



**Telling the Truth, Proclaiming the Dream
Stories of Leadership, Racial Injustice, and Healing
from Deputies, Bishops, and Leaders of Color in The Episcopal Church**

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This report contributes to telling the truth about things done and left undone regarding racial justice and healing in The Episcopal Church (TEC). It lifts up themes and patterns drawn from the stories and perspective of 18 leaders of color who have journeyed significant portions of their lives with TEC and participated at its 79th General Convention. It also offers glimpses of behaviors and commitments that foster the liberative environments in which the Church as Beloved Community can flourish.

Our research identifies some of the barriers to and strengths of lay and ordained leadership as it is lived into by people of color at local, regional, and church-wide levels. The findings, questions, and voices we highlight are meant to support the Episcopal Church and its Racial Reconciliation Team as the Church lives into its call to seek loving, liberating and life-giving relationships with God and each other, and strive to heal and transform injustice and brokenness in ourselves, and in our communities, institutions and society.

Background

The Episcopal Church's vision of *Becoming Beloved Community* articulated in 2017 by leaders of the House of Bishops and House of Deputies offers a map to address racial injustice and grow a community of reconcilers, justice-makers, and healers united by a passion for the dream of God.

Using the labyrinth as inspiration and guide, TEC leaders identified four interrelated commitments essential for a lifelong spiritual quest to follow the loving, liberating, and life-giving way of Jesus. The first two commitments, and the core questions that enliven them, are:

Telling the Truth: Who are we? What things have we done and left undone regarding racial justice and healing?

Proclaiming the Dream: How can we publicly acknowledge things done and left undone? What does Beloved Community look like in this place? What behaviors and commitments will foster reconciliation, justice, and healing?

This report presents a preliminary and partial response to the question:



Do deputies and bishops of color feel seen, heard, and valued as full members, partners, and leaders in the Episcopal Church in 2018?

A series of interviews with 18 bishops, deputies, and leaders attending the 79th General Convention in Austin, Texas gives a glimpse of patterns in our behavior, practices, and structures that impede or support the growth of leadership and the beloved community we seek to be.

Process

The Mission Institute was invited by the TEC Staff Officer for Racial Reconciliation, as part of the work articulated in *Becoming Beloved Community*, to interview deputies, bishops, and leaders of color attending its 2018 General Convention. The Racial Reconciliation office spread word about the interviews to their network of deputies and bishops and invited them to sign up for an hour-long interview session in Austin. The Mission Institute team of Dr. Diane D'Souza and Ms. Donna Bivens talked at length with more than 22 leaders of color in their five days at General Convention, completing formal interviews with 18. These established Episcopal leaders represent:

- ❑ 17 different dioceses and/or global covenant partners
- ❑ 7 Black/Afro-American, 7 Asian/Pacific Islander, 2 Latinx/Hispanic, 2 Indigenous and mixed heritage
- ❑ 8 female, 10 male
- ❑ 8 lay persons, 6 priests or deacons, 4 bishops
- ❑ 5 persons (27%) born or raised outside the US
- ❑ Ages ranging from 33 to 88 with an average age of 61 (specifically: 1 person in their 30s, 2 in their 40s, 4 in their 50s, 7 in their 60s, 3 in their 70s, 1 in their 80s).

By choosing to center the perceptions of people of color, we have the opportunity to catch a glimpse of lived realities of race and racism in the context of Episcopal leadership and its development. We draw on the experiences and wisdom of men and women whose social location offers a strong vantage point to see and name structures, practices, and behaviors that get in the way of equity and full inclusion. It also places at the heart of our inquiry voices that too often remain on the margins.

This report centers a deep listening to people's stories, perceptions, and wisdom. We consider this a sacred act. We next wrestled with what we had heard as interviewers with different racial identities. Together we identified and analyzed patterns of behavior, practices, and structures that aid or impede the Church's progress towards seeing, hearing, valuing, and loving all its members, partners, and leaders—irrespective of their ethnicity or race.

We have been careful to preserve people's anonymity. We do this in part to ensure frank and honest conversation, but also to encourage the reader's focus to remain on issues rather than individual personalities. While it is possible to assemble clues from quoted words to guess at who is speaking, we invite the reader to forgo that natural tendency and receive their words as Spirit-inspired text. Such a process is in keeping with and informed by the Episcopal Church's prior experiences of deep listening: it embodies the way of Jesus; honors the courage, vulnerability, and trust with which people have shared their stories; and allows us to hear the movement of the Spirit in the voice of another.

We affirm with Episcopal Church leaders that the work of racial reconciliation is a deeply spiritual process. Structural racism is centuries old and requires a long-term commitment by the Church and a



lifelong commitment in the spiritual lives of each of its members. We are guided by our Christian faith as we travel this road together. With St. Paul (Romans 7:19) we acknowledge our humanity in engaging a sin like racism, "For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing". Our baptismal vows inform our response whenever we fall into sin: guiding us to acknowledge where we have stumbled, and then repent and return to God's love expressed in and through community. Lastly, we hold close God's promise (Revelation 21:5) that a time of healing and transformation is indeed possible: "Behold, I make all things new". For those of us who doubt or despair, God asserts that "these words are trustworthy and true" however distant may seem our transformation into the courageous and beloved community of God.

Themes and Voices

We see racism (and other systemic oppressions) as a complex adaptive system (CAS): one in which a perfect understanding of the individual parts does not automatically convey a perfect understanding of the behavior of the whole. In a complex adaptive system, semi-autonomous agents interact interdependently in ways that produce system-wide patterns. These patterns, in turn, influence the behavior of the agents. The strength and challenge of such systems is that they are highly adaptable and resilient. Systems thinkers tell us that to influence long-term change in a complex human system like racism requires shifting our focus from problem solving to pattern spotting, while at the same time maintaining a firm commitment to moving the whole closer to our desired values. They also tell us that we need not address all patterns in order to have a significant impact. It is sufficient to start with those we find most true and useful.

In that spirit, we lift up some of the patterns that help us understand how we as a Church perpetuate systems of racial injustice and foster racial justice and inclusion. These patterns, and the questions they raise, can help us collectively affirm a shared narrative and move closer to our vision of Beloved Community. A next step is to discern and commit to actions that keep us accountable to engaging and eliminating racism and white supremacy, including an ongoing check-in process that identifies new forms of structural oppression as they develop, and strategizes how to dismantle them.

Our choice in constructing this report is to name and briefly describe the patterns we see, then allow people's voices to speak for themselves. We feel this allows people's own wisdom to surface. It also provides an opportunity for readers to do their own reflection: drawing additional conclusions, spotting different patterns, and flagging points that have special resonance. Guided by "Telling the Truth" and "Proclaiming the Dream", we have tried to identify both barriers to and glimpses of beloved community within each theme.

The Paradox of Church as Refuge and Place of Oppression

Toward the end of our interviews, we heard what for us was an iconic story for leaders of color. A Latino leader was describing his 2005 intervention with a church with a dwindling white membership in a neighborhood that was quickly becoming Mexican. His encounter is foundational to his experience as a person of color in the Church. He and other leaders have to wrestle with what it means to grow and lead communities when the "we" we are as a Church includes the very oppression we seek to counter in the world. Our interview partners also described moments of deep love and occasions when they witnessed or were part of radically welcoming communities working

¹ Adapted from K. Dooley, 1997. "A complex adaptive system's model of organization change." *Nonlinear Dynamics, Psychology, and the Life Sciences*, 1:69-97. Referenced from "HSD Essentials", 2012. Circle Pines, MN: Human Systems Dynamics Institute.



for the flourishing of all. There is a paradox here: Church is both place of refuge and place of injury. This leads to a double consciousness, with some leaders of color naming church as a place apart from “racial ugliness” yet when we probe deeper most share foundational stories of being hurt by actions, attitudes, and structures within their own spiritual community.

This range of experiences might be what writer Parker Palmer calls the ‘tragic gap’: the eternal separation between the way things are and the way we know they might be—between painful and at times violent realities of racial injustice, and the courageous, loving, spiritually rooted communities we long to be.

➤ What knowledge, skills, dispositions, wisdom, and actions do leaders of color bring to navigating the gap between the Beloved Community we see the Church called to be and the imperfect, painful reality we too often experience?

➤ What support or culture or spiritual grounding do leaders of color and mainstream actors for racial justice and healing need in order to provide transformative leadership in a church that is both oppressive and liberating?

“I was asked to speak to the congregation and the priest about demographics and the way the country was changing. I suggested they might consider their legacy and the mission of the church and open their doors to the community. People were fairly gracious, but I could feel some really negative karma energy in the room. Some looks and stares. There was one lady who sat and just glared at me the whole time. I talked for about thirty or forty minutes. Then I asked if people had any questions. This woman just kept glaring. Finally I looked at her and said ‘Ma’m do you have anything you’d like to share?’ She leaned in and said, ‘I’d rather have my church burn than let those Mexicans in’... I looked around me and said, ‘Thank you for sharing that.’ I leaned back and thought, ‘Shit. That’s the end of this conversation.’ I was stunned that she said it to me. And I was saddened and angry... I was also deeply thankful that she had the guts to say to me what a lot of other people sitting there had been thinking but didn’t have the courage to say. I was thankful that it happened early on in my ministry too because when I go to a place, I’m aware that there are people who feel that way but who don’t have the guts to tell me. Because this could have happened anywhere.”

“The church is imperfect and full of imperfect people, and exists in structures that are flawed. It’s still the place where I find Jesus. Where else am I going to go?”

“[The Seminary] was not a very supportive environment for people of color... The faculty on the whole were okay; there was nothing overt from them. It was from the staff that I experienced a subtle racism. For example, a staff person said to me, ‘Oh, you speak English so well!’ or my wife’s accent was made fun of (she doesn’t speak English fluently). So she stopped coming to events. She didn’t participate in community life... I thought, I can get through two years here, that’s all I need to do. I just need to finish my studies. So I did.”

“When I first came [to General Convention], I knew about [the church] where I grew up—a beautiful church with all its history. By that time I also knew about churches across the diocese. I knew about diocesan council meetings, annual meetings. That’s the Episcopal Church as I knew it. Then I came to General Convention and I saw this beautiful bouquet of human beings. So many of them spoke the



language I speak, had some of the thoughts I had, cared about some of the same issues. I was in heaven... And the music that first year: there were choirs singing all types of music from all different cultures. God! I was overwhelmed... My experience of the church at the General Convention level broadened me. I grew as a person because of it. I loved it. I've made friends. I can't wait to get here to see them, to have conversations. We're family. And we're from everywhere: all over the continental US and outside. I love my church."

"This great big beautiful family that comes together here at General Convention is a glorious experience for everyone. We write resolutions, we pass resolutions, we get passionate about issues. And then there are other sessions that take place—sessions to which people of color are not always privy. Many times we have seen that resolutions don't go anywhere. This is the dark side, the political element of our church. It's hard to discern and even hard to identify. It's amorphous. But we know it's there. I served on Executive Council. There are various committees that are appointed. They're selected by a small group of people. They're re-arranged by a small group of people. If you just look around, you'll see that there's a very small group that's kind of moving the church. That's so, so disheartening. You don't see it initially because on the surface it's all just as it should be. Occasionally you hear 'Why didn't you come to the meeting last night?' [And you ask] 'What meeting? I didn't know about a meeting.' 'Oh... you should have been there. We talked about this and we talked about that.' These are... old, old themes that I thought might have disappeared by now, but they are still with us. Yes, people of color are in many ways invisible. Yet if you come and just see this church experience from a distance it all looks very, very well and in order: equitable, fair, inviting. But when you delve down deeply, it's there. And it hurts. Because there's something about the church that almost invites vulnerability... And so when disappointment and hurt happens, it's far more devastating and painful than one would imagine."

Faith-Informed Theories of Change

While the overall collection of stories was powerful, we found a profound integrity and intelligence within each individual's story. Faith and leadership are intertwined and deeply inform each other. Of course, this is to be expected among those whose work involves accompanying people in making theological meaning in and from their lives.

There is an amazing diversity and complexity of theologies and "theories of change" that leaders offer and draw from in their leadership in the Episcopal Church. We've heard stories of forging tragedy into spiritual milestones, of the push to claim one's power to effect change, "living into what you say you're about". We've heard from clergy who see their role as being "subversive" and others who regularly shed markers of clerical privilege in order to experience how strangers are welcomed when visiting unfamiliar congregations. In grappling with racism and framing the journey to Beloved Community these leaders are engaging deeply spiritual work.

- What can the Episcopal Church learn from leaders of color in order to make sense of and deepen our liberation from white supremacy and racism in our lives and in our ministry?
- How are people integrating racial reconciliation work within their vision and practice of mission and ministry in the Episcopal Church? Is theirs a "bottom up" expression of what *Becoming Beloved Community* is the 'top down' expression of?



"I believe in the militancy and standing up that we are called to do as a part of the Jesus movement and that is being re-instilled in us as Episcopalians. That militancy is exemplified in the many ways Jesus went off on people. 'You tell that vile fox,' he said when speaking about Herod. Jesus was not trying to complement Herod on being crafty like a fox. Foxes were the enemies of people in those days... When Jesus was in the temple and saw all that was going on, he didn't say, 'Oh golly gee whiz, guys...' He turned over tables. In one account he made a whip and cracked people on their backsides and said, 'You get out of here!' I believe there is a militancy that we're called into, both spoken, civil disobedience, and otherwise. When we see evil and especially the sin of racism being reestablished in our presence, we're called to act. I try to be an activist. I try to advocate for people."

"I think for a long time we've tried to bludgeon people out of habits that are abhorrent. That's not really the model we have in Jesus. It's the model we have from Constantine certainly, from the Spanish inquisition, or from colonialism. But it's not what Jesus invites us to."

"Everytime I come up to that [Matthew 26:11] I say, 'No, Jesus. We don't always have to have the poor with us.'... We're having a conversation. I'm talking back to Jesus... Jesus is probably rolling his eyes at me... 'Oh it's this chick again' [laughs]."

"Another random vision for the Episcopal Church: that the Episcopal Church stop giving people a way out of being the gospel in action. So many times we talk about change being difficult. Saying change is difficult and change takes time allows us to backpedal on or back away from tough topics. Change is difficult. But the gospel expects change. The opposite is stagnation and ill health. If my child is the same size at age eight that they were at age one, then that's ill health. There's something wrong there. But the church gives people

a way out, of not attending to their spiritual growth and change... Change is expected. Are you going to make God's expected change of you?"

"I like the language that we're beginning to outwardly say about how we do racial reconciliation work. Incorporating it into racial healing, incorporating it into truth telling. It's about revealing, it's about actually addressing and dressing the wounds that are there... Healing is comprehensive, and it's deep and it's complex. Healing doesn't always mean 'better' at each step. That's hard to accept, because when you say you heal something you want it to be done, you want it to be complete. I was listening to a story about... physiological healing... about how your body still remembers the pain... You may have healed [the injury], things may feel better, but the muscle memory is still there."

"When I was doing CPE [Clinical, Pastoral Education] while in seminary, I did it at [the] General Hospital. I stayed with the inlaws and worshipped at [a local congregation]. We were planning a communion service and the hospital didn't have the chalice and other things. So I volunteered to borrow them from [the congregation]. When I asked, the priest gave me this old beat up stuff. It was old and tarnished. I said, 'I'm not taking that over there. That makes you look bad, me look bad., and to do so would be disrespectful to patients and staff. I want that stuff over there,' and I pointed to a beautiful set. He said, 'No, you can't have that.' [Later] the priest said, 'I know what your problem is. You like to think that people are special. Let me tell you, in God's eyes no one is special.' I thought about that... In my view point, everyone is special in God's eyes. I try to live my life and interact with people as if I recognize how special they are in God's eyes."



"I would love not to have to legislate the idea of loving one another. Because we already have legislation called the principles of the Jesus movement, to use the language of our Presiding Bishop. We have no need for legislation because it has already been said. We say that is what we follow, but we don't. We still need to tell each other, 'Well, since I am the Episcopal Church I have this resolution B or A or C with a number after it that says I have to.' We can't simply say, 'we should' because that's another thing: whenever we use strong language in a resolution it gets voted down. So we say, 'It's suggested...'. If you say 'we must', people say, 'Oh no! You cannot say that in a resolution. It's too strong.' The [Ten] Commandments are not suggestions. Or invitations. We have to live it this way. In the Episcopal Church we haven't gotten there yet. I think we've come a long way, but we still haven't gotten there."

Growing Vital, Resilient Leaders

The leaders we interviewed were powerful and resilient. They were also very diverse in their leadership styles. Most named individuals or groups (including the Deputies of Color Caucus, the Union of Black Episcopalians, Bishops of African Descent, and others) whose support was essential in their journey to becoming the leaders they are today. Some had been heavily mentored by people who recognized their talents and guided them in presenting their gifts to fit within the dominant culture and structure. Others *took* leadership in a more confrontational manner by pushing the Episcopal Church to grapple with difference, fueled by their dream of who and what the Church should be in the face of systemic racism. Some of those who were mentored spoke of opportunities they had to which other people of color had no access. And some who were more confrontational spoke of the consequences of their style and the resulting losses.

From each we heard a deep integrity and commitment to bringing life-giving change in the Church. Leaders drew on different change making styles: disrupting, accommodating, reconciling, healing, teaching, community relationship building/tending, etc. As outsiders, it was easy for us to see the power of this diversity in approaches but it wasn't clear that people had many chances to reflect on the value and best use of this diversity in 'the work'.

In assessing the current shortage of lay and clergy leaders of color in the Church, interview partners named several contributing factors including a lack of welcome and the reluctance of people of color to have to operate within a culture of whiteness. We heard leaders place their hope for change in young adults, prioritizing the need to work with them in ways that value and strengthen their leadership. They also pointed to active recruitment to lay and ordained ministries rather than relying on a process where the main onus for discernment lies with an individual. Several of our interview partners saw hope in the appointment of Presiding Bishop Michael Curry—not simply because he is a leader of color but because he brought vision, focus, and a clear path forward, emphasizing racial reconciliation and evangelism as essential to the future of the Church.

- How does one navigate a system that rewards those who are agreeable and just get along? When is disrupting or confronting valuable or essential? What are the costs for the leader who takes on that prophetic role? How might we grow greater capacity to be challenged or to feel uncomfortable?
- How does work between elders and young adults see and honor the unique spiritual struggles that young people encounter?



"I... went to my first diocesan convention. When I walked in no one welcomed me. Totally the invisible woman. Even the Bishop was not welcoming... I know if I were a [white male having the high status and profile job I had], there would have been all kind of, 'How you doing [sir]...?' There would have been all kinds of overtures. But there were no overtures... It was really a rude awakening. But then I got involved... And I [told] them [about this]. And they started to change... I had to make myself be at the table. If you're not at the table, you can't make a change because your voice is not heard. I was determined to be at the table so I could make a difference. And I did."

"One of the things I loved about the Episcopal Church from the time I came to the US was that I felt included. I didn't know much English at the time. I have to give great credit to the person that brought me in because he made sure that I encountered a welcoming, supportive environment. Later, as I started working at the provincial level, I realized that that kind of welcoming support was not the norm. The person who brought me in... protected me to such an extent that it fooled me into believing that everything was just fine and dandy in the Church. But he helped me in a way that allowed me to feel I had a voice even when things were not fine and dandy... I think that was very formative. Even today I know that if I see or hear something, I will not necessarily stay quiet. I will stand up for myself and for others and say what is in my mind and heart. It was that initial formation that was very much a stepping stone in helping me find myself. Those years helped me feel welcome within the Episcopal Church. So when I went out on my own and realized that parts of the church are different, I didn't feel that I was in the wrong place. I felt I was in the right place and that there was a reason for me to be there."

"The result of speaking up is that there will be more awareness. That's the positive result. So after I spoke out about the budget cuts [during diocesan budget discussions when Hispanic ministries were being cut without debate], people came up to me afterwards and thanked me. But they themselves didn't speak up. They weren't willing or able to bear the cost. Some of them couldn't: their positions were dependent. When you say stuff like I did... of course the Treasurer of the Diocese sees me as an enemy. I'm calling him out. So there's a cost to speaking up."

"How do we claim our agency across the spectrum but particularly for people of color for whom it's easy to say, 'Oh my God, this church is a mess! There's no place for me!' If you exit the room, then there's really no place for you. How do you get yourself in it in a way that you can hold authentically whatever you feel called to advance?"

"In [my childhood] the [lay] women were very, very supportive of the young people. They knew our talents before we ourselves knew them. And they would encourage those talents. There were many opportunities to speak and recite and sing and interact with each other and with the adults."

"Other people knew God was calling me... I was called up out of the church I was attending. The diocese... was starting the diaconate program... [My priest said], 'I think you should be a deacon.' [I said], 'What are you talking about?' [He said], 'They're having the discernment weekend, I want you to go.' So I went. Fifteen of us went. Then discernment started calling me."

"They're not going to hire someone like me. If you're going to be on diocesan staff you have to go along... I don't have the skill to do that... I served on a... committee in my diocese. I expressed my



opinions... I found that if you say something about [racism as it crops up], the people in power don't want to hear it..."

"Something I learned really early on that I wish for my child and I wish for people everywhere is to say that you deserve to be in every space you're in... and you deserve to be in that space with all of who you are. Don't let people tell you otherwise. Don't believe the lie that you are not worthy and don't belong... As I look back on myself when I was a kid... I was this odd duck who put herself in spaces because I thought, 'Of course I belong here.'"

Integration and the Power of Ethnic/Racial Identity

Leaders of color have diverse and complex stories about the impact of their integration into the Episcopal Church. The majority of leaders have to reconcile their racial identity with the whiteness of the local congregation or the larger Church. For almost all of those with whom we spoke, the racial and ethnic story of their and their people's place in the Church was foundational to their leadership. Whether it was the story of the historic transition from Jim Crow or of generations of segregated and de-segregated participation and leadership, the story of international migration or of interment in Japanese concentration camps, none of the narratives could be made sense of without the context of racism and ethnocentrism in the United States. These stories were not a problem, they were the lens through which leadership was built and developed.

- How best to navigate the tensions between the pull of the dominant culture toward assimilation and the life-giving power of the cultures and history of people of color?
- What would an Episcopal culture that is both cohesive and authentically diverse look like? What is our vision for that?

"When I went away to college I went to a HBCU [Historically Black Colleges & Universities] just for a year. That year was enough for me to really fall in love on my own with what it meant to be black, experiencing it while being in a majority. It was enough also to have me question, 'What am I doing in this really white church?'"

"When we went to Ghana I went to the slave dungeons. Not the castles but the dungeons. The dungeons were down below. And they had a church right above them. A church! How do I reconcile that? How do I fit into this [white church]? What does that church right above the slave dungeon say? And for a while I just was disgusted with the complicity, with the hijacking of Jesus and Christianity to uphold oppression and white supremacy. I have my own rich [personal] history: my connection and transformational experiences that I've had with Jesus and with God. But at the same time there is the church with this history. How do I marry the two? Do I marry the two? For a long while I just was angry. I didn't do much church at all. Or I went to black churches and suffered through, pretending that I didn't hear them say things about homosexuality."

"It was very important to me to be in the context of a [specific ethnic group] church community... It was very affirming to be in that community, in that cultural context. Having the community supporting me and sponsoring me was important. It was where I recognized the importance of the spiritual dynamic that includes my cultural identity and background, as well as the faith component."

"We need to do something about Province IX and about other non-English speaking members of General Convention. We need to find a way to make General Convention a place where everybody



feels welcome. I know in this particular General Convention this has not been so... I know that those members have not been totally included in the life of General Convention... I know [this] has been a struggle. I have had the great fortune since I began coming in 1994 to have a Latino caucus... Because of my relationship with that particular group, I know there have been struggles. Even up until today... As much as we talk about reconciliation, as much as we talk about love and life abundant as a body, we still have not been able to see each other as equals. To me General Convention is just the icon of that because it also happens in other parts of our church, in polity and in daily life. I lived it at [specific congregation]. They would question me, especially after the last general election: why am I involved with Latino ministries? [I explained that] it was when I realized that there was a segment of our community that needed extra attention because many were worried and struggling in their own minds and hearts about their safety in this country. I thought that I needed to address that. But my congregation couldn't see it. I had to pull out resolutions of General Convention to say, 'You know, I'm not doing this just to upset you. I understand it is my call as a priest, but as the Episcopal Church we also have these mandates that guide us: that we need to be welcoming, that we need to do for each other, that we need to love our neighbor. All of these things.'"

"We like to think we [the Episcopal Church] are welcoming. And in some ways we are. But if you look at us culturally or you look at the language and process and formality... as much as we say, 'Oh, we welcome everybody!' it's really only as long as you do it our way... We're inclusive to a point but we're xenophobic to a point as well... People say they want all this diversity, but they're not willing to be made different or to do things differently in order to truly welcome diversity. It doesn't stop with just welcoming people in the door and teaching them to do things your way... If the 'big tent' truly is big, there's going to be some hand clapping, there's going to be some gospel music, people may be worshipping with zydeco. There's going to be a lot to it..."

"Another important part of my story is that I grew up as a [American from a particular ethnic group] in [a particular state] in the 1950s and '60s. It was extremely difficult. There was tremendous racism. I lived in a small community of mostly Polish and Italian people and a few of us [from this ethnic group] and a few blacks. There were segregated schools—I did not go to a segregated school but the blacks were segregated. There was a separate balcony for the blacks. I was spanked in the first grade for speaking [my mother tongue] on the playground, and so I decided I was not going to get spanked again so I stopped speaking [the language]. Later as I entered junior high school and developed an interest in girls, they were not interested in me because I was dark skinned and a number of them told me in high school that they could not go out with me because I was [this ethnic group]. So I told people I was American Indian and pretended to be that for a number of years. I just kind of denied everything about being [my ethnicity]."

Leader as Pioneer

Almost all of the leaders we interviewed had at some point been "the first" person of color to take on a particular leadership role. In a classic article on building inclusive organizations, Frederick Miller and Judith Katz describe the path from "exclusive club" to truly multicultural organization.² They note that when organizations transition from the "exclusive club" stage to the "symbolic difference" stage,

² Frederick Miller and Judith Katz (1991). "The Path from Exclusive Club to Inclusive Organization: A Developmental Process." The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group. Accessed on 1 Sept. 2018 from: <https://articles.extension.org/sites/default/files/The%20Path%20from%20Exclusive%20Club.pdf>



there is a real need for pioneers. This reflects the Episcopal experience. But the symbolic difference stage is soon followed by a “critical mass” stage that is marked by conflict between the old and the new, between the dominant and the different. The authors warn that at this stage “[the young] are less willing to be the pioneer leading the way. They expect when they get hired that they will be able to contribute quickly and encounter few barriers.” While Miller and Katz’s article was written to describe change in business organizations, it offers a useful frame for analyzing the Church’s progress into being a multicultural and inclusive body. We wondered how a preponderance of pioneers might be impacting its venture into the new territory of trying to strengthen and build Beloved Community in the current era.

➤ What is the same and what is different as the Episcopal Church advances from a largely symbolic diversity of leadership to one that represents a critical mass? What are the cross generational leadership challenges that accompany this shift?

➤ What does this moment tell us about attracting the next generation of leaders? What might it mean for what’s next?

“At the time, in the early 1990s there were not a lot of Latino priests available. And [the Bishop] said what we have is something of a ‘pastoral emergency for Latino ministry’. And you should be ordained to be able to supply to that.”

“Looking back I’m mindful of the fact that I’ve been a trailblazer in many ways. In my high school I was the first foreign student that was accepted. I’m not the first [from my area of the world] to be ordained, but I am one of a very few... I’m the first Bishop [from my ethnic community]. I am aware of all that, and I’m aware of the role that I’m called to play—whether I like it or not—to be hopefully a positive role model for other [people from this ethnic group]. People who can look at me and think, ‘maybe I can be a bishop in the church’. People who never thought of that as a possibility. Whether I like it or not, that is part of my life.”

"I saw this young black woman: her eyes got so big! She was so proud to see someone who looks like her in the Council. I thought, I've got to keep going. So people can realize that they can be there too."

*“I was the first African American to graduate from [a specific seminary]. But this incident could have happened anywhere. Someone put a piece of paper in my mailbox at seminary. They folded it in quarters. It seemed blank and I stuck it in a book. But later I saw there was one word written : n***. There were other things that happened. I don’t want you to think I was three years [there] and that was the only thing. No, it was not the only incident. But I don’t want to portray [this particular seminary] as being the worst one. I’ll never forget some of the stories that I heard from other seminarians [of color]. I would hear them and think, I didn’t*

expect that from there. We all shared our own horror stories. It was kind of sad that the process included that. [My seminary] has come a long way since then. They hired a black person on their staff... . She’s dynamic. She thinks black thoughts as opposed to being a sell out. [The seminary] already was making strides while I was there... [allowing] me to do an Absalom Jones service in 1990, for example.”



"I did some looking into this and found that in our fifty year history, I'm the sole person of color from my Diocese who has ever been sent to seminary in the traditional fashion: going through the Commission on Ministry and attending a three-year residential seminary. There have been priests of color, specifically African American priests, who have been hired from outside the diocese. There is a priest who was received from the Roman Catholic Church. But that's it. There are no more people of color in discernment now, so I will be the only one for the foreseeable future. That's incredible and it's part of our history. We're not going to change it if we're not going to acknowledge it and then do some intentional work around it."

"The Church as a whole has done a bad job in raising up a generation of leaders. We're facing a wide clergy shortage. But for people of color the numbers are truly dismal... I'm trying to nurture young people to step up into leadership in the church in all orders, whether lay, deacon, or priest. This is something the church as a whole and the House of Bishops especially must address. And they have not. It's an issue that communities of color must address... Let's find a way, an intentional way, of calling and raising up the young people of color for ministry."

"...So we went to church in a nearby town... When the service was over, the [white] priest asked me who I was, where I came from. I told him. He said he thought I might be a lot more comfortable going to a church in [another town] where there were black people. There were not any black members in this church and as he said, 'I might not be comfortable, and the other members might not be comfortable.' I didn't go back there. The Baptist church was not far from where we lived and so my girls went to Sunday School at the Baptist church... Then I got invited to [another job in another town]... I went to the [Episcopal] Church... It was all white also. The [white] rector told me that there weren't any black members. He said, 'Maybe you would be more comfortable if you went to one of the other churches because we have no black members.' So I didn't go back after that."

"I would like to go to a Clergy Conference without being recognized as absent if I have to make a phone call or get a cup of coffee. It's easy to count to three; it's more difficult to count to ten [laughs]. Even if I want to take a break and go take a nap. My fellow clergy can do that but clergy of color can't. It's an additional weight that we carry in large gatherings, particularly clergy gatherings. As leaders of color, your absence is palpable."

White Dysconsciousness or Obliviousness

Most, if not all of the leaders of color with whom we spoke, recounted experiences of direct or indirect racism or examples of microaggressions. Their stories revealed a pattern among white colleagues and leaders who have limited experience discerning the meaning and impact of their personal and historical whiteness on their ministry and leadership in the Episcopal Church.

We see a significant difference in the growth and development of white Episcopal leaders and those of color. A big part of the leadership journey of people of color involves making sense of one's cultural or ethnic identity given the racism and dominant white culture of the Church. White folks in contrast tend to be unaware that they too are racialized. If white people cannot discern the presence and impact of their own whiteness, it makes it difficult for them to see people of color, and easy to render them and their communities invisible.



- What does the obliviousness of white people mean for leaders of color? What do they grapple with and what can emerging or other leaders learn from them?
- Where are white leaders moving past their dysconsciousness to form and strengthen their presence in an anti-racist, multicultural church?

"The problem is that the dominant culture doesn't even see the discrimination it enacts. It's blind. I was talking to someone who had been a [seminary] student... She was asked to be part of the worship team here at Convention. A person involved with leading it said to her, you can speak in the language you feel most comfortable using. But her most comfortable language is English—even though she is ethnically Chinese. He wanted her to speak in Chinese because they want the appearance of diversity. Instead of just being honest and asking if she could speak in Chinese, he assumed Chinese was her primary language. We're always being used that way. I just told her you just have to get used to it."

"I think in a very white dominant culture, even the election process is very political... People think that the whole issue of race and color no longer exists. But as a person of color, when you talk to your own predominantly white deputation about supporting people of color to get elected, you can tell that they almost roll their eyes. You see it in nonverbal gestures: 'Oh, we're talking about this again.' I think there is a misconception that we have already achieved racial reconciliation. That we are color blind and so need no longer focus on the issue of race."

"Province IX has a majority of Spanish speakers. In the 2009 convention we passed a resolution making sure that materials are translated into Spanish... That is still not happening."

"The Episcopal Church is viewed as an upper crust kind of church. You have people in it who have no relationship, no contact with lower income folks. So they don't see themselves as having a problem. I talked with a clergy person from my Diocese. I asked if her congregation would feel comfortable participating in [implicit bias] training. She said, I don't think so: they don't think they have a problem. They're an all white congregation in the suburbs somewhere. They don't see this as something they need..."

"[During] one of the [General Convention] Committee hearings [a bilingual Hispanic bishop] was translating during the discussion time since his associate only spoke Spanish. A person had the audacity to turn around and say, 'Keep quiet!' because he thought the bishop was having a private conversation... That was disrespect. And it shows an assumption that a person of color does not have the ability or intention to engage."

"Asians talk about being an invisible minority. That was definitely true... [and] it still happens here in the House of Bishops."

"The Book of Common Prayer is so anglo-centered. [For example] Chinese culture focuses a lot on ancestors... Usually in the funeral rites there will be something about paying your respect to the ancestors. It is almost like the ancestors are the ones waiting at the gate when you are coming—you know, the cloud of witnesses and saints we speak about in the Bible. A lot of different cultural pieces are really missing in our translation of the Book of Common Prayer. When you think of our liturgy, it is all very, very culturally specific."



"When I've been in other places, in Episcopalian churches, I've had the occasion to walk in and basically either be overwhelmed with people trying to invite me in or ignored. I went to the cathedral in [a largely white diocese] to worship. They were needing a new dean of the cathedral at the time. I walked in, they didn't know who I was, and it was one of those over-solicitous type situations, 'Oh my God, would you consider becoming Dean of our Cathedral?' You have a collar, you're a person of color, you can allow them to check off a lot of boxes. In contrast, I recall walking into a church in [a mid-Atlantic diocese] and being totally ignored."

"[The white leadership of the House of Deputies] tries to include and empower a lot of people... But it's still a white mindset even if they won't say that. The bishops, if they're white, still have a mindset. But they don't want to hear that they have a white mindset. You look at diocesan staff teams. They're not going to hire someone like me. If you're going to be on diocesan staff you have to go along. You have to serve the master... I think it would be good if the people in authority and power would examine themselves, examine the way they do things. But it's very hard. I don't think you can directly say that to people because it creates a defensive reaction and then you get scapegoated for being the bad person."

Racial Disparities: Resources, Shortages, & Inequities

The body of the Episcopal Church is rich in resources: leaders, opportunities, educational and spiritual programs, music, volunteers—and more. Our interview partners pointed to inequities in who is resourced and who is not, in who is seen as a resource and who is overlooked, in who hears about opportunities and who lacks access to information. Communication becomes political, for it determines who has access to knowledge and opportunity and who does not.

Two indications of a person's value to the Church are their inclusion in key leadership and their compensation for their work. While there is greater representation of leaders of color in some of our church bodies, the Church has been slow to take a clear look at possible inequities in salary across race. In order to address local and national shortages of clergy and lay leaders of color, the Church would be wise to shift from passive processes of discernment to active, intentional recruitment.

- What have we lost as a Church if we do not cultivate and support diverse leadership?
- What would it look like if the Episcopal Church were actively recruiting leaders of color for all levels of ministry? What needs to change for this to happen, and what gets in the way of progress?

"There were several seminarians in my class from [a southern diocese] who were very well connected. They got intern jobs at [major and well resourced parishes]. I hadn't seen this dynamic in [the city I came from] very much. But it became very clear at placement time when I had almost no connections for a job, and these seminarians had jobs all lined up. It was then that I realized for the first time that this is really a very white church."

"There are quite a number of ordained priests and bishops of color. But the tendency has been and still continues that these clergy, if they are assigned to a church, generally are given one that is a struggling congregation and then they are expected to raise it up from the ashes and create a phoenix."



"I don't know that the gifts and talents of black folks offering themselves to ordained ministry are always being appreciated the way they should be in the Episcopal Church. Especially black men. I would envision the church that in all communities, especially the black communities, would go out and not wait for someone to process vocation, but go out and do vocational recruitment. That would be one way of strengthening smaller churches and our community of faith as a whole."

"There's a financial benefit that comes along with ministry that is long lasting. If you're in a part time role or in a small parish with a small budget and you're making small dollars, you're on a particular path. What your retirement is going to look like is all based on your earnings over the course of your career. So if you go to these congregations and you serve out of your heart, you're setting yourself up for a financially tight life and a financially constrained retirement as well. It happens to minorities, it happens to women."

"Out of the eight black churches [in our diocese], only two are served by full time priests. The rest are served by vicars or priests-in-charge. Two of the congregations even are led by non-black clergy. For some people that's a problem, for other people it's not a problem, but I think it is illustrative of the fact that we don't have the structures in place for black ministry."

"Our black clergy... have mentioned feeling generally directed toward smaller opportunities. Even if they wanted to serve in a cardinal parish they don't feel they would ever be considered for it."

"We're expected to become leaders in the rules of the dominant culture which isn't always going to be inviting. The way that we identify leaders and expect them to come forward on their own isn't quite working. We're not encouraged to step up. Having the support of people to move forward was really important... the support of a separate [people of color] discernment group was crucial because a lot of people struggled with their own parish... So there were many things we talked about. Some was about how to get the parish to support us, that there were as many people supportive as there were not..."

"The Church Pension Fund currently does not document ethnicity of our clergy, only gender. We have no idea of the disparity and discrimination that exists among our clergy. We only know that right now the most recent data shows that women are getting paid 14% less on average than men in the Episcopal Church... But we have absolutely no data to know what exists as far as ethnicity. We always get push back when this issue is brought up."

"So we do need to include younger voices. And find them. I don't know whose job it is to bring them to church and to bring them to the table. That might be some of the reason we don't have the black clergy, because we haven't tapped them early enough. That may just be a problem with clergy leadership in general: identifying people at a young age and saying, 'You're really gifted at x. Have you ever thought of...?' No one ever said that to me. And I feel it took me a while—yes, in God's time—but it took me a while to get here. If someone had spoken to me when I was younger I may have come around to it sooner. Maybe I wouldn't have thought about being a doctor or entertained those other options, or wandered around aimlessly."

"The concern for many people is that they do not want to apply for a job and then get the door shut. I have heard stories even at this convention from deputies of color. There was one in particular... who



applied for a position and everything went really, really well. At the last minute when they saw him face to face... they said, "I'm sorry this might not be a good fit." That kind of things still happens. People are still very concerned about racial profiling during the interview process."

"[People tell me] 'All the great positions out there never really hit the airwaves—how do I get hooked into them? It seems like other people find out about them before I do.' Or by the time they hit the transitions database, there already are people in the pipeline to be interviewed for the job and others really don't stand a chance."

"There are a lot of resources developed by a lot of wonderful task forces, but if nobody is aware of how to access them then we will keep reinventing the wheel... Communication is really a big thing. How do we start getting those resources down to the local level?"

"I work ¾ time but the time I actually spend [at the church] is time and a half. Our diocese doesn't have the resources to send me assistance. Other churches that don't do nearly the amount of work we're doing have a big staff. Their priest is not being woken at 3am when a stranger calls to say my son is dying from AIDS, will you come and pray with us. A worker is worth what he is paid. I'm only making \$43,000 a year,"

"Someone said, 'We need to be thankful for how far we've come.' It's not that. I need to acknowledge how far we've come and question why we haven't gone farther. And keep pushing to work against the erosion for people of color of all that has been achieved, especially [at this moment in our history]."

The Many Pathways to Racial Justice and Healing

There were several critiques of the Episcopal Church anti-racism training with critiques ranging from the way the trainings were done to the lack of follow-up. There also was evidence that learning about systemic racism was important in order to address many of the barriers and conflicts people raised. With that in mind, we flagged distinct parts of what people called 'the work': training, research and education, relationships and building beloved community, work in affinity groups, implementation of and follow-up on change initiatives. We heard the importance of having more people of color on Episcopal decision-making bodies, We saw a pattern of conflict between those supporting various different ways of approaching systemic change. People tended to favor certain ways over others, and seemed less able to see the strong, collective impact of a diversity of approaches.

- Can we envision a future without racism and white supremacy? How do we create spaces for unfettered imagination, and why might our ability to picture such a future in rich and vivid detail be linked to our ability to bring it into being?
- "What is 'the work'?" And how do we learn to ask and answer this again and again?
- Can we maintain passionate engagement in 'the work' while also cultivating a graciousness in recognizing and supporting multiple paths to racial justice, healing, and beloved community?

"I wonder if we seriously know or understand what ['the work'] means much more than having a training, or having a program, or having a requirement, or whatever other word we might use... [Our



mandatory church trainings] are legislating something that is not about legislation. It's about a change of heart and a change of attitude."

"[If we were succeeding at 'the work' black] churches would be thriving in such a way that priests would want to go work there. So we wouldn't have a deacon in charge of running a congregation. We wouldn't have non-black rectors at places where churches want an African American. If [our efforts] were successful, we wouldn't have a vicar choosing between having music on Sunday and having a children's program... If people were serving in part time roles it would be out of choice rather than necessity. We wouldn't have people working full-time and receiving a part-time salary. We wouldn't have people serving ten or twelve years without having a sabbatical. Those are the types of things that people... wish could be different but because they have limited finances... they're not able to have the same kind of things that their white counterparts often have access to."

"Octavia Butler has a book series called Lilith's Brood. There's a collection of stories inspired by her writing [Octavia's Brood] that talks about the role of science fiction. Science fiction is about being able to write and dream about a different kind of world. A world where we don't have the issues we're facing now. It's prophetic. I want to be writing myself out of a job I want to have. I want to do this work and I want the job to not have to exist. Right now that's science fiction. And it almost hurts to say that. That's it's a form of sci-fi and fantasy. "

"...We have been talking about anti-racism for the last ten years and we haven't really made a whole lot of progress... [We are] starting to realize that anti-racism training has not helped us to become less racist."

"If a leader is transformed, they can change things. But... they need to have some kind of experience, to see other people's suffering. You don't get argued into transformation. You don't get argued into a change of heart—an argument just causes another argument. There has to be personal transformation."

"I even wonder if there is work being done beyond just talking about it. I can tell you I'm sure that [you have] participated in many anti-racism workshops. Because they happen everywhere. And we think that because so and so did the workshop, racism has been dealt with already. I had one experience [where]... going to the workshop actually

made things worse. There has to be some openness to say, 'Yeah, I have privilege.' Or, 'Oh yeah, I need to behave differently.' But this person came back saying, 'How dare they tell me I have privilege when I don't have much money, or I don't have...' whatever. They... still don't see themselves as privileged in comparison to others."

"So the work is conversation. It's bringing awareness... I just like to engage people. I think though when we mandate, when we sit down and have anti-racism training... if you think, 'I'm going to have you sit here and teach you and make you look at this stuff,' people are going to sit there with their arms crossed and say, 'You're not going to tell me shit.' We have to find another way. Let's bring people together. Let's bring people together for a party. Let's bring people together and dance. Let's eat food. Let's get to know one another by name. I think that's the work that we have to do. We can't change it globally, we just have to do it among ourselves."

"You have to have a foundation of knowledge and the concepts and the language. What we want to feel now in our diocese is that we can reach a tipping point where we have shared the analysis of



structural, institutional racism with enough people that they can move forward and work with us and make a difference. For example with our new bishop we called him out when the fourth hire in a row was a white male. We've called him out when they've chosen really posh resorts [for Diocesan events]... when there are economically stressed areas that get ignored and could use the support. All that money could have served the community better. So we've asked them to consider where they are placing those events."

"Some of the tension that we're holding within ourselves is this idea that we're not doing enough, we're just sitting and talking... I know that before I [joined the Diocesan Racial Reconciliation Commission] they definitely were more event oriented. I've been trying to bring us to the idea that we should be talking about this in a spiritual formation kind of way. Of course it's a slow process. We have some people on the Commission who have said, we don't just want to sit, we want to do marches, or when an incident happens we want to respond... We just need to act! I think all that's important. But my commentary is always that we need to be careful to not just be running around putting out fires. You can feel really good when you do that, but are you really getting to the root causes? Have you really unearthed anything? Have we actually transformed anyone? True transformation is not necessarily going to come from holding signs and marching. I think that's important. I think it feels good. But you can't just have that. You also need to have the uncomfortable sitting and the silence, and the feeling of the pain, the lamenting. It needs to be both/and. We need to swing the pendulum back and forth. It's not easy to tell this to the people who want to hit the streets. To tell them, you've got to come back because we've left some people behind. There are still some who haven't made it off the couch yet. They haven't even stood up to walk through the door. We have to go back and get some people."

"I show up when they need to show color. The work is more about people of the dominant culture understanding their part in it. If people of color point their finger at them there's push back: the situation is not because of race. It's about class or women's issues or gay rights issues. They don't really want to talk about race."

"The problem is that after you take this training you can say I took it and check the box... [But] what did you learn? How are you using it? Do you realize that racism isn't just name calling and personal? Where have you seen structural racism working?... It does start with training. To learn the concepts, the history [that many of us] did not learn in the right way. And have an understanding why Colin Kaepernick can take a knee peacefully... Then when you see what's happening in the news you can recognize structural racism. That it's operating under a big system... our country never intentionally attacked... If you had a gash in your leg and ignored it, it's not going to get better by itself."

Where Do We Go From Here?

This report has lifted up some of the patterns we see, and the questions that challenge or intrigue us. We believe a next step is to use this report to do what systems thinkers call "adaptive action": which among the identified patterns are most true and useful to those who lead the Episcopal journey to Becoming Beloved Community? We suggest a next step is to make meaning of the patterns that will have the greatest impact if addressed from the vantage point of leadership and support. And then to decide what further steps can be taken, being sure to be attentive to new patterns appearing once action is taken.



Efforts to create a culture shift often focus on creating immediate, noticeable changes: increasing diversity of members on a committee, or using images of diverse people on a website. These changes can be important, but they tend to operate at a surface level. They rarely catalyze a deep, institutional shift because they do not engage the larger norms and practices of the institution. It is our searching and honest reflection on core values and norms, and how they are embodied in formal routines and procedures, that strengthens our quest for enduring change.³

We see structural inequities around race, and also acknowledge that the situation is complex. Variables like class, gender, age, sexual orientation, and ordination status combine with race to impact how individuals experience their leadership and how it develops and is seen or received by others. In a video resource for *Becoming Beloved Community*, Bishop Michael Curry broadens the definition and scope of racism as being “beyond black and white; anything that colors our relationships as children of God”. This is a powerful lens through which to explore the words of these amazing leaders. We are grateful for the privilege of conducting these inspiring interviews.

³ Damon A. Williams, Joseph B. Berger, Shederick A. McClendon. 2005. “Towards a Model of Inclusive Excellence and Change in Postsecondary Institutions”. Association of American Colleges and Universities. 10.