

Your vestry and I are aware that perhaps these banners may be perceived by some as an overtly political statement. The Vestry has collaborated to address this possible perception, stating: "[We have] discussed this topic prayerfully and thoughtfully and came to the consensus that justice and security for all of God's children are not political issues but matters of Christian conscience. We believe our Episcopal Faith compels us to stand with our Black brothers and sisters in fixing what has been so irrevocably broken in our society."

Additionally, the Vestry wants to share the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia's strong stance in recognizing racism as a sin and our making public statements in support of Black lives. Specifically our Bishop, Susan Goff writes: *Naming that Black Lives Matter does not take away from God's love for all and God's call to us to love all. What it does do is recognize that there is a particular population of our neighbors that needs a focus of our love and attention right now. Think of it in terms of another parable of Jesus, the Parable of the Lost Sheep in Luke 15:4-6.*

*Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'*

(<http://www.thediocese.net/news/bishop-goffs-meditation-for-the-fourth-week-of-pentecost/>)

The Vestry and I would also like to share the following resources on our Diocesan webpage:

- <http://www.thediocese.net/resources/ministries/missional-engagement/racial-justice-and-healing/>)
- <http://www.thediocese.net/resources/ministries/missional-engagement/racial-justice-and-healing/statements/>

We encourage all to explore these resources and to join us on the road as you are able as. Together, we "strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being." (Baptismal Covenant, BCP p. 305). This is one of God's Kingdom's purposes we are on the road to living. We proclaim the Gospel in word and deed and love our neighbor as ourselves on this journey of addressing the sin of institutional and personal racism in our nation and in the process affirm Black lives matter.

And although we may feel we are at times wandering in the wilderness and lost (in so many ways in our lives today), we know that God's presence is with us and leading us forward. And we will get there together!

Pax,

Andy+