

## **St. Michael's Acceptance, Respect, and Community Committee**

Following an Episcopal Church initiative promoting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in our actions, St. Michael's Vestry established DEI as the title of Goal #4 of the 2024-2025 Strategic Plan subtitled: "All are Welcome." The objectives to implement this goal involve fostering a greater understanding of the purposes of DEI among parish members, offering opportunities for the inclusion of diverse populations, and incorporating DEI into St. Michael's hiring and promotion practices. By the end of 2025, the Committee had accomplished many of the specific objectives, including a reviewing our neighborhood's demographics, evaluating the facilities and services of St. Michael's to assess their accessibility to persons with disabilities, and ensuring that St. Michael's hiring and promotion procedures are equitable. Other activities related to Goal #4 are still being addressed, including the ongoing review of the accessibility St. Michael's facilities and programs; establishing discussion groups relating to books and movies that deal with the issues of acceptance and inclusivity; inviting speakers, including teens and young adults, to promote further discussion; and writing grant proposals to fund programs that promote these values and activities.

In 2025, the committee determined that DEI has a deeper and more personal meaning than that encompassed in the phrase "diversity, equity, and inclusion;" one that does not reflect partisan politics, but rather our desire for a deeper connection with our fellow humans. At its most personal and spiritual level, DEI means the acceptance, respect and inclusion of all persons within our community. These were the values that Jesus practiced as he reached out and ministered to all individuals, including those who were traditionally shunned by his peers. With this example in mind, the committee recast its focus to incorporate a more personal and spiritual approach. The new name of the committee is "ARC", which stands for Acceptance, Respect and Community. The Committee's mission statement is: "It is the mission of this committee to foster a sense of inclusivity/fellowship within St. Michael's, where each member experiences for themselves and exemplifies to others the values of welcoming all people, valuing all people, and cherishing all people." We believe this accurately reflects who we strive to be as a welcoming church community.

Throughout 2026, the Team will continue to explore ways of expanding St. Michael's welcome to all and ensuring that ARC becomes an ongoing focus of all of our work. We would appreciate any thoughts members of the Congregation may have on how to facilitate these goals. Please reach out to Doug Davy, Tammy Murray, Suzanne Phinney or Elizabeth Dolezal with your input or if you would like to join the Committee.