

From Ralph Abernathy

28 May 1958
Montgomery, Ala.

On 10 January 1957, the parsonages of Robert Graetz and Ralph Abernathy were bombed along with four black churches, including Abernathy's First Baptist Church. Dexter members joined the First Baptist congregation to rededicate the bombed building on 27 April 1958. King and Abernathy presided jointly at the service, and New York minister Gardner Taylor gave the sermon. A month later, Abernathy expresses his appreciation.¹

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Minister
Dexter Avenue Baptist Church
454 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, Alabama

Dear Pastor, Officers and Members:

On behalf of the official family and entire membership of the First Baptist Church, I am indeed very pleased and happy to express thanks and appreciation to you for your fine spirit of co-operation genuine support given during the bombing and rededication of our dear Church. We want you to know that we appreciate to the highest degree your prayers, moral and financial assistance. You have been more than kind to us. At no moment in our struggle have we felt alone or discouraged, because we felt your presence and heard your encouraging words.

We are especially grateful to you for closing your doors and joining in worship with us on Sunday, April 27, the occasion of our Rededication. We want to thank members of your Choir, the members of your Usher Board, your Deacons, the members of your lovely Congregation and especially your distinguished Minister, who had the courage to break away from traditions and score another "first" in Christendom here in the city of Montgomery. I am certain that nothing like this has ever occurred in our community and it never could have happened this time had not it been for your great Pastor and for your great spirit.

1. The following day Abernathy sent a letter of gratitude to the MIA, noting especially the efforts of the Bombed Churches Committee and the Reconstruction Committee and adding that First Baptist Church "has been rededicated to those same principles which caused it to be bombed" (Abernathy to MIA, 29 May 1958).

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

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If in the future in any little way First Baptist Church can be of any service to you, please do not hesitate to call upon us. We stand willing and ready to do whatever we can to assist you and your Pastor. Again, we are happy to say thanks for having made our Rededication Service an overwhelming success and for the very liberal financial assistance you have given all along the way. May God ever bless you and crown your efforts with success. I remain

Eternally grateful,
[*signed*] Ralph D. Abernathy (AB)
Ralph D. Abernathy, Pastor

CC: Professor T. H. Randell, Chairman, Deacon Board
Mr. R. D. Nesbitt, Clerk, Dexter Avenue Baptist Church
Mr. William D. Beasley, Clerk, First Baptist Church

TLSr. MLKP-MBU: Box 71A.