

Covenant for Reckoning with White Supremacy as a House of Bishops and as a Church

Racism is a sin. At its core is white supremacy, the ideological and structural assertion of whiteness and white superiority in virtually all facets of society. As bishops of The Episcopal Church, we strive to follow Jesus on the Way of Love, a way that is diametrically opposed to white supremacy. We join all the baptized – and the voices of many faiths and cultures around the world – in denouncing racism.

And we acknowledge that denunciations can be mere words.

Accordingly, we commit ourselves to the sustained and arduous work of dismantling white supremacy with the power of love, and we begin that work among ourselves as a House of Bishops.

We confess and lament that we – as individuals and as a body – have accommodated and been complicit with racism in the wider culture, in our dioceses, and with one another. Too often, white bishops have engaged and conducted ministry in ways that diminished or disregarded the experiences and voices of bishops of color, and bishops with primary languages other than English. Our individual actions and our corporate practices have assumed white superiority, excluding and marginalizing members of the Body of Christ, and thus failing our promise to respect the image of God present in each of us.

We repent of this failure of love. Following Jesus, trusting the power of the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to amendment of life. To that end we now covenant to ...

- Meditate on the life and teachings of Jesus, who restores us to right relationship with God, one another, and ourselves – *John 15:12-13: This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.*
- Tell the whole truth – as Native, Black, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Mixed Race peoples and as White people – and honestly reckon with our church's historic and current participation in colonialism, white supremacy and racial oppression – *John 8:32: You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.*
- Respond directly to these truths by listening, speaking, acting, and leading in ways that bring healing, reparation, and justice – *Isaiah 58:9-10: If you remove the yoke of oppression, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light shall rise ... and your night will become noonday.*
- Seek and trust the discernment, stories, and wisdom of communities of color and other underrepresented groups in the House of Bishops, in our dioceses, and in the wider society – *Acts 10:34-35: God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to God.*
- Make wider room for leadership practices that reflect the many cultures, races, languages, genders, and other expressions of the diversity with which God has gifted and equipped the church – *1 Corinthians 12:6: There are different ways of working, but the same God works all things in all people.*
- Guard one another's dignity and, whenever we witness anyone being demeaned or oppressed, intervene in love to stop the painful behaviors and bind up the wounds – *Deuteronomy 10:17-19: For the LORD your God executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and loves the strangers. You shall also love the stranger, for you were once strangers in Egypt.*

- Create ongoing, safe channels for dialogue and accountability between those who are the targets of oppression and those who are protected and advantaged by oppressive systems – *Ephesians 4:25: So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another.*
- Ask – at any convening – who is not at the table, whose story and language needs to be heard, and how will they now be sought out and embraced – *Ephesians 2:13: In Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near.*
- Embed significant anti-racism/dismantling racism training and formation into all leadership development, particularly in the College for Bishops – *Ezekiel 36:26: A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.*
- Preach, pray, and lead each other and all God’s people toward becoming Beloved Community – *1 Corinthians 12:13,26: We were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free ... If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.*
- Hold one another accountable for creating and supporting diocesan structures and environments where racial healing and justice can flourish – *James 1:22: But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers* – taking personal responsibility in our ministry as bishops to ensure our dioceses and communities make strides to ...
 - Organize a diocesan group dedicated to racial justice and reconciliation ministry
 - Ensure awareness of and compliance with General Convention resolutions related to race
 - Provide access to anti-racism/dismantling racism trainings
 - Engage in rigorous, public truth-telling about diocesan and congregational participation in such racist systems as colonialism, native genocide, slavery, Asian exclusion and internment, Jim Crow, lynching, redlining, mass incarceration, immigrant exploitation and detention, segregation, and the myriad ways churches and individuals communicate white superiority and diminish people of color
 - incorporate the stories, expressions and leadership of people of color in diocesan and congregational life, including worship
 - eliminate inequities in hiring, pay and benefits across race and gender

Just as denunciations can be mere words, so can covenants. We therefore commit to hold one another accountable to this Covenant in specific ways, in the spirit of Hebrews 10:24-25 (“Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together”) ...

- Approve a new core value in the norms of the House of Bishops incorporating this Covenant’s commitment to dismantling white supremacy
- By the end of September, create a timetable for certain actions related to this Covenant (such as anti-racism training through the College for Bishops)
- Organize a series of Truth and Reckoning convenings in the House of Bishops, as soon as practical, where we will intentionally create respectful, non-harmful spaces to tell the whole truth with each other – as Native, Black, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Mixed Race peoples and as White people.
- Commit to at least quarterly meetings with our table groups, the ideal small gathering for increased accountability and vulnerability. In these gatherings, we will share about how we are engaging the Covenant, provide one another with resources and support for making change, and urge one another to lead, listen, and learn in new ways.