

# Keeping the Conversation Going

Public views on the pervasiveness of racism across the myriad intersections of our lives have risen to a new level of awareness, especially in recent months. Surfacing complicated and volatile issues, conversations about racism can get heated fast. Yet many more people seem willing to go to riskier ground as agreement builds that racial discrimination plays a long-seated and persistent role in society at large.

A fruitful conversation has begun at St Stephen's Church in response to the events of recent times, with a growing interest to continue. A big thank you goes out to Karl Belgum, Sarah Sung, and Janet Brown for holding the second in conversations about the impacts of race in society and how we approach racial issues as Christians. Their courageous and timely leadership has initiated a responsiveness in this congregation that impels us toward further work together.

The Episcopal Church has developed a film-based dialogue series on race and faith called *Sacred Ground*. Several congregations in our diocese have started the series and a supportive community is growing up to navigate the journey from raising awareness and informing our stories to transformation and becoming agents for change. The series is part of the *Becoming Beloved Community* initiative of The Episcopal Church, a long-term commitment to racial healing, reconciliation, and justice in our personal lives, our ministries, and our society.

The following quote from *The Getting Started* section of the series describes an aim of the program:

“This is a race dialogue series designed for these times. It is an attempt to be responsive to the profound challenges that currently exist in our society. It is focused on the challenges that swirl around issues of race and racism, as well as the difficult but respectful and transformative dialogue we need to have with each other about them. It invites participants to walk back through history in order to peel away the layers that brought us to today, and to do so in a personal way, reflecting on family histories and stories, as well as important narratives that shape the collective American story. It holds the vision of beloved community as a guiding star – where all people are honored and protected and nurtured as beloved children of God, where we weep at one another’s pain and seek one another’s flourishing.”

**We are laying the groundwork for incorporating this program into our life at St Stephen’s. Striving to foster transformation in community, the program involves planning, training, and commitment to a group (or groups) to do this work together. Please stay tuned to hear about next steps.**

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