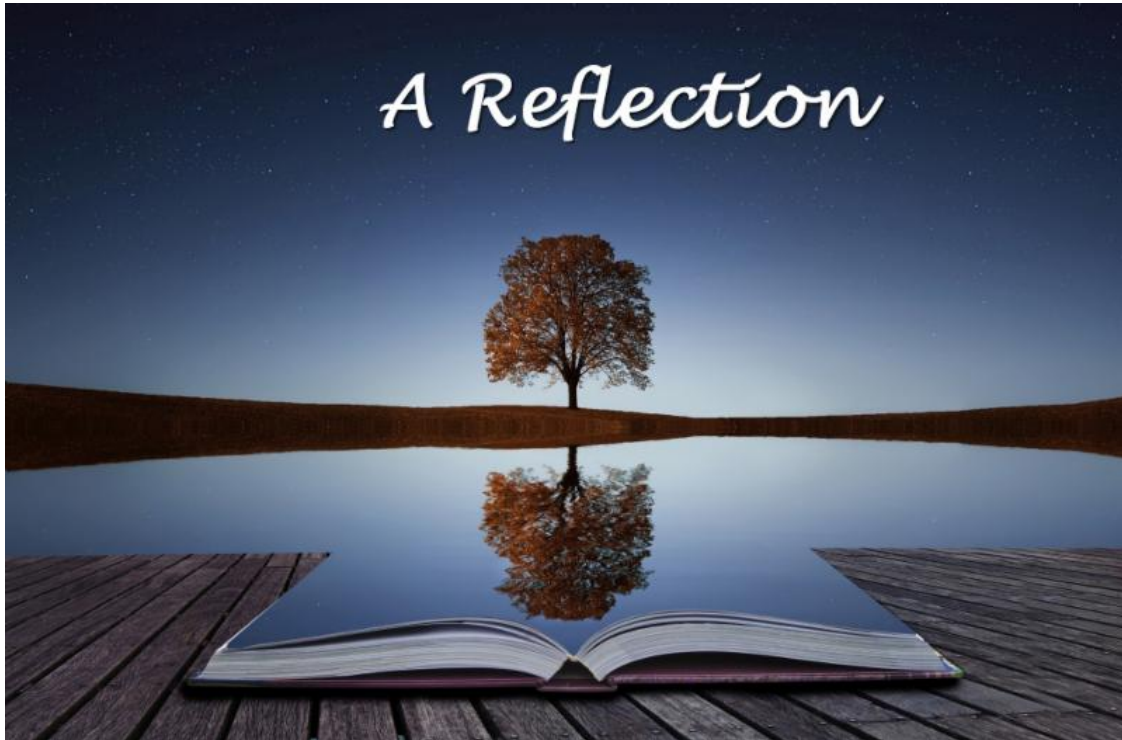


Transforming our Nation One Child at a time



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A Reflection

January 17, 2018

Greetings!



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Reflections

by Bill Whicher

But let justice roll down like waters,

and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Amos 5:24 (NRSV)
Last Monday our nation celebrated the birthday of the civil rights champion, Martin Luther King, Jr. Most people were probably just happy to have a federal holiday and a 3-day weekend. But for some reason, maybe it is the turmoil and disfunction in Washington today, I began to think about the events of the 1950's and especially the 1960's. Dr. King rose to prominence in 1955 as a leader of the Montgomery bus boycott and was a giant and

leader of the non-violent civil rights movement until his assassination in 1968 at the age of 39. Many of his quotes are memorable but several stand out for me as harbingers of today.

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy."

and

"A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a molder of consensus."

The 1960's were an especially turbulent time. During the 1960's, the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights act were passed. But during this time, there was extreme violence in the South against the movement lead by Martin Luther King, Jr. Additionally there was strong opposition to the Vietnam war. I spent the Fall of 1967 and most of 1968 in Vietnam, this land so far away. It is worth noting that the dominos have not fallen. We all remember the horror of Kent State and the many protest songs of this period. My favorite was "Blowing in the Wind" written by Bob Dylan and performed by Peter, Paul and Mary.

The achievements of the Civil Rights movement of the last half of the 20th century have been spectacular though we all admit that there remains very, very much still to be done. A small example; I watched "Meet the Press" this last Sunday and one of the panel members was Helene Cooper. Helene Cooper is a Liberian-born American journalist who is a Pentagon correspondent for The New York Times. Before that, she was the paper's White House correspondent in Washington, D.C. Who would imagine in the 1960's that a person of color, or an immigrant from Africa, would occupy such a prestigious position?

It was also during this period that the United Church of Christ was formed by uniting denominations with common theology if not common polity. By the 1960's the United Church of Christ was established and was working to improve the lives of people. On May 10, 1965, the Illinois South Conference of the United Church of Christ in cooperation with the Elijah Lovejoy Presbytery established Uni-Pres Kindercottage. Though I have no way of knowing, I like to think that the cry for justice during the 50's and 60's convinced the leaders of that time to bring Kindercottage to East St. Louis. The vibrant city of earlier times was having problems and this was one way to help. It was indeed fortunate that this new organization was ultimately led by a capable and dedicated African-American woman, Brenda Crisp. Kindercottage has been shaped and led by this woman with the support of a dedicated staff.

Let us all allow justice to roll down like waters as we work to continue and expand the achievements of the civil rights movement.

We ask that you remember to include Uni-Pres Kindercottage in your

will or trust documents. We would be ever so grateful! Thank you!

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