Martin Luther King proclaimed: “I say to you, my friends, even though we must face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed – we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” Be warned, I may share King’s I Have a Dream speech with you every year on MLK weekend. It is one of my favorite speeches ever written and we need to continue to be inspired and motivated by these words.

But, here’s the thing…the dream is not just for us. It is not a dream just for the United States. This is a dream dreamed across the globe. This is the dream of all of Creation. We dream, we yearn for reconciliation with God. Striving for justice and peace, respecting the dignity of every human being is understanding that we are all born of one Creator. And, remember, God doesn’t create us because God needs us. God creates us because God loves us. When we love one another, when we give thanks for each other’s gifts, when we recognize the truth in each and every one of us, we are yearning for God, we are reconciling with God, we are heading home.

The dream didn’t begin with Martin Luther King, Jr. The dream has always been a part of us. The dream is as old at Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the great theologian who spoke out against the Nazi regime and was martyred in April, 1945, 23 days before the Germans surrendered. The dream is as old as Harriet Beecher Stowe who, in 1852, wrote Uncle Tom’s Cabin. Her writings and her anti-slavery work brought the evils of slavery to light. Her influence spread beyond this country to Britain, Europe, and Russia. The dream is as old as Catherine of Siena, the great
mystic, who died in Italy at the young age of 33 in 1380. She was a political reformer. She was a nurse, also, caring for people with leprosy and cancer, the patients no one else would go near.

The dream is as old as Macrina, a saint in the Early Church – she lived around the mid-300’s. Macrina renounced her wealthy lifestyle and established a monastery on the family estate. She cared for the poor, literally picking up young women who lay in the road starving.

The dream is as old as John who describes in the Book of Revelation a new heaven and a new earth. John hears a loud voice cry out, “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; …he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more” (Rev 21:3-4). The dream is as old as Isaiah who prophesies about the time when “the wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them…They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isa 11:6, 9).

We have always desired reconciliation with God and our individual relationship with God inspires how we reconcile, how we live together in this world. I love the passage from I Samuel we heard this morning because it describes our humanness. Samuel hears God calling. He hears the words; he just can’t acknowledge at first try, or even at second try, that it is God who is calling. We deeply desire God because God created us, God is at the core of our being, God is our home. While knitting us together in the womb, God gives us the yearning and the ability to connect to God. We don’t need to go it alone – God is always loving, comforting and inspiring. Yet, so much of life gets in the way of making that connection with God: pride, greed, envy, busy-ness. But, Samuel does finally get it. He hears God calling – note God hasn’t given up, it’s
the third try – and Samuel says, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” He makes the connection, and so can we.

A week ago Friday, my alarm went off as usual around 6:30 am…enough time for me to go exercise before coming into the office. But, that morning, I just couldn’t motivate. I gave it a great deal of thought and finally decided to skip the workout and just lay in bed for a little while. About 20 minutes later, the phone rang. It was a dear friend of mine in Chicago reaching out because her daughter, whom I have known her whole life, had died during the night. There I was able to listen and to cry with her. We might call it a coincidence that I was home that morning. We might recall that it was maybe all of 5 degrees that morning and, really, who wanted to get out of bed? Or, we might ponder the nature of our humanity and God’s desire to live with us, loving, comforting and inspiring. Innate within us is the desire to make the connection.

In some ways it is easier to care for others than to explore ourselves. But, understanding ourselves, our particular gifts and weaknesses, skills and experiences, is important to understanding how we live in this world, how we care for each other, how we nurture God’s Kingdom. It’s not always easy taking a look at ourselves…perhaps we are bothered by feelings of inadequacy, or perhaps we’re good at hiding our doubts away. But, when we allow ourselves to address our doubts in the context of God’s love, we come to understand our dependence on God. God takes all the broken pieces of our lives, and all the attributes, some that we don’t even know that we possess, and offers us a new day, an opportunity for reconciliation. All that we have, all that we are, all that we might become is from God. The need to understand our dependence on God might sound like a demand, almost like we are being scolded for not recognizing some deficiency that needs to be rectified. Not at all…it’s not a demand…it’s an invitation. Understanding our dependence on God is an invitation into God’s love, comfort and
inspiration. Planted within us is the desire to be reconciled with God and to be reconcilers in God’s Kingdom. The invitation is always open to follow that desire home. Amen.