



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Inaugural Agape Gala to Illuminate Love's Triumph over Hate *Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Presbyterian Church invites the Springfield community to celebrate social justice and help rebuild the church.*

Springfield, MA [January 16, 2024] — Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Presbyterian Church (MLK Church) proudly announces its First Annual Agape Gala: CALLED TO CONQUER AWARDS to be held on March 2, 2024, from 6:00 to 10:00 PM at the Sheraton Springfield Monarch Place Hotel in Springfield, MA.

Celebrity host, Rolonda Watts, award-winning actress, talk show host and author of *Destiny Lingers*, is set to emcee this inaugural event. The gala, inspired by the timeless impact of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is a fundraiser dedicated to rebuilding the church and celebrating the triumph of love over hate within the Springfield community.

On December 28, 2020, the MLK Church was targeted by an arsonist successfully setting the building ablaze in an act of hate. In addition to honoring the selected awardees, the primary goal of the Agape Gala is to raise funds to restore their place of worship.

“The Agape Gala transcends being just a fundraiser; it is an opportunity for our community to come together, celebrating our shared vision and fostering hope for a more peaceful and loving world,” says current MLK Church pastor, Rev. Dr. Terrlyn L. Curry Avery (TLC). “By participating, you become an integral part of our journey towards healing, rebuilding, and fostering a spirit of love in the face of adversity.”

A key component of the gala is The Called to Conquer Awards, created to recognize individuals that embody Agape principles and actively pursue social justice in various capacities. The following awards will be presented:

- **Agape Love Ambassador – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Award:** Acknowledges an individual who has exemplified the principles of Agape love in their interactions with others. The recipient has demonstrated selfless love, compassion, and a commitment to building bridges within the community. This person actively promotes understanding, unity, and the well-being of others, embodying the spirit of Agape love in their everyday actions.
- **Social Justice Trailblazer – Ida B. Wells Award:** Honors an individual who has shown outstanding dedication to advancing social justice causes. This recipient has actively

worked towards dismantling systemic injustices, advocating for equality, and creating positive change within their community. Their efforts have made a significant impact on issues such as racial equity, economic justice, or environmental sustainability.

- **Community Healing and Reconciliation – Bryan Stevenson Award:** Recognizes a group or individual who has made remarkable contributions to community healing and reconciliation. The recipient has played a pivotal role in fostering understanding, forgiveness, and unity within a diverse community. Their initiatives may include organizing events that promote dialogue, facilitating reconciliation efforts, or implementing programs that address historical grievances, leading to a more harmonious and interconnected community.

Tickets are available for \$100 per person. For more information and to purchase tickets, please visit mlkagapegala.eventbrite.com. To donate to the MLK Church Fire Fund, please visit mlkchurchma.org.

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About Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Presbyterian Church:

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Presbyterian Church is a beacon of hope, justice, and love in the heart of Springfield, dedicated to embodying the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and fostering a spirit of unity within the community.

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