

Beloved Community Definition - Draft

Short:

At Village Baptist Church, we understand Beloved Community to mean putting love into action and pursuing justice in our everyday living, striving through our work to build authentic relationships through listening to and learning from one another and the community around us.

Long:

The term *Beloved Community* became popularized by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. He defined *Beloved Community* as the ultimate end of the nonviolent movement, through which agape love will “transform opposers into friends... [and] transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age.”¹ The King Center describes the *Beloved Community* as “...a global vision, in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the *Beloved Community*, poverty, hunger, and homelessness will not be tolerated because International standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood. Love and trust will triumph over fear and hatred. Peace and justice will prevail over war and military conflict.”²

Today, many groups use the term *Beloved Community* in reference to people for whom one has affection and on whom one could rely for friendship and support. Though this type of community is also sorely needed in today’s culture, it falls short of the deeper meaning King attributed to the formation of *Beloved Community*.

At Village Baptist Church, we proudly display the words *Beloved Community* as an affirmation of our commitment to build a community driven by agape love, defined by King as “the love of God working in the lives of [people],”³ in which each person is embraced and valued as nothing less than human beings created in the Image of God. We share the conviction that creating and sustaining *Beloved Community* demands that each member of Village Baptist Church comes together to actively pursue justice with the same fervor demonstrated by Jesus Christ, looking towards his vision of the Kingdom of God as our guide. We recognize that this type of community requires

¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Facing the Challenge of a New Age,” in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writing and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, edited by James Melvin Washington (New York, NY: HarperOne, 1986), 140.

² “The King Philosophy - Nonviolence365,” The King Center (website), accessed January 29, 2021, <https://thekingcenter.org/about-tkc/the-king-philosophy/>

³ King, “Facing the Challenge of a New Age,” 140.

dedication to the values stated in our Church Covenant to “strive for learning, dignity, courage, and understanding,” building genuine, authentic relationships through acknowledging our failings, actively listening to one another, and breaking down barriers that divide us from one another and from the community around us.

We believe, as MLK said, that in our striving to build *Beloved Community*, we are engaging in the work of transformation, redemption, and reconciliation, both within our own congregation and the community beyond these four walls.

Highlights from *Welcoming Justice* Book Group:

- Embrace “least of these”
 - Old, young, underrepresented, marginalized, poor, discriminated against
- Emphasis on local community - investment in local community
 - Create jobs; create opportunities
- Learn to listen
 - Inside the church
 - To the community outside the church
- Learn to express feelings
- Ability to identify needs of the community (outside the church)
 - Meeting needs of the community
- **Movement oriented**
- **Action oriented/Active**
 - **Active Love**
 - MLK called this agape love
 - **Actively Reaching Out**
 - Working at food bank, engaging community
 - Not just giving out, but being with
 - **Actively pursue justice**
 - Not taking foot off the pedal
- Beloved Community is difficult work and demands time
 - **Everyone has to be involved**
- Safety
- Requires attention to personal formation
 - Discipleship
- Speak out on social injustice
- Celebrate cultures; Celebrate diversity
 - Understand and appreciate differences
- **Acknowledge sins/failings (in order to move forward)**

- Believe in abundance
- **Genuine/Authentic Relationships**
 - No insiders / outsiders
 - Break down biases
 - Authentic community of grace
- Substance
- Small Group activities
- Shared humanity
- **Learn about racism (particularly White church members)**
- **Learning to be uncomfortable**
- Patience
- Communication
- Being honest with the reality of what is happening now
- Education - particularly around history
- Joy
- Makes people feel welcome
- Don't make assumptions about people
- Persistence
- "Be-ing" with people
- Arbiters of justice
- **Courageous**

If I could describe Beloved Community using one word, it would be:

- Tolerance
- Inclusion
- Love
- Family
- Collaborative
- Sacrifice
- Attentive
- Openness
- Patience
- Advocates
- Grace
- Respect
- Adaptability
- Informative
- Christ-Centered
- Enriching
- Hopeful
- Harmony

Helpful articles:

<https://www.wearethebelovedcommunity.org/bcquotes.html>

<https://www.r2hub.org/library/25-traits-of-the-beloved-community>

<https://www.8thprincipleuu.org/what-is-beloved-community>

<https://www.boundlessloveproject.org/beloved-community>

As explained by [The King Center](#), the memorial institution founded by Coretta Scott King to further the goals of Martin Luther King:

Dr. King's Beloved Community is a global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood.

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-beloved-community-dr_b_4583249