

**MLK Day Speaker Shares Thoughts, Challenges Ahead of Celebration**

Dr. David Emmanuel Goatley will be the keynote speaker at the 2022 Martin Luther King Jr Celebration Worship Service held January 17 at 6 p.m. in the Boyce Chapel at First Baptist Columbia. Dr. Goatley is the former executive director of the Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Society and current Associate Dean for Academic and Vocational Formation, Research Professor of Theology and Christian Ministry and Director of Black Church Studies at Duke Divinity School of Duke University. He is also a friend and ministry colleague of CMBA Executive Director George Bullard for more than 20 years.

Bullard observed, “I am pleased to have David Goatley as our speaker this year. His work among Baptists throughout the world empowers him to speak with experience, authority, and spiritual maturity into the issues of racial reconciliation in the Baptist Christian experience. He is an insightful and inspiring speaker regarding how we should encounter one another in the diversity of our faith and our world. He was scheduled to be our speaker last year, but we did not conduct an on-site celebration due to the pandemic. I urge Baptists throughout the Midlands and the state to join us for this Celebration Worship Service.”

For his part, Dr. Goatley looks forward to greeting members of the CMBA Family of Baptist Congregations that represent diversity in size, location, age and ethnicity across the Midlands. He says the hard work of serving together across some of these demographics is critically important to being Salt and Light in the world.

“It requires diligence and discipline, because churches are a part of communities and community is a part of regional and national networks. We live with a lot of polarization and a lot of demonization and our communities, and the world needs an authentic witness to Christ Jesus. That authentic witness can be very meaningful when it is done in relationship and partnerships that go beyond homogeneous expressions,” he says.

“All of us have ‘muscle memory’ that we have to work against sometimes. Because this brings up some of the embedded ideologies and theologies that have contributed to separations, segregations and marginalizations, we have to work very hard to keep the fire burning that can light the way when we have all of these competing wins of culture and country that are trying to snuff out the Light of Christ.”

For his part Dr. Andre Rogers, CMBA Mobilizer and pastor of Concord Fellowship, says Dr. Goatley’s address is timely for the unique challenges facing churches in 2022, including the pandemic and Critical Race Theory.

“Our churches are looking for answers and direction as we fulfill the Great Commandment in light of the Great Commission. Dr. Goatley is a seasoned scholar and churchman. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. paved the way for schools like Duke University to consider African American scholars. I'm particularly excited about celebrating MLK Day because this gives our churches a chance to live out Dr. King's dream. Dr. Goatley will inspire our churches with a common touch without tainting us,” Rogers says.

Dr. Goatley’s MLK Day address will include more on his challenge to believers and churches to build relationships, meaningful ministries and personal witness. “It is easier to tear something up than to build something up. I think churches need to encourage one another to continue doing the good work and the hard work of building up one another and building a witness of integrity and authenticity so that we can help make this world what God dreams it to be,” he says.

When asked about which of MLK’s messages resonates most with him personally, Dr. Goatley points to some of his lesser-known works naming the combined dangers of racism, predatory capitalism and militarism which “prevent the country and world from being places for the flourishing of all humanity. They are connected and they all reinforce each other.” This, he says of MLK’s message, articulates the ultimate work Christians are called to do for the human family.

To individuals wishing to celebrate MLK Day differently this year Dr. Goatley suggests intentionally building relationships and collaborating with people who are not in their demographic. “We need to seek relationships and partnerships with people who stand in a place that I don’t stand. They can help me see more clearly because of their perspectives, experiences and journeys. Building these relationships can enlarge our imagination, enlarge our hearts for service and enlarge our wisdom for how we can be a blessing and live in ways that build up rather than tear down. That requires our seeking first to understand and to listen and to learn.”

Taking this a step further, Dr. Goatley suggests individuals “who enjoy whatever kind of privilege or influence we enjoy, be intentional about utilizing our influence or privilege, power or resources so that we can help to empower others who don’t enjoy what we enjoy. It’s easy to do what we’ve always done with whom we’ve always done it. It takes effort and intentionality to use my resources and relationships in a way to empower someone else who has not been blessed with what the Lord has blessed me with.”

Dr. Goatley also expresses his well-wishes to Bullard, who will retire later this year, saying Bullard has “helped churches, Baptist communities and ecumenical networks across North America and globally to imagine new possibilities and be open to the Spirit in a unique way. That has been a gift that continues to produce and yield and facilitate new conversations. For that we are grateful, and we will continue to drink from those streams he’s helped to enrich. A big congratulations and gratitude for his ministry throughout the continent and around the world.”