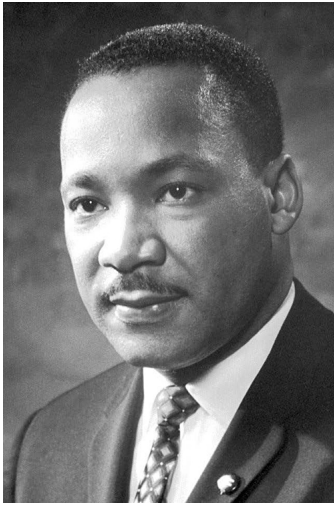


Gallup community celebrates Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Written by By Carli Mortensen, Communication Director, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Gallup New Mexico Stake

Friday, 19 January 2024 00:00



Four events took place in Gallup over Martin Luther King Jr. weekend to honor the activist, starting with a commemorative service at UNM-Gallup, then a community service project at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a food drive at St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church, and finally a documentary screening at the Zollinger Library.

The UNM-Gallup Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, in partnership with the Charlie Morrissey Education Center, Howard Chapel of the Homeless, and St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church, hosted an MLK Jr. Day Celebration on Jan. 13, beginning with a Commemorative Service at Calvin Hall Auditorium.

Mona Frazier, a community volunteer and a former member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, led the event as the Mistress of Ceremonies. Frazier shared her history of seeing racism when she was growing up attending an all Black elementary and junior high school.

In ninth grade, her school was integrated, and she said it was strange going to school with other people who didn't look like her. She said she still has friendships from high school that she never thought she would have.

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"It is just such a blessing to be able to give back to what Dr. King has done for me, for my community, for myself, and to be able to serve others," Frazier said. "His legacy was to serve others more than ourselves."

St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church provided the music for the commemorative service. The invocation was given by Deacon William Day of St. Paul Church, with a sermon and benediction by Reverend Dr. Geleta Smith of the Word of God African Methodist Episcopal Church in Rio Rancho, New Mexico. L.D. Lovett of the UNM-Gallup Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion gave closing remarks. Those in attendance joined hands in a circle for the closing song and benediction.

Smith opened her sermon about Hosea chapter seven by singing, "We've Come This Far by Faith."

"I want you to learn to do civil rights the way the Lord has you do it in your community, not based necessarily on how it was done in the past because times have changed," Smith said in her sermon.

"Technology has changed. Our young people have different thoughts, and some of them aren't wrong. I want you to join a civil rights group if you have to. ... The best group, however, that can start this is you and me because it starts with us," she said.

Following the event at UNM-Gallup, community members from various churches, non-profits, and government organizations gathered at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to assemble more than 700 hygiene kits for the unsheltered. They also collected more than 650 pairs of socks. All items from the service project will be distributed to the unsheltered through local non-profits.

"Service is such a great outlet and helps gather community members. All of the people from Crownpoint, Zuni, Grants, and Gallup were a sight I can't get over. ... I think most stood next to someone they've never stood next to before," Crystal Jimson, of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Gallup Stake Relief Society Presidency, said.

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Some hygiene kits, socks, and other winter items were distributed on Martin Luther King Jr. Day at the St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church. While community members dropped off food that will be donated to The Community Pantry and additional clothing, unhoused individuals got a warm lunch, free clothes, to-go food, and items from the Saturday service project.

“All in all, a glorious day for the Lord. We were able to help those in need. Able to feed some people. Clothe some people. And pray for some people,” Day said about the event on Monday.

Frazier thanked the community for donating clothing and food and for those who helped assemble the hygiene kits on Saturday.

“The whole weekend was just a blessing,” she said. “Doing what Dr. King wanted us to do to feed those in need and to keep those clothed, especially during this time of winter.”

To cap off the weekend’s celebrations, the Zollinger Library showed a documentary screening about Martin Luther King, Jr. on Jan. 16. Attendees also received a Make a Dream card.

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