

BECOMING BELOVED COMMUNITY WHERE YOU ARE

A Resource for Individuals, Congregations and Communities



Adapted for individual and congregational use from "Becoming Beloved Community: The Episcopal Church's Long-term Commitment to Racial Healing, Reconciliation and Justice" (May 2017, Presented to the Church by the Presiding Officers of the Episcopal Church in response to General Convention Resolution C019 ["Establish Response to Systemic Injustice"])

Full church-wide statement of commitment and many more resources available at
www.episcopalchurch.org/reconciliation

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A Long-term Commitment to Racial Healing, Reconciliation and Justice

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

— Prayer for the Human Family (Book of Common Prayer, p. 815)

Jesus laid out the most basic Christian teaching of all when the young man asked him, “Which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He told him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:36-40). The Beloved Community is the body within which all people can grow to love God and love the image of God that we find in our neighbors, in ourselves, and in creation. It provides a positive, theologically and biblically based ideal that orients the work of racial healing, reconciliation, and justice. It is the end toward which the Jesus Movement points.

The Episcopal Church’s Becoming Beloved Community vision – presented by our Church’s key leaders in May 2017 – frames a path for Episcopalians to address racial injustice and grow as a community of reconcilers, justice-makers, and healers who share a passion for the dream of God. Because this is the work of spiritual formation, and not simply completing a training or implementing a set of programs, we encourage individuals and congregations to embrace the journey ahead as a long-term commitment. It may be helpful to imagine a labyrinth as you reflect, act, and reflect again. After all, on the road toward reconciliation and healing, we travel around corners, make sharp turns, pass fellow travelers, and double back into quadrants we have indeed visited before, each time discovering a fresh revelation or challenge.

In particular, we anticipate that becoming Beloved Community will lead communities and individuals through four interrelated commitments, like quadrants of the labyrinth ...

Telling the Truth
Who are we? What things have we done and left undone regarding racial justice and healing?

Repairing the Breach
What institutions and systems are broken near us? How will we participate in repair, restoration, and healing of people, institutions, and systems?



Proclaiming the Dream
How can we publicly acknowledge things done and left undone? What does Beloved Community look like in this place? What behaviors and commitments will foster reconciliation, justice, and healing?

Practicing the Way of Love
How will we grow as reconcilers, healers, and justice-bearers? How will we actively grow relationship across dividing walls and seek Christ in the other?

Becoming the Beloved Community will take more than one three-year cycle of the Church’s life. It will take more than our lifetimes. But we have heard the cry of the prophet Micah, “O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8). With prayer, by the grace of God alone, rooted in our baptismal promises, we set out now on a lifelong commitment to follow the loving, liberating, and life-giving way of Jesus.

Telling the Truth about Our Church and Race

Celebrant: Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

People: I will, with God's help.

Anecdotes and stereotypes abound regarding Episcopalians and race, but there is rarely adequate data, especially for dioceses beyond the United States. If we seek reconciliation, healing, and new life, it begins with telling the truth about The Episcopal Church's racial composition and participation in systems of racial justice and injustice, especially given the Church's relationship to the complex history of race in the 17 nations our Church calls home. ("Becoming Beloved Community," p. 9)

Core Questions: Who are we, as a church? What things have we done and left undone regarding racial justice and healing?

Church, Neighborhood, and Beyond

Compare your church's racial, ethnic, and cultural makeup to the local area's demographics (<http://pr.dfms.org/studyyourcongregation/>)

- Notice any differences between the racial, ethnic, and cultural makeup of the church and its leadership, and the makeup of the community where your congregation or ministry is based. With what diverse neighbors might God be calling you into relationship, justice-making, and learning? What historic or systemic barriers would you need to address to grow these relationships?
- Notice adjacent areas with a significantly different racial, ethnic, and cultural makeup. With what diverse peoples in your geographic area might God be calling you into relationship, justice-making, and learning? What historic and systemic barriers would you need to address?

Within the Church

Where possible, gather data on race, ethnicity and culture within your congregation and diocese

- Congregational membership
- Congregational engagement (people who may not consider themselves "members" but are part of the church's life and ministry [attend a parents group, 12-Step group, preschool, soup kitchen, etc.])
- Congregational leadership (vestry, clergy, staff, other leadership bodies [official and unofficial])
- Diocesan leaders and staff, including Trustees, Standing Committees, Commissions on Ministry, etc.

- Notice the patterns of racial, ethnic and cultural representation in the bodies above. What racial, ethnic, and cultural groups are present? Why might these patterns exist?
- Notice which racial, ethnic, and cultural groups make decisions in your church and diocese. Are certain groups trusted with power, while others are not? Why might these patterns exist?

Participation in Racial Injustice and Justice

- What is your church's history of participation in behaviors and structures of racial injustice? Interview elders, research church and diocesan documents, newspaper accounts, etc.
- What is your church's history of participation in behaviors and structures of racial justice and healing? Interview elders, research church and diocesan documents, newspaper accounts, etc.

Further Reflection: Even when we have the best of intentions, we will see patterns of exclusion as well as inclusion. How could you tell the truth and take note of current and historic divisions around you without feeling paralyzed, criticized, or defensive? What helps you to stay in an open, grace-filled conversation?

Proclaiming the Dream of Beloved Community

Celebrant: Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

People: I will, with God's help.

An essential part of our work for racial justice, transformation, and reconciliation is the intentional gathering of Episcopalians and our neighbors to consciously share about the history and reality of race in a particular place. This process of “re-remembering, retelling, and reliving” is necessary to create space and time to collectively discern a shared, renewed narrative and vision of Beloved Community. (“Becoming Beloved Community,” p. 13)

Core Questions: How can we publicly acknowledge things done and left undone? What does Beloved Community look like in this place? What behaviors and commitments on our part will foster reconciliation, justice, and healing?

Host Community-wide Listening and Learning Sessions

1. Organize a Listening and Learning Session in partnership with neighbors, faith partners, justice groups, civic groups, foundations, schools, businesses, elders, young people, etc. With the help of elders and historians, examine the history of race and racism in the regional and local context, including the church’s role.
2. Listen to the lived realities of race and racism in your context. All participants should be welcomed to share stories about their current and ongoing experiences of race and racism.
3. Invite individuals, congregations, dioceses, and organizations to share particularly innovative and meaningful local and regional work addressing race, racism, racial justice, healing, and reconciliation.
4. Discern the shape of Beloved Community. In a carefully facilitated session, participants should together make meaning of what they have jointly heard, seen, and witnessed during the Listening and Learning Session(s). Use these fruits to collaboratively shape a vision for what Beloved Community would look like in your shared context. What would a diverse community of people growing to love their neighbors as they love themselves look and act like where you are? What would the dream of God look like where you are? Discern together what specific behaviors and commitments from individuals and groups in your wider community would be necessary to live into that dream.
5. Integrate worship and prayer appropriate to the full group of participants. Liturgy, song, prayers, preaching should ground the experience of re-remembering and eventually rewriting our narrative around race.
6. Incorporate social media in order to expand and connect the Listening and Learning Session with others who are making the journey. This wider circle could support or learn from your experience.

Consult resources and books like these:

- Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice, *Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing*
- “*Under Our Skin*,” *Seattle Times* project on race and racism
- Jim Wallis, *America’s Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege and the Bridge to a New America*
- Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*

Further Reflection: As we strive to embrace the diversity of the human family of God, it helps to have a positive vision or dream toward which you are moving. Have you ever experienced something that looked or felt like “Beloved Community”? How could you speak publicly about your own experiences with race and racism *and* about your own dream of healed, Beloved Community?

Practicing the Way of Love as Ambassadors of Reconciliation

Celebrant: Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

People: I will, with God's help.

Walking the road toward Beloved Community is an adventure, fueled by the power of the Holy Spirit, and no Christian should ever expect to arrive at the destination. This is a spiritual practice, after all, and no one ever finishes with spiritual formation. We are always praying. We are always reading scripture. We are always seeking to love and serve our neighbors. And we are always learning and practicing Jesus' way of love, especially as he calls us to cross racial, cultural and ethnic lines, to examine structures of oppression and their impact on our own and others' lives, and ultimately to nurture Beloved Community. ("Becoming Beloved Community," p. 16)

Core Questions: How will we grow as reconcilers, healers, and justice-bearers? How will we actively grow relationship across dividing walls and seek Christ in the other?

Reading or Viewing Groups

Host a reading/viewing group at your church - and invite non-churchgoers - to reflect together ...

- Catherine Meeks, [Living into God's Dream: Dismantling Racism in America](#)
- [Listen for a Change: Sacred Conversations for Racial Justice](#)
Videos and readings from Trinity Institute 2016. Especially recommended: the Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas' video presentation.
- Shelly Tochluk, [Witnessing Whiteness: The Need to Talk About Race and How to Do It](#)
- Howard J. Ross, [Everyday Bias: Identifying and Navigating Unconscious Judgments in Our Daily Lives](#)
- Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, [Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America](#)
- John a. powell, [Racing to Justice: Transforming Our Conceptions of Self and Other to Build an Inclusive Society](#)

Engage in Beloved Community Story-sharing

1. Use local and/or accessible resources to help people to the practice sharing and hearing stories about faith, race, and difference.
 - Mine the wisdom of community organizing, Public Narrative, pastoral care, the Network of Biblical Storytellers, StoryCorps, the Moth Radio Hour for help with the art of storytelling
 - Also note the [Called to Transformation](#) asset-based community development trainings, the [Kaleidoscope Institute](#), the [Episcopal Church in Minnesota's listening toolkit](#), and the [GoSpeak project in North Carolina](#) (reconciliation edition), to name only a few.
2. Build story-sharing practice into all parts of your congregational life.
 - Open church meetings with brief story-sharing
 - Craft sermons that include stories of faith, race, and difference
 - Create space during sermons for 1- or 2-minute story-sharing in pairs
3. Share stories in wider and wider circles: within the congregation, with other Episcopal churches different from your own, with other faith groups, with civic and neighborhood groups, with partners in areas different and even distant from your own.

Join or learn about a racial healing and reconciliation pilgrimage

- The Diocese of Atlanta's Pilgrimages to Lynching Sites
- The Trail of Souls in the Diocese of Maryland
- Episcopal Relief & Development Ghana Reconciliation Pilgrimage
- The Feast of Frances Joseph Gaudet in the Diocese of Louisiana
- The Diocese of Alabama's Jonathan Daniels and Civil Rights Martyrs Pilgrimage
- Also take note of celebrations of Martin Luther King Jr., David Pendleton Oakerhater, Florence Li Tim-Oi, Absalom Jones, Pauli Murray and other holy women and men from non-dominant cultures

Engage in a comprehensive, well-facilitated training in dismantling racism and growing beloved community

Even if you've completed anti-racism training or diversity training a while ago, remember that formation is ongoing for those who follow Jesus as ambassadors of healing and Beloved Community. Trainings and programs might include (not an exhaustive list):

- Seeing the Face of God in Each Other: www.episcopalchurch.org/library/document/seeing-face-god-each-other-antiracism-training-manual-episcopal-church
- Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training: www.crossroadsantiracism.org
- Duke Center for Reconciliation: divinity.duke.edu/initiatives/cfr
- Initiatives of Change: us.iofc.org
- Kaleidoscope Institute: www.kscopeinstitute.org/index.html
- People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (especially the Undoing Racism Program): www.pisab.org
- Talking Race: Kids and Race: talkingrace.org
- Traces of the Trade (based on the film of the same name): www.tracesofthetrade.org
- VISIONS Inc.: www.visions-inc.org
- The Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation: winterinstitute.org
- World Trust: Social Impact through Film & Dialogue: world-trust.org
- Other resources by ecumenical and interfaith partners, including those for children and people who do not speak English (resources for these groups currently being developed for Episcopal contexts)

Incorporate racial healing, reconciliation, justice and repentance in worship (collection of resources from the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music forthcoming on www.episcopalchurch.org/reconciliation)

- Prayers after Ferguson, select resources from the Book of Common Prayer
- Litanies
- Prayers of the People
- Repentance services
- Confession
- Eucharistic prayers
- Feast Day prayers and collects

Further Reflection: Story-sharing, pilgrimage, and trainings are just the beginning of our work of healing and reconciliation, not the culmination of our efforts. What racial and ethnic wounds and divisions do you feel God calling you to heal? What unique gifts and talents will you bring to the church as we practice the way of love together? Are there capacities or gifts you personally hope to grow? How will you bring your own spiritual practices of compassion and presence to the work of listening, learning, and healing?

Repairing the Breach in Institutions and Society

Celebrant: Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?
People: I will, with God's help.

If all our action centers on the Church and nurturing our interior experience of Beloved Community, we will have missed the core of the loving, liberating, life-giving good news of Jesus Christ: it is for all the world, not just for those within the walls of the Church. ... Our Church has enjoyed a unique degree of economic and social privilege in the United States, thanks in part to our origins in the British Empire. That privilege often extends to Episcopal congregations in Latin America and Asia, and it often transcends the actual economic status of the congregation itself. The Episcopal Church has a special vocation to examine our history, to say we are sorry, and to participate in the repair and restoration of communities and institutions that struggle to flourish because of systems built to privilege our Church's historic membership. Put frankly, we cannot speak of reconciliation and healing without also speaking of justice and repairing what our Church has contributed to breaking. ("Becoming Beloved Community," p. 21)

Core Questions: What institutions and systems are broken near us? How will we participate in the repair, restoration, and healing of people, institutions, and systems?

Participate in Criminal Justice Reform and Healing

- a. Do a book study at your church - and invite non-churchgoers - to read and discuss books like ...
 - Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*
 - Kelly Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*
 - Victor Rios, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*
 - Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*
- b. Sign up for advocacy alerts from the Episcopal Public Policy Network, which tracks criminal justice-related policy at the federal level. EPPN also offers an advocacy toolkit on Faith and Citizenship.
- c. Identify and participate in a program that accompanies formerly incarcerated or detained people returning to community *and* the families of those returning. Such programs offer mentoring, job skills, clothing closets, spiritual and emotional support. Be open to learning from the stories of women, men and children returning from incarceration and detention and from the stories of their families.
- d. Recognize and accompany members of your congregation who are or have been incarcerated or detained, and the family members of those who are or have been incarcerated or detained

Stand with Immigrants and Refugees

- a. Link with local and regional groups standing in solidarity with immigrants and refugees
- b. Consult with experienced groups like Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles and the Episcopal Sanctuary Task Force in California, Welcoming Congregations/Guardian Angels Network of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and others to learn how your church can offer protection and sanctuary to people targeted by anti-immigrant bias
- c. Sign up for advocacy alerts from the Episcopal Public Policy Network, which tracks immigration and refugee-related policy at the federal level. EPPN also offers a toolkit on Faith and Citizenship.

Support Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

- a. Pray for and make contributions to St. Augustine's University in North Carolina and Voorhees College in South Carolina, the two Episcopal HBCUs
- b. Take note of colleges and universities near you whose student bodies are majority people of color. Build relationships with these schools.

Further Reflection: Living into the Great Commandment invites us to embrace the most vulnerable people in our communities as beloved neighbors. How could you use your insights, assets, and relationships for the sake of justice-making and healing? What are your sources for courage?