

Testimony of
The Right Reverend M. Thomas Shaw, III, SSJE
Bishop of the Diocese of Massachusetts
December 18, 2007

Oversight Hearing on the Legacy of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade
Committee on the Judiciary
Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties
B353 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

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Thank you, Chairman Conyers. My name is Tom Shaw. I am the Episcopal Bishop of Massachusetts and I am honored to be here with this distinguished panel. As you may know, I was an intern in Representative Amo Houghton's office in 2000, so I am particularly pleased to be back in Washington for this important oversight hearing on the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

I should state at the outset that we, as a church, have asked God's forgiveness for our complicity in and the injury done by the institution of slavery and its aftermath. Unlike the Quakers who were leaders in the abolitionist movement, too many Episcopalians did not raise their voices when God would have wished them to do so. Episcopalians were owners of slaves and of the ships that brought them to this land. Episcopalians lived in the north and in the south and, as a privileged church, we today recognize that our Church benefited materially from the slave trade.

The Episcopal Church in the decades leading to the American Civil War did not formally address the problem of slavery. The post- Revolutionary War church wanted to avoid a schism within the church, which it was successful at doing (unlike the divisions that had occurred to Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist churches during this period over the issue of slavery) but avoiding that schism meant not addressing the issue of slavery in any official or collective way. With that painful history as background, our 75th General Convention meeting in 2006 looked to the upcoming bicentennial commemoration of the abolition of the slave trade as a time in which we could affirm "our commitment to become a transformed, anti-racist church and to work toward healing, reconciliation, and a restoration of wholeness to the family of God."

As background I should explain that when our General Convention speaks it speaks for our whole church and only after careful discernment. The members of this committee would feel quite at home at our General Convention. It consists of a House of Deputies and a House of Bishops, and legislative committees that hold hearings such as this. Legislation must pass both Houses in the same form. So the voice of the General Convention is very much the voice of the Episcopal Church.

And with that voice, we looked to what we could do as the Episcopal Church, as individuals, as parishes and dioceses – a diocese being a collection of churches in a single

geographic area - and also what we could ask you, the Congress, to do. This is what the Episcopal Church decided:

- We apologized as a Church for our complicity in, and the injury done by, the institution of slavery and its aftermath.” We repented of this sin and asked God’s grace and forgiveness, ever mindful that we did so far too late.
- We recognized that slavery is a fundamental betrayal of the humanity of all persons and a “sin that continues to plague our common life in the Church and our culture.” Furthermore we expressed “our most profound regret that (a) The Episcopal Church lent the institution of slavery its support and justification based on Scripture, and (b) after slavery was formally abolished, The Episcopal Church continued for at least a century to support de jure and de facto segregation and discrimination.”
- We called upon the “Congress and the American people to support legislation initiating study of and dialogue about the history and legacy of slavery in the United States and of proposals for monetary and non-monetary reparations to the descendants of the victims of slavery.” We, therefore, fully support H.R. 40 which would establish a commission to examine those very issues and recommend appropriate remedies.
- We asked every Diocese “to collect and document ... detailed information in its community on (a) the complicity of The Episcopal Church in the institution of slavery and in the subsequent history of segregation and discrimination and (b) the economic benefits The Episcopal Church derived from the institution of slavery.” A report on that work will be made to our 2009 General Convention on how the Church can be “the repairer of the breach” (Isaiah 58:12), both materially and relationally, and achieve the spiritual healing and reconciliation that will lead us to a new life in Christ.” We believe that work essential to determining the remedies that might be considered.

Work is underway in a number of our dioceses, including Mississippi, where research on slavery and its impact on building the city of Natchez has already disclosed that its oldest Episcopal Church was built by slaves. The rector of St. Paul’s Delray Beach in Southeast Florida is writing a history of the presence of, and contributions of blacks in the Episcopal Church in Florida. We are hopeful that what we learn will be helpful to the commission that would be established under H.R. 40. We know that our exploration has just begun and that next year’s release of the film *Traces of the Trade* — a documentary being made by Katrina Brown, an Episcopalian from Rhode Island whose ancestors were involved in the slave trade — will open the eyes of many to the legacy of slavery for both black and white Americans, and the role of the North in its perpetuation.

- Finally, we asked the elected leader of our church, the Presiding Bishop, to name a Day of Repentance and on that day to hold a Service of Repentance at the Washington National Cathedral, and each Diocese to hold a similar service. The Dioceses of New York, Newark, New Jersey and Long Island are joining in a service in commemoration of the abolition of the slave trade at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City on January 13, 2008. The National Cathedral event will be October 4, 2008 and we invite all of you to attend.

The full text of each of these resolutions is included as an appendix to my testimony as well as two pastoral letters, 1994 and 2006, from the House of Bishops on the sin of racism:

Each of these actions is important and together they represent our effort to be “repairers of the breach.” We have much to overcome, and as the British Parliamentarian and crusader against slavery William Wilberforce told the House of Commons in 1789: “We are all guilty – we ought to all plead guilty, and not to exculpate ourselves by throwing blame on others.” The history that we are researching is essential to understanding our Church’s role in the institution of slavery and its perpetuation. With fuller knowledge will come true repentance that will then open us to reconciliation and remedies that we believe are yet to be revealed.

Ten years after Wilberforce’s speech, on December 30, 1799, the first black priest in the Episcopal Church in the United States, Absalom Jones, and 70 fellow signatories petitioned the House of Representatives to protect those taken by slave traders. They concluded their petition with these words:

“In the Constitution, and the Fugitive bill, no mention is made of Black people or Slaves — therefore if the Bill of Rights, or the declaration of Congress are of any validity, we beseech that as we are men, we may be admitted to partake of the Liberties and unalienable Rights therein held forth — firmly believing that the extending of Justice and equity to all Classes, would be a means of drawing down the blessings of Heaven upon this Land, for the Peace and Prosperity of which, and the real happiness of every member of the Community, we fervently pray.

Nine years later, on January 1, 1808 Jones would celebrate the end of US participation in the transatlantic slave trade:

The history of the world shows us, that the deliverance of the children of Israel from their bondage, is not the only instance, in which it has pleased God to appear in behalf of oppressed and distressed nations, as the deliverer of the innocent, and of those who call upon his name. He is as unchangeable in his nature and character, as he is in his wisdom and power. The great and blessed event, which we have this day met to celebrate, is a striking proof, that the God of heaven and earth is the same,

yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. (January 1, 1808 St. Thomas Church, Philadelphia)

We continue to pray for Absalom Jones's "real happiness of every member of the Community," knowing that the "blessed event" of January 1, 1808 was an important step, not the final step, in the emancipation of slaves. As the Episcopal Church resolved in 2006, we are committed to becoming "a transformed, anti-racist church and to work toward healing, reconciliation, and a restoration of wholeness to the family of God." We believe the work we are doing to research our Church's complicity in the institution of the slave trade will help us, the Episcopal Church, to be transformed. We also believe that H.R. 40 will aid the nation in its own continued healing. We look forward to the opportunity to continue this important and necessary work together.

Resolution Number: 2006-A123

Title: Study Economic Benefits Derived from Slavery

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention of The Episcopal Church declare unequivocally that the institution of slavery in the United States and anywhere else in the world, based as it is on “ownership” of some persons by other persons, was and is a sin and a fundamental betrayal of the humanity of all persons who were involved, a sin that continues to plague our common life in the Church and our culture; and be it further

Resolved, That The Episcopal Church acknowledge its history of participation in this sin and the deep and lasting injury which the institution of slavery and its aftermath have inflicted on society and on the Church; and be it further

Resolved, That we express our most profound regret that (a) The Episcopal Church lent the institution of slavery its support and justification based on Scripture, and (b) after slavery was formally abolished, The Episcopal Church continued for at least a century to support de jure and de facto segregation and discrimination; and be it further

Resolved, That The Episcopal Church apologize for its complicity in and the injury done by the institution of slavery and its aftermath; we repent of this sin and ask God’s grace and forgiveness; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention of The Episcopal Church through the Executive Council urgently initiate a comprehensive program and urge every Diocese to collect and document during the next triennium detailed information in its community on (a) the complicity of The Episcopal Church in the institution of slavery and in the subsequent history of segregation and discrimination and (b) the economic benefits The Episcopal Church derived from the institution of slavery; and direct the Committee on Anti-Racism to monitor this program and report to Executive Council each year by March 31 on the progress in each Diocese; and be it further

Resolved, That to enable us as people of God to make a full, faithful and informed accounting of our history, the 75th General Convention of The Episcopal Church direct the Committee on Anti-Racism to study and report to Executive Council by March 31, 2008, which in turn will report to the 76th General Convention, on how the Church can be “the repairer of the breach” (Isaiah 58:12), both materially and relationally, and achieve the spiritual healing and reconciliation that will lead us to a new life in Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That to mark the commencement of this program the Presiding Bishop is requested to name a Day of Repentance and on that day to hold a Service of Repentance at the National Cathedral, and each Diocese is requested to hold a similar service.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), pp. 664-665.

Resolution Number: 2006-A127

Title: Endorse Restorative Justice and Anti-Racism

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention of The Episcopal Church endorse the principles of restorative justice, an important tool in implementing a neutral articulation of the self-examination and amendment of life that is required to fulfill our baptismal covenant; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th Convention, in support of and to enhance Resolution A123, call upon the Anti-Racism Committee of Executive Council to design a study and dialogue process and materials in order to engage the people of The Episcopal Church in storytelling about historical and present-day privilege and under-privilege as well as discernment towards restorative justice and the call to fully live into our baptismal covenant; and be it further

Resolved, That in the spirit of inclusion, dioceses also be invited to determine whether their call is to conduct truth and reconciliation processes in regard to other histories and legacies of racial discrimination and oppression that may be applicable in their geographic area, while not diminishing the strong call to focus on the history and legacy of slavery; and be it further

Resolved, That the dioceses will give a progress report to the Anti-Racism Committee. The Anti-Racism Committee will report their findings and recommendations to the Standing Commission on National Concerns and to Executive Council and to the 76th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the Church hold before itself the vision of a Church without racism; a Church for all races.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), pp. 665-666.

Resolution Number:

2006-C011

Title: Support Legislation for Reparations for Slavery

Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended

Final Text:

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention, affirming our commitments to become a transformed, anti-racist church and to work toward healing, reconciliation, and a restoration of wholeness to the family of God, urge the Church at every level to call upon Congress and the American people to support legislation initiating study of and dialogue about the history and legacy of slavery in the United States and of proposals for monetary and non-monetary reparations to the descendants of the victims of slavery.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), p.666

The Sin of Racism

A Pastoral Letter from The House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church, March 1994

PREAMBLE

To all the baptized of the Episcopal Church, grace to you and peace in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For decades this church has issued statements, passed resolutions and taken actions which have addressed many aspects of racism and racial justice. While positive changes have occurred at certain times in various situations, racism not only persists in our world, but in many places is powerfully resurgent. The most recent comprehensive attempt to deal with endemic racism in our church and society was initiated by the 70th General Convention in Phoenix three years ago. Among a series of resolutions directed specifically to the church, one required the House of Bishops, in its teaching role, to issue a Pastoral Letter prior to the next General Convention on the sin of racism.

In preparation for this responsibility, we have devoted part of the agenda at each of our interim meetings since Phoenix to this pressing concern. As we have sought to sharpen our personal and corporate consciousness, we have discovered that we ourselves have much to learn, relearn and do. Therefore, what we write here speaks not only to the church at large but to us, your bishops, as well.

This Pastoral Letter is the first in a series of teachings addressed primarily to Episcopalians in the United States. It does not attempt to touch on every aspect of racism, but rather to initiate a continuing discussion on a spiritual malady which infects us all.

In this introductory message, we evoke words and images sacred to our tradition. We share with you an analysis of the current dynamics of racism, confess our complicity with that evil, declare a covenant with each other to work to eliminate racism wherever we find it in church and society, and invite all Episcopalians to join us in a mission of justice, reconciliation and unity.

ANALYSIS

*Take away from me the noise of your songs;
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.
But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.
(Amos 5:23-24 NRSV)*

Cries for justice in our land and around the world inevitably confront us with the sin of racism. Those cries have not gone away – not from the far corners of the world, not from the communities in which the Episcopal Church ministers, nor from our beloved church itself. Ethnic cleansing in central Europe, apartheid in South Africa, murder of indigenous people in our hemisphere, ethnic violence in the Middle East, India and other Asian nations are all variations on the theme of racism.

Escalating violence in America illustrates the complexity of racism. At the heart of the matter is fear. We fear those who are different from ourselves, and that fear translates into violence which in turn creates more fear. Institutionalized preference, primarily for white persons, is deeply ingrained in the American way of life in areas such as employment, the availability of insurance and credit ratings, in education, law enforcement, courts of law and the military.

The definition of racism from Webster's Dictionary sharpens the focus for us.

Racism [is the] abuse of power by a racial group that is more powerful than another group and the abuse of that advantage to exclude, demean, damage, control or destroy the less powerful group; a belief that some races are by nature superior to others; racial discrimination based on such belief. Racism confers benefits upon the dominant group that include psychological feelings of superiority, social privilege, economic position, or political power.

The handbook of the Episcopal Church's Commission on Racism gives further definitions:

Racism – the systematic oppression of one race over another. It occurs at the personal and institutional level.

Prejudice– a judgment or opinion about others, made before one has the facts.

Discrimination – any kind of action taken to deprive members of a certain group or person of their civil rights. [1]

The essence of racism is prejudice coupled with power. It is rooted in the sin of pride and exclusivity which assumes “that I and my kind are superior to others and therefore deserve special privileges.” In our religious tradition the people of the covenant have frequently expressed this attitude. Often we have been challenged by prophetic witness to turn from a life of privilege to a vocation of responsibility and moral rectitude. Jesus, in his time, clearly called the people of God to lives of discipleship and servanthood without boundaries of race or class.

Racism perpetuates a basic untruth which claims the superiority of one group of people over others because of the color of their skin, their cultural history, their tribal affiliation, or their ethnic identity. This lie distorts the biblical understanding of God's action in creation, wherein all human beings are made “in the image of God.” [2] It blasphemes the ministry of Christ who died for all people, “so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.” [3] It divides people from one another and gives false permission for oppression and exploitation.

While our generation is not the first to experience it, racism has surfaced with particular intensity today because pluralism – the inevitable result of a shrinking world – exists on a scale not known before. The challenge of people with differing backgrounds having to live together has never been greater.

The sin of racism is experienced daily in our society, in our church and its institutions, in the House of Bishops. We have listened to first-hand accounts from brother and sister bishops who, in the face of racial prejudice and discrimination, have struggled to maintain a sense of integrity and personal worth. The church in your community is filled with such stories. They are there to be told and heard.

God's response to human sin is to establish a covenant in Christ Jesus that overcomes division and isolation by binding human beings to God and each other in a new way. For Episcopalians, the implications of this new community in Christ are spelled out in the baptismal covenant. [4] Our ability to live into that covenant, personally and in our life together in the church, witnesses to the power of Jesus Christ, with whom we have died to sin through baptism and risen to a new life of joyful obedience.

The House of Bishops and the General Convention as a whole have long rejected the evil of racism and have supported full civil rights for people of color among all races. At the same time, a

new appreciation has developed for the plight of all oppressed people and the need for equality in the laws of the nation and in the governance of the church.

Various resolutions in the past have proposed ways for victims of discrimination to participate in the prevailing system. Many have challenged the system itself to become more inclusive. The unspoken assumption of these resolutions is that victims will adapt and assimilate into the existing system. Their message, in essence, has been: "You are welcome to become like us." Such efforts may have represented progress in their time, but they are seen by many today as the product of a dominant racial attitude, which is at the heart of institutional racism.

Racism may be manifest in any race when it is in a position of power and dominance. In the United States our primary experience is one of white privilege, even in places where whites may be a minority in the surrounding population. This comes as a surprise to many white people, because they do not think of themselves as racist. They may even see themselves as victims of various violent reactions against the dominant culture. Yet there are many in our society at all levels who seem to find a certain security in racially restricted communities, schools, clubs, fraternities, sororities and other institutions.

Questions abound. Can the old melting pot image of assimilation, be replaced by a better metaphor that reflects the value of difference? How can the inherited privilege and unearned advantage of some people be used to bring about the reconciliation of all? How can the church offer all people the "supreme advantage of knowing Christ," [5] when too often it is itself a bastion of separation? How can the Episcopal Church, which reflects the dominant culture, be a factor in changing destructive racial attitudes and behaviors? Are we ready to find new common ground on which all may stand together? Will we trust the grace of God to enable us to bridge our many unhappy divisions?

CONFESSION

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

I will, with God's help.

(The Book of Common Prayer, p. 304)

As baptized Christians and as bishops in the Church of God, we recognize that racism is endemic in every aspect of society, including the church. A poster spotted on a university campus put it this way:

Racism is just about everywhere. It is in our language, customs and beliefs, fears, work, schools and sports. It is virtually everywhere except in those places where people deliberately choose to remove it...on this floor – in this hall – on this campus. [6]

One diocese in the church has adroitly adapted this poster for local use by substituting the concluding words with: **in this pew – in this church – in this community.**

We have found the exhortation of an African-American priest of our church to be compelling:

If racism is to be overcome, and our culture attain true inclusivity based on plurality and diversity, there is a great deal of confessing that must go on all sides: confession that relates to our complicity in the genocide of native peoples, confession by whites of their continued advantage based on unearned privilege, confession by blacks of our co-dependence and participation in that corrupt value system, confession by both blacks and whites of our collusion in the racist dynamic which excludes Asians, Native Americans and Hispanics, confession by all of us of our dependency upon violence as a means of controlling others and settling disputes. [7]

What this observer discerns and diagnoses in a North American context applies, we believe, to every interracial setting, each with its own particular dynamics. Whoever uses power to suppress

and demean people of another racial group stands in need of confessing the sin of racism. We recognize that no conscious actions need to be taken to perpetuate this sin. By virtue of its own institutional and systematic character, racism runs on its own momentum. The rooting out of racism requires intentional and deliberate decisions, prompted and sustained by the grace of God. The fundamental Christian rhythm of resistance, failure, repentance and returning, well stated in the baptismal covenant, reminds us that all stand in need of honest self-examination and continuing discipline to enable us to become converted and convinced anti-racists. Therefore, we the bishops of the Episcopal Church, confess our complicity with racism and pledge to make necessary changes in our personal lives, in our diocesan structures and in the church as a whole.

COVENANT

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in our flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.

(Ephesians 2:13-14, NRSV)

In the past, through a variety of resolutions and programmatic offerings, the church has attempted to deal with racism in its own life. Now, we believe, a new moment of choice is upon us. This moment is shaped by a fresh understanding of our baptismal calling, as it is expressed in The Book of Common Prayer. This moment is shaped by the persistent and pervasive racism of our day, an evil that clings so closely that it seems to be part of our very flesh.

Determined to move beyond pious but easy resolutions, we, the bishops of the Episcopal Church, commit ourselves afresh to combat racism in church and society and to hold ourselves accountable to this new covenant.

As a personal investment in the task at hand, each one of us will make an inventory of racist attitudes in our feelings, habits and actions toward others. We will use this inventory as a basis for transforming our lives through reflection, meditation, prayer and action. Among specific personal commitments we make are the refusal to participate in racially discriminatory clubs, or other institutions, and the refusal to engage in racially denigrating stories and humor.

We recognize that we are part of a body that is itself infected with racism, which endangers our spiritual health. Those of us who are white acknowledge that our advantaged position inevitably reinforces the racism we seek to dismantle. What gives us hope and courage is our sure knowledge that all people are created in the image of God and that Jesus Christ breaks down every wall that divides, restoring all to unity and wholeness.

We believe that the time has come for us in the dominant culture to be still and listen to those on the margins of society. Attending with care may help us realize that people of color must expend endless energy as they contend daily with the consequences of racism. Sensitive listening may help us understand our complicity with a system that discriminates, oppresses and demeans. To that end we commit ourselves to be better listeners.

Many people, including members of our own church, live in de facto segregated communities with increasingly segregated public schools. Many barely subsist in an economy which affords declining opportunities for many people, most especially people of color. We are particularly challenged by the despair of the young in our society, faced with a culture of drugs, sexual abuse and violence.

In the face of these realities, we believe that our mission involves not only changing hearts, but also engaging ourselves in seeking to transform a socio-economic system that drives many into poverty, alienation and despair. In the regular exercise of the Episcopal office and at the time of our pastoral visitations to our congregations, we will share our experiences of racism and will encourage others to do the same. We will teach and preach the gospel in ways that sustain a vision of justice and peace among all people.

It is our apostolic and pastoral responsibility to proclaim the vision of God's new creation in which the dignity of every human being is honored. As we are about that task, we discern an emerging new context for mission. The lingering image of the Episcopal Church as essentially white and Anglo-Saxon does not serve us well. We are affected by continuous shifts in the domestic population and by the constant arrival of new waves of immigrants. The church's missionary strategy must take seriously the changing complexion of its broadening constituency.

In a church which is increasingly diverse, racially and ethnically, we will place a high priority on the development of strategies for the recruitment, deployments and support of persons of color, including Native Americans, Asians, African-Americans, Hawaiians and Hispanics at every level – congregational, diocesan, national – and their inclusion in decision-making positions throughout. As leaders of the worship of the church, we will encourage the development of liturgical expressions that reflect the church's racial and ethnic composition and articulate clearly the good news that in Jesus Christ every barrier that separates God's people is broken down.

Finally, in order to be accountable to one another and the church at large, we will establish a standing committee of the House of Bishops to implement and monitor the fulfillment of this covenant.

INVITATION

*Will you strive for justice and peace among all people,
and respect the dignity of every human being?*

I will, with God's help.

(The Book of Common Prayer page 305)

The catechism declares that the mission of the church "is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." [8] Through baptism all Christians are called and empowered to participate in a ministry of reconciliation and unity. Central to this mission is the intentional transformation of all structures, systems and practices in the church and elsewhere that perpetuate the evil of racism.

Racism in the church subverts the promise of new life in Christ for everyone. Racism stains the church and contradicts the reconciling power of Christ's death and resurrection. Racism is totally inconsistent with the Gospel and, therefore, must be confronted and eradicated.

Having entered into covenant with each other to root out the sin of racism in very specific personal and corporate ways, we, the bishops of the Episcopal Church invite all members of our dioceses to join us in this mission of justice, reconciliation and unity. This will be an expression of our commitment to the fundamental covenant each of us entered into at the moment of our baptism.

May God give us the will to engage in this task together and the power and grace to accomplish it.

NOTES

Episcopal Church Center, 815 Second Ave., New York, NY 10017

Genesis 1:27b

John 3:16b

The Book of Common Prayer, pages 304-305

Philippians 3:8

Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY

Rodman, Edward W., True to Our God, True to Our Native Land, Episcopal Urban Caucus, 1993

The Book of Common Prayer, page 855

- Seek forgiveness for our lack of charity and consciousness in recognizing those situations which degrade the image of God in our neighbors;
- Make amends for our undeserved position and benefit as a result of unjust situations both now and in the past;
- Empower all members of God's human family, that they may live into the fullness of what God intends;
- Encourage the larger church to continue and expand its work of education, spiritual formation, and anti-racism training, that all might discover the riches of God's diverse creation, especially in those who differ from us;
- Advocate for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, our respective dioceses, the parishes which comprise them, and our governments, as well as our own households, that God's desire may become increasingly evident for all of humanity;
- Recruit and empower people of all races and ethnic origins as leaders in our church, and as members of all boards, agencies, commissions, and committees;
- Dedicate equitable resources for all races and national origins in the funding of theological education for all ministries, lay and ordained;
- Advocate for continued response to the sinful legacy of slavery; expose situations of environmental racism and classism which poison and threaten the poorest among us, and seek justice for those communities; and
- Advocate for compassionate care of the stranger in our midst, and demand just immigration policies.

Having entered into covenant with each other to root out the sin of racism in very specific personal and corporate ways, we, the bishops of the Episcopal Church, invite all members of our Church to join us in this mission of justice, reconciliation, and unity. This is an expression of our commitment to the fundamental covenant each of us entered into at the moment of our baptism. May God give us the will to do this reconciling work, and the power and grace to accomplish it. We ask that this pastoral letter be read in all churches as soon as possible.