Nov 1954

Dr. B. E. Mays, President
Morehouse College
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Dr. Mays:

I am in the process of setting up my program for the coming church year. The second Sunday in July has been set aside as the date for the annual Men's Day. I am seeking each year to bring some of the great preachers of our nation to Dexter Avenue Baptist Church for this occasion. I would like to extend to you an invitation to preach the Men's Day sermon on the 2nd Sunday in July (10th), 1955.

I am seeking to make this a big event for our church and the community at large. I sincerely hope that you can accept the invitation. Your presence as well as your message would mean so much to our church and to our community. Please let me hear from you as soon as possible concerning this matter so that I can proceed with setting up my church calendar.

Our work here is going very well. We are getting superb cooperation from the membership at large.

I hope everything goes well with you and I hope you continual success in the superb job you are doing at Morehouse.

With every good wish, I remain

Sincerely yours,

M. L. King, Jr.
MLK/csk

TLc. MLKP-MBU: Box 116.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

From Major J. Jones

[November 1954]

Boston, Mass.

Jones, King's classmate at Boston University, praises King's "Recommendations," commenting specifically on his explanation of pastoral authority and the plan to centralize Dexter's treasury.1

1. Major J. Jones (1919—) received his A.B. from Atlanta's Clark College in 1941, his B.D. from Gammon Theological Seminary in 1944, his S.T.M. from Oberlin Theological Seminary in 1950, and his Th.D. from Boston University in 1957. An ordained minister in the Methodist church, Jones served as a pastor and a district superintendent in eastern Tennessee from 1956 to 1967. He served on the General Board of Education of the Methodist church; and the boards of directors of the Committee of Southern Churchmen and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. From 1967 to 1985, Jones was president of Gammon Theological Seminary. Since then he has been chaplain of the Atlanta University Center. His publications include Black Awareness: A Theology of Hope (1971) and Christian Ethics for Black Theology (1974).
Dear Martin,

Just a line to say how much I do appreciate your sending me your most interesting “Recommendations to the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church” which I read with much interest; as you had asked me, when I got the time, to say what I thought of them. After reading them over I do not feel that there anything I could say that you did not say in the act of speaking to the over all needs of the church. I feel that you did a very good job in pointing out the relationship which should exist between the pastor and the people of the church. Likewise I would have no questions to raise about methodology, which point you covered very well. I think some of the plans which you gave were very good, and I say some to speak of those which were new and which I am sure were new to the church. I put of this in the first section of the paper as it has to do with my reading and with what I thought after having read, with interest, the recommendations.

Now let me say this in the way of a suggestion which may or may not add anything to the overall recommendations of the church, but which would give more unity to the purpose for it all, and which will act as some sort of aims and objectives for the church at large. I find that when we organize any large group of people into many competing groups we have to be careful not to make each group the end unto itself; each forgetting the whole. I feel that you could have offset a lot of this by stating in the outset a gorup of aims and objective around which all of the other things which you said could have been integrated, not to say they are not implicit in each of the things which you mentioned. But this would have given a concept of the nature of the church as it becomes relative for this particular church. You can see that there are some people who want to know what the church’s purpose is as it might be spelled out in concrete policy or aim. These aims and objective could have caught up in a collective statement what you said in each of the separate things which relate to each of the recommendatons.

Now I was interested in another aspect of the recommendations, and that was the matter of the Unified Budget plan, and also the Central Treasury. In many cases the central treasury has made for less organizational ambition. I once tried a method like the bank, where each club or organization would hold its money in a central treasury, presenting a check or draft as needed, and with the church unable to use the money only in a state of crises voted by the board. I feel that your way is better if it works with the people and will get activities desired without people, as groups having controll of Monies.

I am planning to come home for Xmas and will be staying at Ra. 0668, or 1003 Palmetto, I do hope that I have the chance to see you before I come back here. There is no other news other than that Rev. Gibson’s wife died.²

Very truly yours,
[signed]
Major

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² Jones refers to W. Marvin Gibson, pastor of Cambridge’s Union Baptist Church, where King had preached the previous summer.
1 Nov 1954 {Give my regards to the wife and I do hope I will be able to see the two of you when I come home to talk some more about this most interesting paper-}

TALS. MLKP-MBU: Box 117.

From Sankey L. Blanton

1 November 1954
Chester, Pa.

King wrote Blanton on 26 October, providing his new address and informing Blanton of his work at Dexter.¹

Rev. Martin L. King, Jr.
Dexter Avenue Baptist Church
Montgomery, Alabama

Dear Mr. King:

Thank you for your letter. I am delighted to know where you are, and that you are happy. I regard you as one of the most promising students that I have met, and will watch your career with a deep personal interest and some pride. I will be coming to Alabama in mid-winter. When I come, I will call you in the hope that I can drop by to see you for a little while.

Yours sincerely,

[signed]
Sankey L. Blanton

SLB/sr

TLS. MLKP-MBU: Box 117.

¹. See King to Blanton, 26 October 1954, MLKP-MBU: Box 116. In the letter King reported that "we are getting off to a good start here. We are getting real cooperation from the entire membership. I am enjoying my work very much, however, it really keeps me busy."