

Speaking Down Barriers: Community Gathering

for the MLK Celebration following
the Walk As One event on Saturday,
January 16th at the Episcopal Church
of the Advent in Spartanburg, SC

Make sure to RSVP by emailing
mlkunityweek@cityofspartanburg.org
or calling 596.2052

What is Speaking Down Barriers?

Speaking Down Barriers (www.speakingdownbarriers.org) is an organization that builds our life together across the differences of ethnicity, class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and national identity that so often separate us. To do this, we host community gatherings and facilitate trainings in safe environments through the use of honest conversation and spoken word poetry. We believe that the differences between us are a source of strength. We help our communities discover that we can live creatively together, even in our disagreements and widely varying experiences.

What is a Community Gathering?

In our Community Gatherings (www.speakingdownbarriers.org/community-gatherings), all ages and backgrounds gather to participate in facilitated dialogue around difficult issues that affect how we live as a community. Professional facilitators guide the discussion. Conversation develops through three simple questions, designed uniquely for each gathering, to empower us to listen and speak with one another in a way we rarely have before. Gatherings are designed to last from 1.5 – 2.5 hours depending on the group and context. By speaking out of our experience, and by listening to the experiences of others, we begin to build a new picture of how we can live together. Everyone has vital perspectives to offer in this process; no one has the whole answer. By sharing our insights, we build a shared vision.

What will happen at the MLK celebration Community Gathering?

Following the Walk As One, we will listen to a brief excerpt from one of King's speeches or interviews. It will lead into our first small group question, orienting everyone to the space and one another. Then individuals will answer a question that leads them deeper into their personal narrative, considering their emotions at the present time as well as in reflection. This will lead to opening the group into the large room discussion format, allowing individuals to share, process, and imagine our life together beyond difference...the beloved community.

Who may participate?

All ages and backgrounds, including children, are welcome to participate. We host gatherings every month in Spartanburg and Greenville, and children regularly attend and participate. This is at the discretion of parents. Although discussion topics are challenging, children have powerful insights to share. Children also have an ability to model the kind of listening and living together that adults often find difficult, because they have not yet been taught not to do it.