

Vice-Chairman; Mrs. R. E. Harris, Secretary; 31 Oct  
Mrs. Mary Morgan; Mrs. E. M. Arrington; Mrs. 1955  
Mary Louise Williams; Mr. Jerome Morris. The  
names of the person or persons joining shall be  
listed in the Church Bulletin on the Sunday af-  
ter they join, and they will be officially welcomed  
into the church on the First Sunday night with  
the right hand of fellowship. [ . . . ]<sup>4</sup>

TD. MLKP-MBU: Box 77.

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4. A listing of the church members and officers is omitted, as is the detailed financial report.

### To Howard Thurman

31 October 1955  
Montgomery, Ala.

*King invites Thurman, dean of Boston University's Marsh Chapel, to speak for  
Men's Day.*<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Howard Thurman  
Boston University School of Theology  
745 Commonwealth Avenue  
Boston, Mass.

Dear Dr. Thurman:

I am in the process of setting up my program for the coming church year.  
The second Sunday in July is the date set aside for our annual Men's Day. I

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1. Howard Thurman (1899–1981) received his B.A. from Morehouse College in 1923 and his M.Div. from Rochester Theological Seminary in 1926. After serving as pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Oberlin, Ohio, Thurman returned to Morehouse as professor of religion in 1929. He joined Howard University's faculty in 1932 and three years later became dean of the university's chapel. Just prior to his appointment as dean, Thurman and his wife, Sue Bailey Thurman, traveled to India on a "Pilgrimage of Friendship" and met Mohandas K. Gandhi. Thurman resigned from Howard in 1943 to help establish San Francisco's Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples, one of the first churches composed of African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Euro-Americans. In 1953 he became dean of Boston University's Marsh Chapel, where he served until 1965. His many publications include an autobiography, *With Head and Heart* (1979); *Deep River: Reflections on the Religious Insight of Certain of the Negro Spirituals* (1946, rev. ed. 1955); *The Negro Speaks of Life and Death* (1947); *Jesus and the Disinherited* (1949); *Deep Is the Hunger* (1951); *Meditations of the Heart* (1953); *The Creative Encounter* (1954); *Footprints of a Dream* (1959); *The Inward Journey* (1961); *The Luminous Darkness* (1965); and *The Centering Moment* (1969).

2 Nov  
1955 am seeking each year to bring some of the great preachers of our nation to Dexter Avenue Baptist Church for this occasion. Our last Men's Day speaker was Dr. Benjamin E. Mays of Morehouse College. I would like to extend to you an invitation to preach the Men's Day sermon the second Sunday in July, 1956.

This is one of the outstanding events of our church year. 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.

The Dexter Avenue Baptist Church has a rich history. Probably you are already familiar with the church. Many outstanding ministers have served here. My immediate predecessor was your friend, Dr. Vernon Johns.<sup>2</sup> You will probably remember me from my recent studies at Boston University. I received my Ph.D. degree from the University in June of this year.

I will look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience concerning this matter so that I may proceed in setting up my church calendar for the year. Please give my best regards to Mrs. Thurman.<sup>3</sup> With every good wish, I am

Sincerely yours,  
M. L. King, Jr.  
MLK:imt

TL. HTC-MBU: Box 43.

To W. T. Handy, Jr.

2 November 1955  
[Montgomery, Ala.]

*Both King and Handy preached at Southern University in Baton Rouge in October.*

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2. Vernon Johns (1892–1965) was pastor of Dexter from 1947 until 1952. Johns received his A.B. from Virginia Theological Seminary and College in 1915 and his B.D. from Oberlin College in 1918. After pastoring churches in Virginia, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania, Johns was called to Dexter in 1947. Johns preached economic self-sufficiency and civil rights militancy, arousing the ire of local authorities. See Charles Emerson Boddie, "Vernon Johns," in *God's Bad Boys* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press), pp. 61–75.

3. Sue Bailey Thurman (1903–) was a contemporary of Alberta Williams King at Spelman and graduated from Oberlin in 1926. She became traveling secretary of the national YWCA in 1928, remaining in that position until her marriage to Howard Thurman in 1932. In 1940 she helped found and edit the official organ of the National Council of Negro Women, the *African American Women's Journal*. Her publications include *Pioneers of Negro Origin in California* (1952) and *The Historical Cookbook of the American Negro* (1958).