Let’s talk about Dr. King’s vision

*Background:*
More than 50 years ago, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights leaders helped our nation and the world understand that separate is not equal. He urged us to live up to the ideals of our Constitution and to move toward what he termed the “Beloved Community.”

In 1994, Congress passed legislation making the federal holiday honoring Dr. King a day of service. We serve on MLK Day because our serving together can make a difference to others and address critical issues in communities. In addition, this service brings together people from all backgrounds and with different experience to focus on ways we can fight poverty and create economic opportunity.

As we plan for how we will honor MLK Day 2017, it is important to consider the actions and the conversations that can bring about the Beloved Community. The link below takes you to information developed by the King Center on Dr. King’s philosophy.

*Ideas to consider:*

- If you are planning a service project in which volunteers will be divided into teams, organize the teams in such a way that individuals get to know someone new. This could be as simple as giving each team a number and as individuals check in, each person gets a different number than the person that registered in front of them. We know there will be some exceptions (like children under 14 serving with their parents or individuals/families who just want to serve together), but this is a simple way to diversify your teams when possible.
- Share the *King Philosophy* with your volunteers in advance of the day and ask them to read it before they come to volunteer.
- Communicate with your volunteers in advance to let them know how the service they are performing on King Day (or committing to do going forward) is making a difference in their community and how it helps us advance toward a “Beloved Community.” Ask them to think about their contribution to the Beloved Community in advance of the project, so they are prepared for conversation on the day of service.
- Schedule your service projects to begin with a discussion (it is often hard to do this at the end of the project because people are ready to leave). You can lay the foundation for this when you communicate with your volunteers before the service project and again during orientation and logistics briefings. Once folks are in teams, you can begin your service with a discussion that can pave the way for people to get to know each other as they discuss how they can/will help address barriers to the Beloved Community.

*Discussion starters for individuals or teams. You probably want to go over this at the beginning of your service project to prepare team leaders to prompt discussions:*

- Ask volunteers to make sure to introduce themselves to someone they don’t yet know.
- Ask volunteers to share with each other why they came out to serve on MLK Day.
• Continue the discussion with a question such as, “What are some issues that affect our community that you are concerned about?” Followed by, “How will you work to address those issues this year?”

• Ask them what their contributions are and will be to creating the Beloved Community; you may want to have them write down their goals and actions for themselves for the coming year. This could be as easy as having paper on the walls where they can post goals and actions at their own pace during the project, or distribute note cards for individuals to jot down their goals and plans.

Next steps:

• Share your King Day of Service experience on your social media platforms using #MLKDay.
  o Consider including the concerns you have for your community and why you served on the King holiday
  o Share your plan of action
  o Ask others to join you, or you join them
    ▪ Consider writing to friends and others about your King Day service activities
    ▪ Look for organizations and individuals that share your concerns

• Throughout the year, revisit your commitment and share your actions on social media using #MLKDay.