

BECOMING BELOVED COMMUNITY ... WHERE YOU ARE

A Resource for Episcopal Individuals, Congregations & Communities
Seeking Racial Healing, Reconciliation and Justice



UPDATED JULY 2020

Adapted for individual and congregational use from "Becoming Beloved Community: The Episcopal Church's Long-term Commitment to Racial Healing, Reconciliation and Justice" (May 2017, Presented to the Church by the Presiding Officers of the Episcopal Church in response to General Convention Resolution C019 ["Establish Response to Systemic Injustice"])

Full church-wide statement of commitment and many more resources available at www.episcopalchurch.org/beloved-community

Written by

Stephanie Spellers, Canon to the Presiding Bishop for Evangelism, Reconciliation and Creation Care
sspellers@episcopalchurch.org – 212.716.6086

Charles "Chuck" Wynder, Jr., Staff Officer for Social Justice and Advocacy Engagement
cwynder@episcopalchurch.org – 212.716.6169

Heidi J. Kim, Former Staff Officer for Racial Reconciliation

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

– *Prayer for the Human Family* (Book of Common Prayer, p. 815)

A Long-term Commitment to Racial Healing, Reconciliation and Justice

Jesus laid out the most basic Christian teaching of all when the young man asked him, “Which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He told him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:36-40). The Beloved Community is the body within which all people can grow to love God and love the image of God that we find in our neighbors, in ourselves, and in creation. It provides a positive, theologically and biblically based ideal that orients the work of racial healing, reconciliation, and justice. It is the end toward which the Jesus Movement points.

The Episcopal Church’s Becoming Beloved Community vision – presented by our Church’s key leaders in May 2017 – frames a path for Episcopalians to address racial injustice and grow as a community of reconcilers, justice-makers, and healers who share a passion for the dream of God. Because this is the work of spiritual formation, and not simply completing a training or implementing a set of programs, we encourage individuals and congregations to embrace the journey ahead as a long-term commitment. It may be helpful to imagine a labyrinth as you reflect, act, and reflect again. After all, on the road toward reconciliation and healing, we travel around corners, make sharp turns, pass fellow travelers, and double back into quadrants we have indeed visited before, each time discovering a fresh revelation or challenge.

In particular, we anticipate that becoming Beloved Community will lead communities and individuals through four interrelated commitments, like quadrants of the labyrinth ...



Telling the Truth about our Churches and Race	<p>Baptismal Promise: Persevere in resisting evil, and whenever we fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord.</p> <p>Core Questions: What racial/cultural/ethnic groups are in our church? Who have we excluded or included?</p>
Proclaiming the Dream of Beloved Community	<p>Baptismal Promise: Proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.</p> <p>Core Questions: How has our city/town/area participated in racial injustice or healing over time? What’s happening today? What is our dream for Beloved Community? What behaviors and practices foster it?</p>
Practicing the Way of Love in the Pattern of Jesus	<p>Baptismal Promise: Seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves.</p> <p>Core Questions: How will we grow as reconcilers, healers, and justice-bearers? What activities, practices, learning and experiences would (trans)form us? How will we share stories and grow relationship?</p>
Repairing the Breach in Society and Institutions	<p>Baptismal Promise: Strive for justice and peace among all people & respect the dignity of every human being.</p> <p>Core Questions: What institutions and systems bear the signs of racial injustice? How will we participate in the repair, restoration and healing of people, institutions and systems?</p>

Becoming the Beloved Community will take more than one three-year cycle of the Church’s life. It will take more than our lifetimes. But we have heard the cry of the prophet Micah, “O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8). With prayer, by the grace of God alone, rooted in our baptismal promises, we set out now on a lifelong commitment to follow the loving, liberating, and life-giving way of Jesus.

Telling the Truth about Our Churches and Race (TRUTH-TELLING)

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

People: I will, with God's help.

Anecdotes and stereotypes abound regarding Episcopalians and race, but there is rarely adequate data, especially for dioceses beyond the United States. If we seek reconciliation, healing, and new life, it begins with telling the truth about The Episcopal Church's racial composition and participation in systems of racial justice and injustice, especially given the Church's relationship to the complex history of race in the 17 nations our Church calls home. ("Becoming Beloved Community," p. 9)

Core Questions: What racial, cultural and ethnic groups are in our church? Who is around us? What groups shape our common life, leadership and worship? How has our church excluded or embraced different racial, cultural and ethnic groups over time?

Church, Neighborhood, and Beyond

Compare your church's racial, ethnic, and cultural makeup to the local area's demographics

(<https://www.generalconvention.org/study-your-neighborhood>)

- Notice any differences between the racial, ethnic, and cultural makeup of the church and its leadership, and the makeup of the community where your congregation or ministry is based. With what diverse neighbors might God be calling you into relationship, justice-making, and learning? What historic or systemic barriers would you need to address to grow these relationships?
- Notice adjacent areas with a significantly different racial, ethnic, and cultural makeup. With what diverse peoples in your geographic area might God be calling you into relationship, justice-making, and learning? What historic and systemic barriers would you need to address?

Within the Church

Where possible, gather data on race, ethnicity and culture within your congregation and diocese

- a. Congregational membership
- b. Congregational engagement (people who may not consider themselves "members" but are part of the church's life and ministry [attend a parents group, 12-Step group, preschool, soup kitchen, etc.])
- c. Congregational leadership (vestry, clergy, staff, other leadership bodies [official and unofficial])
- d. Diocesan leaders and staff, including Trustees, Standing Committees, Commissions on Ministry, etc.
 - Notice the patterns of racial, ethnic and cultural representation in the bodies above. What racial, ethnic, and cultural groups are present? Why might these patterns exist?
 - Notice which racial, ethnic, and cultural groups make decisions in your church and diocese. Are certain groups trusted with power, while others are not? Why might these patterns exist?

Participation in Racial Injustice and Justice

- a. What is your church's history of participation in behaviors and structures of racial injustice? Interview elders, research church and diocesan documents, newspaper accounts, etc.
- b. What is your church's history of participation in behaviors and structures of racial justice and healing? Interview elders, research church and diocesan documents, newspaper accounts, etc.

Further Reflection: Even when we have the best of intentions, we will see patterns of exclusion as well as inclusion. How could you tell the truth and take note of current and historic divisions around you without feeling paralyzed, criticized, or defensive? What helps you to stay in an open, grace-filled conversation?

Proclaiming the Dream of Beloved Community (PROCLAMATION)

Celebrant: Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

People: I will, with God's help.

An essential part of our work for racial justice, transformation, and reconciliation is the intentional gathering of Episcopalians and our neighbors to consciously share about the history and reality of race in a particular place. This process of "re-remembering, retelling, and reliving" is necessary to create space and time to collectively discern a shared, renewed narrative and vision of Beloved Community. ("Becoming Beloved Community," 13)

Core Questions: How has our town/city/area participated in racial injustice or racial healing over time? What is happening today? What do we and our neighbors dream for Beloved Community? What behaviors and commitments would foster it?

Host Community-wide Listening and Learning Sessions

1. *Organize a Listening and Learning Session* in partnership with neighbors, faith partners, justice groups, civic groups, foundations, schools, businesses, elders, young people, etc. With the help of elders and historians, examine the history of race and racism in the regional and local context, including the church's role.
2. *Listen to the lived realities of race and racism in your context.* All participants should be welcomed to share stories about their current and ongoing experiences of race and racism.
3. *Invite individuals, congregations, dioceses, and organizations to share local and regional work* addressing race, racism, racial justice, healing, and reconciliation.
4. *Discern the shape of Beloved Community.* In a carefully facilitated session, participants should together make meaning of what they have heard, seen, and witnessed during the Listening and Learning Session(s). Use results to collaboratively shape a vision for what Beloved Community would look like in your shared context. What would a diverse community of people growing to love their neighbors as they love themselves look and act like where you are? What would the dream of God look like where you are? Discern together what specific behaviors and commitments from individuals and groups in your wider community would be necessary to live into that dream.
5. *Integrate worship and prayer* appropriate to the full group of participants. Liturgy, song, prayers, preaching should ground the experience of re-remembering and rewriting our narrative around race.
6. *Incorporate social media* in order to expand and connect the Listening and Learning Session with others who are making the journey. This wider circle could support or learn from your experience.

Consult resources and books like these:

- St. Paul's-Richmond (VA) History and Reconciliation Initiative: www.stpaulsrva.org/HR/
- Roberson Project on Slavery, Race and Reconciliation: <https://new.sewanee.edu/roberson-project>
- Diocese of New York Reparations Committee: <https://www.dioceseny.org/mission-and-outreach/social-concerns/reparations-for-slavery/>
- Trail of Souls in the Diocese of Maryland: www.trailofsouls.org/
- New York Times 1619 Project: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>
- Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*

Further Reflection: As we strive to embrace the diversity of the human family of God, it helps to have a positive vision or dream toward which you are moving. Have you ever experienced something that looked or felt like "Beloved Community"? How could you speak publicly about your own experiences with race and racism and about your own dream of healed, Beloved Community?

Practicing the Way of Love in the Pattern of Jesus

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

People: I will, with God's help.

Walking the road toward Beloved Community is an adventure, fueled by the power of the Holy Spirit, and no Christian should ever expect to arrive at the destination. This is a spiritual practice, after all, and no one ever finishes with spiritual formation. We are always praying. We are always reading scripture. We are always seeking to love and serve our neighbors. And we are always learning and practicing Jesus' way of love, especially as he calls us to cross racial, cultural and ethnic lines, to examine structures of oppression and their impact on our own and others' lives, and ultimately to nurture Beloved Community. ("Becoming Beloved Community," p. 16)

Core Questions: How will we grow as reconcilers, healers, and justice-bearers? What activities, practices, learning and experiences would (trans)form us? How will we share and receive stories, grow relationship across dividing walls and seek Christ in each other?

Reading or Viewing Groups

Host a reading/viewing group at your church - and invite non-churchgoers - to reflect together ...

- Sacred Ground: A Race Dialogue Series, produced by award-winning filmmaker and Becoming Beloved Community Consultant Katrina Browne: www.episcopalchurch.org/sacredground
- Episcopal Reconciliation Pilgrimage to Ghana: www.episcopalchurch.org/reconciliation-pilgrimage
- Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*
- Ibram X. Kendi, *How to be an Anti-racist*
- Catherine Meeks, *Living into God's Dream: Dismantling Racism in America*
- Jim Wallis, *America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege and the Bridge to a New America*

Engage in Beloved Community StorySharing

1. Use local and/or accessible resources to help people to the practice sharing and hearing stories about faith, race, and difference.
 - Host a Beloved Community StorySharing gathering, using the guidebook at www.episcopalchurch.org/storysharing
 - Mine the wisdom of community organizing, Public Narrative, pastoral care, the Network of Biblical Storytellers, StoryCorps, the Moth Radio Hour for help with the art of storytelling
 - Also note the Called to Transformation asset-based community development trainings, the Kaleidoscope Institute, the Episcopal Church in Minnesota's listening toolkit, and the GoSpeak project in North Carolina (reconciliation edition), to name only a few.
2. Build StorySharing practice into all parts of your congregational life.
 - Open church meetings with brief StorySharing
 - Craft sermons that include stories of faith, race, and difference
 - Create space during sermons for 1- or 2-minute story-sharing in pairs
3. Share stories in wider and wider circles: within the congregation, with other Episcopal churches different from your own, with other faith groups, with civic and neighborhood groups, with partners in areas different and even distant from your own.

Join or learn about a racial healing and reconciliation pilgrimage

- Trail of Souls in the Diocese of Maryland: www.trailofsouls.org/
- Diocese of Atlanta's Pilgrimages to Lynching Sites: www.centerforracialhealing.org/pilgrimages.html
- Episcopal Relief & Development Ghana Reconciliation Pilgrimage: www.episcopalchurch.org/reconciliation-pilgrimage
- Diocese of Alabama's Jonathan Daniels and Civil Rights Martyrs Pilgrimage: www.dioala.org/dfc/newsdetail_2/3199430
- Also take note of celebrations of Martin Luther King Jr., David Pendleton Oakerhater, Florence Li Tim-Oi, Absalom Jones, Pauli Murray and other holy women and men from non-dominant cultures

Engage in a comprehensive, well-facilitated training in dismantling racism and growing beloved community

Even if you've completed anti-racism training or diversity training a while ago, remember that formation is ongoing for those who follow Jesus as ambassadors of healing and Beloved Community. The Executive Council Committee on Anti-racism has created a framework for assessing trainings, available at www.episcopalchurch.org/racial-reconciliation/formation-and-training-organizations. Here are some that have been especially useful for Episcopalians (not an exhaustive list):

- Seeing the Face of God in Each Other: www.episcopalchurch.org/library/document/seeing-face-god-each-other-antiracism-training-manual-episcopal-church
- Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing (adapts Seeing Face of God): www.centerforracialhealing.org
- Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training: www.crossroadsantiracism.org
- Kaleidoscope Institute: www.kscopeinstitute.org
- Mission Institute: themissioninstitute.org
- People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (especially the Undoing Racism Program): www.pisab.org
- Talking Race: Kids and Race: talkingrace.org
- Traces of the Trade (based on the film of the same name): www.tracesofthetrade.org
- VISIONS Inc.: www.visions-inc.org

Incorporate racial healing, reconciliation, justice and repentance in worship

- Collection of resources from the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music at www.episcopalchurch.org/reconciliation
- "Pray" section of "Learn, Pray, Act: Resources for Responding to Racist Violence and Police Brutality": www.episcopalchurch.org/responding-to-racist-violence

Further Reflection: Story-sharing, pilgrimage, and trainings are just the beginning of our work of healing and reconciliation, not the culmination of our efforts. What racial and ethnic wounds and divisions do you feel God calling you to heal? What unique gifts and talents will you bring to the church as we practice the way of love together? Are there capacities or gifts you personally hope to grow? How will you bring your own spiritual practices of compassion and presence to the work of listening, learning, and healing?

Repairing the Breach in Institutions and Society

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.

If all our action centers on the Church and nurturing our interior experience of Beloved Community, we will have missed the core of the loving, liberating, life-giving good news of Jesus Christ: it is for all the world, not just for those within the walls of the Church. ... Our Church has enjoyed a unique degree of economic and social privilege in the United States, thanks in part to our origins in the British Empire. That privilege often extends to Episcopal congregations in Latin America and Asia, and it often transcends the actual economic status of the congregation itself. The Episcopal Church has a special vocation to examine our history, to say we are sorry, and to participate in the repair and restoration of communities and institutions that struggle to flourish because of systems built to privilege our Church's historic membership. Put frankly, we cannot speak of reconciliation and healing without also speaking of justice and repairing what our Church has contributed to breaking. ("Becoming Beloved Community," p. 21)

Core Questions: Repairing the Breach in Society and Institutions

What social institutions and systems most clearly bear the signs of racial injustice and brokenness? How could we participate in the repair, restoration, and healing of people, institutions, and systems?

Participate in Criminal Justice Reform and Healing

- a. Sign up for Episcopal Public Policy Network, which tracks criminal justice policy at the federal level. EPPN also offers an advocacy toolkit on "Faith and Citizenship." Learn more at episcopalchurch.org/OGR.
- b. Explore the "Act" section of "Learn, Pray, Act: Resources for Responding to Racist Violence and Police Brutality": www.episcopalchurch.org/responding-to-racist-violence
- c. Do a book study at your church - and invite non-churchgoers - to read and discuss books like ...
 - Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*
 - Kelly Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*
 - Victor Rios, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*
 - Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*
- d. Participate in a program that accompanies formerly incarcerated or detained people returning to community and their families. Such programs offer mentoring, job skills, clothing closets, and spiritual and emotional support, and help churches to listen and learn from wise, vulnerable neighbors.

Stand with Immigrants and Refugees

- a. Link with local and regional groups standing in solidarity with immigrants and refugees
- b. Actively welcome and protect refugees with Episcopal Migration Ministries: episcopalmigrationministries.org
- c. Consult with experienced groups like Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles and the Episcopal Sanctuary Task Force in California, Welcoming Congregations/Guardian Angels Network of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and others to learn how your church can offer protection and sanctuary to people targeted by anti-immigrant bias
- d. Sign up for advocacy alerts from the Episcopal Public Policy Network, which tracks immigration and refugee-related policy at the federal level. Learn more at episcopalchurch.org/OGR.

Support Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

- a. Pray for and make contributions to St. Augustine's University in North Carolina and Voorhees College in South Carolina, the two Episcopal HBCUs
- b. Build relationships with colleges and universities near you that serve primarily students of color.

Further Reflection: Living into the Great Commandment invites us to embrace the most vulnerable people in our communities as beloved neighbors. How could you use your insights, assets, and relationships for the sake of justice-making and healing? What are your sources for courage?