



OFFICE OF THE
PRESIDENT

Jan. 19, 2021

Dear Students,

Welcome back to spring semester 2021! I hope the winter break offered you lots of opportunities for rest and renewal following a difficult (but successful!) fall semester.

As we begin this spring semester, we do so in the midst of a tragic global pandemic and a time of deep division and tension within our nation. On Monday, we reflected on Dr. King's legacy of love, compassion, non-violence and the call for biblical justice. Tomorrow, as our nation has done for more than 200 years, a president and vice president will be inaugurated and we hope that a peaceful transition of leadership takes place. Sadly, there is significant concern across our nation as the threat of violence persists in the wake of the recent violent attack on the very seat of American democracy.

The mission of Messiah University is to educate and prepare thoughtful and engaged students like you for lives of service, leadership and reconciliation. As Christians, we are called to love God with our heart, mind and soul and our neighbor as ourselves. The world needs Messiah graduates. The world needs you (and me) to be the kind of leaders our campus, neighborhoods, churches and workplaces deserve. Dr. King said, "We need leaders not in love with money but in love with justice. Not in love with publicity but in love with humanity. Leaders who can subject their particular egos to the pressing urgencies of the great cause of freedom... a time like this demands great leaders."

As we engage in deep learning through classes and community conversations this spring, we know that nurturing critical thinking and empathetic understanding is essential to becoming educated persons. As Christians, we also know that the Jesus of the Gospel – the Jesus of Scripture – is not a god of political power or partisan agendas. Just a few weeks ago we celebrated Jesus' birth – the miracle of the incarnation. Jesus came to dwell in our midst and teach us how to live. The lessons of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount – meekness, humility, peacemaking, serving as salt and light – were certainly not evident in the assault on the Capitol and Congress. Nor have they been evident in much of our nation's vitriolic debate of recent years.

Last week, author Tish Harrison Warren posted an article in *Christianity Today*. She offered encouragement for Christian communities to move forward during these unsettling times:

"We have to take up the slow work of repair, of re-forming our churches around the deep, unchanging truths of the light of Christ. We must reconstruct communities where we can know and speak truth, serve the needy and the poor, love our neighbors, learn to be poor in spirit, rejoice in suffering, and witness to the light of Christ amidst darkness."

As active participants in the ministry of service, leadership, and reconciliation, now more than ever we must work together to restore the brokenness in society. In the days to come, let's join together as a Christian educational community earnestly seeking knowledge and truth as we actively care for and serve others. Let's unite together to faithfully pray for our nation, our leaders and each other. Let's work together to be a community that is a true witness to the light of Christ amidst the darkness.

Your president,

Kim Phipps