



ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY

June 24, 2020

We, the Vestry of St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in Atlanta, are heartsick and outraged about the ongoing violence against African Americans in our country. The murders of Rayshard Brooks, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery – among so many others – are the legacy of slavery and the result of systemic anti-black racism in our culture. Throughout history, the church as an institution in America has too often upheld white supremacy by what we have done and what we have left undone. This is wrong.

As followers of Jesus, we stand in solidarity with our Black Brothers and Sisters. We are a parish that has fought for social justice since our founding, from marching for Civil Rights, to welcoming and caring for people with AIDS/HIV, welcoming and affirming LGBTQIA+ people, caring for the homeless with Nicholas House and Toco Hills Community Alliance, and supporting refugees through our resettlement program. We are called once again today to heed the cries of those who are hurting among us. Following in the footsteps of Jesus, who came to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and liberty to the oppressed, we commit to the hard work of change.

We must strive to do better, to re-invent our house of worship as a place for all people, and to use our influence to transform our society. We pledge to take the following steps:

- Re-invest in our current parish outreach ministries that serve Black people and People of Color. These include the Toco Hills Community Alliance, the refugee and immigrant ministry, the prison ministry and our companion congregation of St. Marc's in Bois Blanc, Haiti, which could all use more attention from the parish on every level.
- Train all lay leaders in anti-racism through the "Dismantling Racism" program provided by the church. We must raise the consciousness of all parishioners about ways to be more mindful about how systemic racism plays a role in the church.
- Commit to the hard work of dismantling racism in our parish by examining who we are now. This means better acknowledging and promoting existing programs like "Healing Racism: Pray, Listen, Act" and "Sacred Ground," as well as determining concrete steps we can take to become a more culturally sensitive and racially diverse congregation in the future.
- Display a Black Lives Matter (BLM) sign in front of the building to provide us with a constant reminder of our commitment to this cause. Proclaiming our collective dedication to change, the sign will read as follows:

Black Lives Matter

**We Must Do Better
We Will Do Better**