A LITANY FOR
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., DAY

LEADER: Throughout his life and in his death, King demonstrated that involvement produces empowerment. In a sermon delivered on August 11, 1957, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., stated “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’”

AUDIENCE: Martin taught us that involvement produces the precious fruit of empowerment. “What are you doing for others?”

LEADER: King stated that “An individual has not begun to live until he can rise above the narrow horizons of his particular individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.”

AUDIENCE: In the name of involvement, “What are you doing for others?”

LEADER: King also said that “Every person must decide, at some point, whether they will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness.”

AUDIENCE: In the name of empowerment, “What are you doing for others?”

LEADER: We are all the benefactors of the deeds, contributions, and sacrifices of those who have gone before us. They left their mark; we enjoy the fruit of their labor. It is incumbent upon us, therefore, to leave our mark and to make greater contributions to the betterment of society.

AUDIENCE: In the name of those who have gone before us, “What are you doing for others?”

LEADER: To whom much is given, much is required. The freedoms and privileges of our citizenship, along with the right to pursue our dreams, are gifts of immeasurable proportion. What legacy will we leave those who will come after us?

AUDIENCE: In the name of generations yet to come, “What are you doing for others?”

LEADER: In remembrance of Martin and in honor of the generations that will come after us, what pledge do we offer?

AUDIENCE: We pledge our commitment to involvement in our community in order to better our society and to empower those who will come after us.

Special thanks to:
Dr. Harris Pastides, President; Office of the Provost, Dr. Michael Amiridis, Provost; Department of Athletics, Eric Hyman, Director; Division of Finance and Planning, Dr. William T. Moore, Vice President.
The commemoration of the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., has a rich history at the University of South Carolina. Even before the inception of the national holiday, commemorative activities were held at USC. In January 1983, the USC Black Alumni Caucus sponsored the first University program in honor of Dr. King's birthday and continued to sponsor the event, held in Rutledge Chapel, until 1986.

In that same year, the Office of Minority Student Affairs, in conjunction with the Black Alumni Caucus and the Association of African-American Students, expanded the program and moved it to the Russell House Ballroom. Dr. King's daughter, Ms. Yolanda King, was the 1986 keynote speaker. Since then, through the Office of the President, Division of Student Affairs, and the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs, this commemorative program has evolved into a three-day celebration. Nationally recognized speakers and native South Carolinians who have achieved success in religion, government, and politics have been past keynote speakers for the Annual Commemorative Breakfast which traditionally kicks off the MLK activities for the weekend leading up to the Monday birthday celebration.

The USC Chapter of the Black Law Students Association implemented their Commemorative Law School Program in 1989. The primary focus of this event has been on the legal aspects of Dr. King's life and the Civil Rights Movement, and this event is open to the public and is held on the day of the actual King Holiday. The Martin Luther King, Jr., Holiday Committee is pleased that these activities have evolved into a University-wide event. The committee, with the full support of President Harris Pastides, salutes those individuals and groups that have led the way in commemorating Dr. King's birthday at this institution.

In 1999 then President John M. Palms cancelled classes and declared the day a University-wide Day of Service. This tradition continues today under the leadership of President Harris Pastides. USC's Day of Service includes projects in which faculty, staff, and students devote a day to community service in the greater Columbia community and it continues to grow in scope. USC's Day of Service celebrates Dr. King's spirit and our commitment as a University to never forget his contributions to this nation and to the world.