

The Church of St. Barnabas

in the Episcopal Diocese of New York



15 North Broadway, Irvington, NY 10533

Church office: 914-591-8194

www.stbarnabaschurch.org

Vestry Statement on Racial Justice

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

People **I will, with God's help.**

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.**

(The Baptismal Covenant, Book of Common Prayer p.305)

As Christians, we are followers of Jesus Christ and His way of love, which He both taught and embodied. His way of love is utterly incompatible with racism, prejudice, and every form of violence that denies the dignity of each and every human being, for we are all made in the image of God.

We grieve the deaths of Rayshard Brooks, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and countless other Black people, indigenous people, and other people who have lost their lives due to racial hatred and fear throughout our nation's history. We echo the timeless words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.:

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere... We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.

Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly

(Why We Can't Wait, 1963).

We pray for the elimination of racism, for the souls of all Black people who have died, for their friends and families, and for the souls of those who have perpetrated racist acts. We confess that we have not upheld our baptismal promises to respect the dignity of every person, through our own actions and actions committed on our behalf. We denounce racism in all its forms—within individuals, institutions, and social structures—for it perpetuates injustice, and we commit ourselves to working for systemic change across our society now. We now use our voice and our resources to immediately advocate for systemic change, and again look to Dr. King:

Time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively... Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to work to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right *(Why We Can't Wait, 1963).*

When Dr. King wrote these words from the Birmingham Jail in April 1963, he was facing criticism even from some supporters, who questioned the timing of the 1963 protests. There were many who believed the movement would be better served by postponing the marches. Similarly, there are people today who are asking, *“Why act now, while we are still in the grips of the COVID-19 pandemic, skyrocketing unemployment, and economic hardship?”*

Our answer is simple: because these times demand action now. Only by adding our voice to the chorus of those presently calling for change can we support the growing momentum for racial justice reform in America. **“The shape of the world will not permit us the luxury of gradualism and procrastination.”** Martin Luther King, Jr., (*Why We Can't Wait*, 1963).

It is in this spirit by which we, as a vestry, pledge to do the work that we need to do to become an anti-racist congregation. We commit to starting this work by:

- Sponsoring the first “Juneteenth” rally in Irvington to promote inclusion and highlight its significance;
- Providing our parishioners with the opportunity to participate in small groups to discuss works by diverse authors and/or dealing with racial justice issues;
- Inviting those of us who are white to examine our privilege and the reality of racism;
- Providing our members with programs about anti-racism, unconscious bias, and cultural awareness;
- Examining the structures, norms, and habits in our parish and community that discourage full participation by all;
- Highlighting and supporting the efforts of Rivertowns Episcopal Parishes Action on Inclusion and Race (REPAIR); and,
- Encouraging all our members to engage more, listen more, share their stories, and become more informed about the experiences of people of all races, and in so doing become better equipped to take action in the face of racial injustice.

We strive to welcome everyone into our community on their own terms, embracing and celebrating our differences. And we commit to becoming a beacon of hope for those in our society who are harmed by racist acts and actions.

The Rector, Wardens, and Vestry of the Church of St. Barnabas:

Gareth C. Evans +
Burnett (Jody) Hansen
Rose Lawson
Clem Turner
Michael Bradley
Barbara Mahoney
Pam Middleton
Edward Mielke

Carol Morse
David Oakes
Linda Pierpont
Sue Robinson
Susan Watson
Mary-Jo Weber
Peter Williams

Irvington, New York, June 29, 2020.