Announcements by Rev. King:

1. Keep your “sense of dignity”
2. Vote to stop protest—Rev. Bennett was exercising his “democratic right” to vote the way he did. We should “admire him for his courage”. He is as much with us as he was in the beginning.
3. Continue your policy of “non-violence”
4. Mrs. Reese withdrew her name as a plaintiff. Stop bothering her with “phone call threats”.

AD. PV-ARC-LNT.

3. On 20 February 1956, amid growing rumors that boycott leaders were about to be indicted, MIA members overwhelmingly voted down a compromise seating proposal mediated by the Men of Montgomery, a white business group. Rev. L. Roy Bennett and his assistant pastor were the only dissenting votes out of four thousand. The compromise would have preserved segregated sections in the front and rear of city buses while eliminating several humiliating practices and granting amnesty to protesters (see Ralph Abernathy, Memo to the Men of Montgomery, 20 February 1956; and Men of Montgomery, Outline of Suggestions to End Montgomery Bus Boycott, 13 February 1956).

4. Fearing the personal consequences, Jeanatta Reese had withdrawn as a plaintiff in the Browder v. Gayle federal lawsuit.

To William H. Gray, Jr.

28 February 1956

[Montgomery, Ala.]

On 16 February Gray, a prominent religious leader and family friend, inquired about preaching at Dexter on 11 March if King thought “that a northern Yankee like me could have a message for your courageous people in Montgomery.” Because Kelly Miller Smith was already scheduled to preach that day, King arranges for Gray to preach at Ralph Abernathy’s church. On 27 February Gray appealed to fellow members of the Baptist Ministers Conference of Philadelphia to support the boycott, securing contributions of over $1,500 for the MIA.

Dr. William H. Gray, Pastor
Bright Hope Baptist Church
Twelfth and Oxford Street
Philadelphia 2, Pennsylvania

Dear Dr. Gray:

I have made arrangements for you to preach at the First Baptist Church on Sunday morning, March 11. As you know, the church is pastored by the Rev. Ralph

1. See Gray to King, 29 February 1956.
D. Abernathy. I am sure that Montgomery will be expecting you with great anticipation. Please let me know when you will be arriving.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely yours,
M. L. King, Jr.
MLKlmt
TLc. DABCC.

From George D. Kelsey

[28 February 1956]

Kelsey, professor of religion at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, had taught King at Morehouse College in an undergraduate course on the Bible, focusing on the ethical teachings of Jesus. King replied on 8 March.¹

Dr. M. L. King
Dexter Avenue Baptist Church
Montgomery, Alabama.

Dear M. L.,

Congratulations on the great leadership which you are providing our deprived people in Montgomery.

You are taking your stand and conducting activities in the finest Mosaic and prophetic tradition. You are quite correct when you say the struggle in Montgomery is for justice, humanity decency, and democracy.

Many of us are proud of the high plane on which you are waging the fight, and are deeply moved by the effectiveness with which you keep love as the regulating ideal in a situation which calls for resistance as the chief instrument.

I have always been proud of you as one of my students and as a friend. You surely can imagine my present feelings.

Please find enclosed a small check to assist in the car pool.

Our prayers are continuously with you.

AHLd. GDKP.

¹. See pp. 164–165 in this volume.