

Report for the House of Bishops from its Theology Committee:

White Supremacy, the Beloved Community, and Learning to Listen

The charge of this committee was to support the Presiding Bishop's call to advance the cause of the beloved community. When we began our work, we quickly realized that in our context, the biggest barrier to becoming beloved community is the sin of white supremacy. White supremacy is not the only grave sin that the church must address, but as our deliberations clearly indicated, at this moment in our history, it is the most salient and pressing issue we face, and a deeply entrenched and pervasive obstacle in our common life. Thus, confronting it is the first step to building beloved community.

We recognize that the term "white supremacy" is loaded with political baggage and evokes a lot of emotional reactions. The committee struggled with this term, had a lengthy discussion about it, and even searched for a less emotive term. However, in the words of Bishop Wayne Smith (diocesan, Missouri, resigned), the term, "hard though it be, white supremacy accurately names the racial structures in our culture and also tells us, in just those two words, who benefits from these structures."

By calling this problem "white supremacy," we do not mean simply the sin of anti-blackness and the many manifestations of colorism that are evident on our streets, in our schools, at our places of work, and even in our places of worship. Instead, we wish to address the fact that ours is a culture that, both structurally and ideologically, privileges whiteness in virtually all facets of society. Privileging whiteness is a sin (*Acts 10.34*) talking about this as sin, we mean to underscore both its intimate, individual nature *and* its larger, structural power. Our collective corruption is deep. In order to purge it, we will need both sustained human effort and divine assistance.

The facts of white supremacy are not the special province of the Church. The realities of economic and educational inequality, of vast disparities in incarceration, and of daily prejudice and centuries of discrimination, are all available for those who have ears to hear and eyes to see. Yet these facts are poorly and imperfectly realized by many white people, so much so that when presented with them, many try to deny or explain them away. White ignorance and white indifference constitute their own specific forms of sin.

None of this is news, of course. Those who came to the “New World” engaged in an imperialist project that was death-dealing to Indigenous/Native Peoples, taking lands through violence, biological warfare, and deceit, justifying it with religious language, papal bull, the Doctrine of Discovery and advancing them through removal and treaty violations. Those who were brought to the “New World” in chains as property to be bartered or purchased, and who have felt the whips of oppression, violence, and marginalization, have often tried to speak truth about this sin. Presidents and prophets, writers and martyrs, men and women and little children, have all given testimony since before the founding of this nation. Repeatedly their words and examples have fallen on hard hearts, to little effect.

It is the Church’s responsibility to recognize and reckon with the problem of white supremacy. We intend in this document to investigate white supremacy’s nature, unfold something of its history, and explore several ways to confront it, all from a theological perspective. This work, however, must also include white conversion, confession and remorse. All Episcopalians but especially white Episcopalians must acknowledge the active and substantial role played by the institutional church, including the Anglican Communion, and The Episcopal Church, in constructing, maintaining, defending, and profiting from this monstrous sin and scandal.

This document only begins to grapple with one of the most pervasive and influential aspects of life in the United States. This ideology did not begin in the States, However. Its roots are deep and wide. Although we have reckoned with this in the preparations of the document, the document itself only touches on the deep history of white supremacy, and again only in the United States, the birthplace of the Episcopal Church. We realize that white supremacy both infects all aspects of life and manifests itself in different ways in different times and places. This document begins a study that will have to be expanded to all the places where the Episcopal Church now exists. We invite bishops to build on the work begun here in light of their specific context, its histories and concerns.

Having defined white supremacy as the primary obstacle to beloved community, the Theology Committee presents the following report to serve as a resource for the community as we undertake, and undergo, the process of reckoning with white supremacy. We structure the remainder of the report as follows:

We define *white supremacy* further by providing a context for it, both within The Episcopal Church and within the United States. This includes an investigation of the two foundational narratives underpinning white supremacy in America: *anti-blackness*, and *Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism*. We then turn to *beloved community*, defining the concept, and looking at the role listening plays in shaping it. This is followed by an investigation of the role that *scripture*, *baptism* and *eucharist* play in overcoming sin and moving us toward beloved community.

The report continues with a look at why *narrative* matters, not only to God's people, but also to our efforts to build beloved community, and then moves to an examination of the *prevailing narratives* in The Episcopal Church, as well as in the U.S. *Personal narratives* come next, including a look at how the dominant stories of the past include prejudices against other ethnic groups, from the Original Peoples of this land through to the Asian-American experience. The report concludes with a look at the role *archives* play in capturing and preserving critical stories and voices, as well as a list of *resources* – online, in print, and institutions – that provides useful examples of how best to incorporate, appreciate, and disseminate the stories of marginalized peoples.

It will be noted that distinct voices can be discerned within this document. In the spirit of beloved community which seeks to honor the diversity of tone and pitch in these stories, no attempt has been made to smooth this over.

Understanding White Supremacy

White supremacy is in the DNA of this country. To say this is not to ‘hate America.’ Greatness and leadership among nations rests upon honesty and unflinching realism about the weakness, sin, and brokenness of a nation and its citizens as they pursue their vocation under the Providence of God. Then, white supremacy is grounded in two narratives: anti-blackness and white superiority. Anti-blackness traces back to Europeans’ first encounter with African peoples, when differences in appearance and culture led Europeans to deem Africans inferior and dangerous beings, signaled by their blackness. White superiority traces back to the U.S.’s forebears and founders, for whom U.S.’s social-political and cultural identity was inextricably linked to the myth of Anglo-Saxon superiority. The first arrivals to this continent were preached to by their chaplains, who asserted that they were the chosen people, a new Israelites claiming their promised land. As we have learned in our history and in the history of South Africa, deep Biblical truths about election, vocation, and promise can be distorted and put in service of racialized myths and social oppression. The “city on the hill” that the nation’s founders were building was entangled to be a testament to the exceptionality of Anglo-Saxon character and values. American exceptionalism, then, was equated with Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism, and “whiteness” emerged as the perfect way to mask the fact that “America” was an immigrant nation with migrants, even from Europe, who were not actually Anglo-Saxon. Central to this racist dimension in US history has been the struggle by various immigrant peoples, sometimes overt and sometimes unseen, to ‘become white’ forged an impregnable wall between the American myth of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism and those who might threaten it, and no people were considered more threatening than black people -- hence the virulent anti-blackness endemic to the U.S. Skin color marked out a people as non-white, and this difference was fully racialized by the years before the Civil War. It is a testimony to the power of white supremacy that the ability to ‘pass’ –to appear white –was recognized by some Black Americans, both despised and made use of.

This white/black oppositionality is the foundation of white supremacist culture: a colonial mindset and culture that systemically, structurally, socially, and ideologically promotes the notion of white superiority by privileging whiteness in virtually all facets of society, while attempting to vanquish the non-white other. Whiteness is essentially the passport into the exceptional space that is American identity, as defined by the Anglo-Saxon myth. To be non-white is to be considered “other” than American, especially ironic with regards to Native American peoples. It is only in understanding the complex and insidious nature of white supremacy that we as a church will be able faithfully to challenge it.

White Supremacy and the History of the Church

If the Church is to be the beloved community, we must listen to stories from the past that have been omitted from the official record, stories that tell the truth but have never been heard. Archives contain a trove of what has been left out of our narratives. These archived narratives are vibrant stories of real people in marginalized communities – Native American Episcopalians, African-American Episcopalians and other Episcopalians of the African diaspora, -Asian- American Episcopalians, and Latinx and Latin American Episcopalians – and the efforts they undertook to remain faithful members of the Body of Christ. The whole Church, and especially its white members must listen to these voices and these stories, the songs, the pain, and the hope of these communities, as legitimate components of the church’s narrative, not as footnotes to the “official version” of Episcopal history. When the official church reduces the history of others to anomalies, stereotypes, or lone images from the past, we deny the richness of our heritage, as well as the diversity of the beloved community and the dignity of every human being whose experience differs from that of the majority.

The process of remembering, retelling, and reliving, is necessary to create a new narrative and vision of the beloved community, and the white church cannot have meaningful discussions, tell these stories, or even listen to them, without first acknowledging the pervasive influence of white supremacy. May the whole church have the wisdom to look at our history and see clearly how God has been speaking to us and begin in earnest the difficult work that confronting white supremacy requires.

Historical White Supremacy: America’s Warring Soul

In his classic 1903 text, *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois¹ uses the metaphor of “warring souls” to describe what he considered the existential dilemma of African Americans, who are at once both African and American. This warring-soul metaphor aptly captures the story of our nation, a country with “two thoughts, two un-reconciled strivings, two warring ideas.”¹

¹ Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Amazon Classics, 2017. Kindle.

Are we going to be an Anglo-Saxon walled city or a beacon of God's diverse creation? Are we going to be an enslaving nation or a freedom seeking nation? Are we going to be a Jim and Jane Crow nation or a just and equitable nation? Are we going to be a xenophobic and intolerant nation or a multi-cultural and welcoming nation? Are we going to be a nation where whiteness "stands its ground" by any means necessary or a nation where all may safely live, move, and have their being?

The warring soul of this nation is most obviously manifested today by the very fact that this nation can boldly declare that all are created equal and endowed with the inalienable rights of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," yet elect a vision for the U.S that covers over and mis-directs our attention from the genocide... Such misdirection fosters the very sin white Americans deny. The genocide of indigenous peoples, the criminalization of black people, the sexualization of women, the dehumanization of immigrants, and the nullification of transgender persons.

That we as a nation find ourselves in a warring-soul predicament is not new, however, for the truth of the matter is that a divided soul is intrinsic to our country's identity. Our current contradictory realities point to troubling narratives that are woven into the fabric of our nation. They are the narratives of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism and anti-blackness, both of which provide the foundation for a white supremacist culture.

Anti-Blackness and White Supremacy

Today's reality of black people being assumed guilty, viewed as dangerous and threatening, and accosted for "living while black," has been long in the making. It is the consequence of an anti-black narrative that is woven into this nation's core identity and deeply embedded in the American, if not western, collective consciousness. This narrative has its roots in the earliest European incursions into the African continent.

While ancient Greek and Roman scholars were certainly chauvinistic when it came to the bodily aesthetic of their own people, there is little evidence that "racialized" color prejudice, as we know it today, was integral in their thought or culture. It must be said, however, that the Greek philosophical tradition, particularly as reflected in the work of Aristotle, planted a fertile seed for the anti-blackness narrative that would come to define western thought.

Aristotelian thought laid the foundation for racial hierarchies that defined black people as inferior. In an effort to justify Greek ruling superiority, for instance, Aristotle equated climate with human disposition and nature. He argued that extreme climates produced intellectually, if not also morally, inferior people, whereas moderate climates, such as that of Greece, produced superior people who were well-disposed to rule. Furthermore, Aristotle suggested that complexion resulted from climate. He argued that extreme cold produced an inferior pale people, while extreme heat produced an inferior dark people, such as the Africans whom he described as “burnt faces” -- the original meaning of *Ethiopian*--, implying a people burnt by the sun. The seeds of Aristotle’s racial hierarchy, however, do not fully come to fruition until the earliest Europeans, primarily the English, encounter Africa.

Skin color mattered to the Europeans, just as it had to Aristotle, and they readily described the first Africans they encountered as “black.” This was not a benign signifier. The Oxford English Dictionary had already established blackness as a sign of vileness, danger, and evil, in contrast to whiteness as a sign of innocence, purity, and goodness. As far apart as the African complexion was from the European, the meaning of blackness depended on whiteness; thus, describing Africans as “black” ensured that the Eurocentric gaze would never, and could never, be innocent. This was the beginning of an anti-black narrative that provided the aesthetic justification for enslavement and other violent acts against the bodies of “black” men and women. Skin color was not the only physical feature that astonished the early white intruders and pillagers of Africa. Europeans also noted the fullness of the Africans’ lips, the broadness of their noses, and the texture of their hair. When coupled with the dissimilarity of dress, customs, and religious practices, the European interlopers became convinced that the “blackness” of the Africans was more than skin deep. It must, they believed, penetrate the very character and soul of the African people – if the Africans even possessed souls, which was a matter of some debate. The Europeans were confident that the Africans were so thoroughly uncivilized as to be more beast than human, and in no way divine.

This “beastly” descriptor, which was frequently employed in European travelogues, implied not only that the Africans were wild and uncivilized, but also that they were hyper-sexualized. As historian Winthrop Jordan points out, the terms “bestial” and “beastly” carried sexual connotations. Thus, when an Englishman described the Africans as beastly, “he was frequently as much registering a sense of sexual shock as describing swinish manners...”² Compounding this evaluation was the unfortunate circumstance that the Europeans’ first encounter with the African people coincided with their first encounter with the animals of Africa. Only a small leap, therefore, was required by the European imagination to conceive of a connection between African apes and African people that went far beyond geographical location. Once such a connection was established, it was an even easier leap of logic for the Europeans to assume, as Jordan notes, “a beastly copulation or conjuncture” between the two groups.³ “Blackness,” then, came to signal a people who were both grossly uncivilized and dangerously hyper-sexualized.

This anti-black narrative was deployed in the public forum of Europe through scientific, philosophical, literary, and religious discourse, and became deeply embedded in the western psyche. It is about far more than simply a chauvinistic repulsion to skin color and cultural differences, however. The anti-black narrative negates the very humanity of a people and portrays them as dangerously uncivilized, leading Europeans, and eventually white Americans, to regard black people as a group needing to be controlled and patrolled in order to protect civilized humanity, which, of course, comprises pure and innocent white people.

This brings us to the second troubling narrative intrinsic to U.S national identity, a narrative that relies on anti-blackness to sustain it: the narrative of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism.

² Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes towards the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 33.

³ Jordan, *White over Black*, 31.

Anglo-Saxon Exceptionalism and White Supremacy

When the nation's Pilgrim and Puritan forebearers fled England in search of freedom from religious persecution, they believed themselves to be descendants of an ancient Anglo-Saxon people who possessed high moral values and an "instinctive love for freedom."⁴ Like all people of the earth, the English and Saxons had distinctive traits and character, gifts to the world community. Anglo-Saxon Exceptionalism, as we use it here, does not deny this cultural inheritance; it rather underscores the way racism makes use of historical, anthropological and theological categories to oppose whiteness to Blackness, and local inhabitants to all immigrants.

Beyond loving freedom and possessing moral integrity, there was a divine component to the Anglo-Saxon heritage as well, that traced itself through the ancient woods of Germany to the Bible. The Anglo-Saxons imagined themselves the new Israelites, carrying forth a divine mission to build a religious nation that reflected the morals and virtues of God, which, conveniently, were synonymous with the virtues and morals of their freedom-loving Anglo-Saxon ancestors. These newcomers from across the Atlantic carried with them not only a sense of Anglo-Saxon supremacy, and the narrative of anti-blackness was very much a part of their beliefs.

This Anglo-Saxon/anti-black vision was soon shared by this nation's Founding Fathers, such as Thomas Jefferson. While Jefferson was committed to a nation that promised a justice where all could pursue life, liberty, and happiness, he was also an unabashed believer in the superiority of Anglo-Saxonism, even studying Anglo-Saxon language and grammar and insisting it should be taught in the University. This Father of Democracy also owned slaves while believing that slavery was contrary to America's sense of freedom and democracy and believed that those who were enslaved were irrevocably inferior to white people. In a letter to a friend, he referred to black people as "pests to society," and warned that their "amalgamation with other colours [i.e. white persons] produces a degradation to which no lover of his country, no lover of excellence in the human character can innocently consent."⁵ Building on his anti-black sentiments, Jefferson, in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, argued that the orangutan has a greater preference for black women than for "his own species," and that black males "are more ardent after their female: but love seems to be more an eager desire, than a tender delicate mixture of sentiment and sensation," adding that "never had [he] found a black that had uttered a thought above plain narration."⁶

⁴ Tacitus, *Germania*, (New York, 1996; Internet Medieval Sourcebook, trans. Thomas Gordon), <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/tacitus-germanygord.asp>

⁵ Thomas Jefferson to Edward Coles, 25 August 1814, National Archives, Founders Online, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-07-02-0439>

⁶ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes On the State of Virginia* (New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers, 1964), <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/jefferson/ch14.html>

Clearly, Jefferson embraced the narratives of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism and anti-blackness even though they contradicted his stated vision for America's democracy. In many ways, Jefferson embodied, and consequently embedded, these contradictions into the fabric of the nation's warring soul, allowing his whiteness to mitigate his sense of democracy. Jefferson was certainly not the only architect of America's democracy for whom this was the case, however; the same can be said of Benjamin Franklin and even the so-called "Great Emancipator," Abraham Lincoln. Essentially, the founders and framers of the United States democracy sustained and embraced both the myth of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism *and* the anti-black narrative that undergirded it.

America was envisioned as a testament to the sacredness of Anglo-Saxon character and values, as embodied in Anglo-Saxon people. In order to safeguard this vision and sense of self, a pervasive culture of whiteness was born, in which skin color alone was the identifying marker by which Anglo-Saxon values were indicated. This was necessary because everyone who *looked* Anglo-Saxon was not actually Anglo-Saxon. Thus, "whiteness" became the perfect way to mask the fact that America was an immigrant nation with migrants, even from Europe, who were not actually Anglo-Saxon.

The elevation of whiteness was inevitable since, as earlier noted, whiteness had come to signify purity and moral innocence, and thus was the only complexion befitting the exceptional Anglo-Saxons. Whiteness became the impregnable wall between America's myth of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism and those who might compromise it: all persons on the other side of whiteness, impacting indigenous persons and those migrating from Asia and Latin America. Furthermore, there was nothing that opposed whiteness more than blackness, not only in color, but also in what blackness presumably signified. Within this opposition of whiteness and blackness a white supremacist culture was born.

White supremacist culture is a culture which systemically, structurally, socially, and ideologically promotes the notion of white superiority by privileging whiteness in virtually all facets of society. White privilege is the unspoken and taken-for-granted system of benefits bestowed upon white people by America's myth of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism, which fosters and sustains notions of white superiority and black inferiority. W.E.B. Du Bois refers to these privileges as the "wages" of whiteness.⁷ These wages, he says, are not about income; in fact, they supersede the instances when the white worker might not be compensated more than the black worker. The wages of whiteness are privileges that are far more valuable than economic compensation, for they concretize the distinction between white people and black people. They are "a sort of public and psychological wage" that goes beyond what it means to be a citizen.⁸ Simply put, they are the added bonuses for not only being Anglo-Saxon enough, but for also protecting the Anglo-Saxon space. They are the privileges to claim space and to exclude others from it, and they are the privileges of assumed moral virtue and presumed innocence.

With the emergence of a white supremacist culture, two things are clear. First, to state the obvious, the very notion of white supremacy depends upon the narrative of anti-blackness, since the ideology of white superiority rests on the idea of black inferiority. Second, as labor historian David Roediger observes, from its very inception America has been a nation where "whiteness is important," a sentiment captured by Abraham Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth: "This country was formed for the *white*, not for the black man."⁹ Put bluntly, the social/political and cultural foundation of United States is one that was geared to allow whiteness to stand its ground of superiority. And it has done so by any means necessary. This is what the white supremacist culture that defines our nation in these times is all about.

⁷ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935), 700.

⁸ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 700.

⁹ Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic*, June 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

Defining the Beloved Community

Understanding the problem of white supremacy is the first critical step to beginning the challenging work of building beloved community. The second is to explore beloved community itself. What, exactly, is meant by this term?

The term “beloved community” was coined by American philosopher Josiah Royce (1855-1916), white man whose concept of beloved community was explored deeply by African-American theologian Howard Thurman (1889-1981), from whom Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. most probably derived the term. Through the lens of beloved community, Dr. King saw the African-American struggle for civil rights as bringing to light the deepest implications of this nation’s democracy: unequivocal love of neighbor played out in personal relationships and civic institutions. Thus, beloved community names both an immediate agenda and a long-term vision. It is also twofold in its belovedness: loved by the people whom it attracts and also loved by God.

Looking at Royce’s work may cast additional light on what Dr. King meant by beloved community, as Royce develops his idea in his last major work, *The Problem of Christianity*, written in 1913.

For Royce, the problem inherent in Christianity is the tension between our admiration for heroic followers of Jesus and the spiritual trap of competition: we naturally want to outdo our spiritual betters. This competitive instinct can only be overcome by a sustained effort of the will, aided by grace, to envision, create, and discover a network of non-competitive relationships grounded in a common devotion to Jesus. Beloved community is the product of an act of love whereby individuals subordinate their autonomy to the authority of a shared call. It is important to note that Royce is not imagining any sort of exclusive community. Rather, he calls repeatedly for respect for everyone, without exception. Only such unqualified respect can counter the temptation to compete. But how is the love which wills the beloved community to be sustained? It is sustained by loyalty, which is both the form our love takes in its resistance to selfishness, and the form it takes relative to a selflessness which remains elusive. So beloved community is a goal, not a possession.

Yet for Royce there is a deeper and more troubling reason why beloved community eludes us. If loyalty names our struggle to remain true to the community we envision and love, treason names our willful abandonment of that struggle, however brief or prolonged. When we betray our loyalty to the beloved community, we are wounded, and so is the community that has struggled to remain loyal to the cause. The traitors are wounded because they have betrayed their love and can never undo that fact; even if they repent and are forgiven, the shame and the moral burden remain. And the community, even if it forgives, lives with a sorrow it cannot overcome on its own. Forgiveness preserves community by sharing the traitor's shame, but it cannot erase the moral burden. This is not to diminish the immense spiritual value of forgiveness, or to deny that any community that aspires to become beloved community must be first of all a forgiving community. Nevertheless, the imperative of forgiveness that brings us near to the heart of Royce's work does not bring us all the way. Forgiveness, especially if it goes with truth-telling, can hold a community together by restoring fellowship to sinner and community alike. But both remain imprisoned by what Royce calls "the hell of remorse." For Royce, this is the core dilemma Christianity seeks to solve.

For Royce, the only way out of this impasse is atonement. Although he often treats atonement and reconciliation as synonyms, for him they are actually distinct. Reconciliation is realized within and by a community wounded by treason. Atonement is a gift bestowed on the community by an individual or group which manages through some act of spiritual sacrifice or imagination to transform the treason into an occasion for good. Royce's example of this is the story of Joseph, delivered into slavery by his brothers, but enabled in the end to rise to power in Egypt and so to protect his family from famine. "You meant it for evil," he says to his brothers, "but God meant it for good" (*Genesis* 50:20). Of course, Royce has in mind here the *felix culpa* leading to God's becoming one of us in Christ. But he also hints at the capacity of any suffering servant to transform a narrative of guilt and shame into a narrative of genuine hope and joy.

What does atonement understood in this way mean for Royce's concept of the beloved community? Whether locally or globally, it is a network of individuals committed to love of neighbor, though beset by spiritual failure. Such a network manages to survive dissolution by developing practices of forbearance and forgiveness. But the capacity and the stamina to hold to these practices relies on the conviction that love wins by making even evil serve good – not as an invitation to do evil that good may come, but through faith that God will bring life out of death.

We can see how Royce's notion of beloved community could have been powerful for Dr. King. Royce is clear that the dynamic that produces loyalty in beloved community transcends race, tribe, religion, and class, because it rejects competition categorically. Again, Royce insists that the beloved community is an ideal not yet achieved. This prevents its being uncritically identified with communities which seek after beloved community while still bearing the moral burden and the wound of treason. This in turn opens up the possibility of an invisible body of people who are not only loyal, forgiving, and/or repentant, but who have also experienced atonement and believe in it. But we can also imagine Dr. King being wary of Royce's atonement as too susceptible to misinterpretation as an easy fix. The traitor must first be awakened to remorse by the suffering servant, thus painfully entering the ranks of the beloved, before knowing the cost of atonement to the suffering servant(s) and accepting the cost of that gift, namely forswearing being better than anybody. Royce says this, but King's life work sharpened it.

Howard Thurman (1900-1981) discussed the relation of his thought to Royce in a lecture delivered in the Marsh Chapel at Boston University in 1951. He claimed the importance of the importance of the concept of beloved community, and Royce's related notion of loyalty for racial justice and, ultimately, racial reconciliation. To paraphrase Thurman, beloved community is the fruit of genuine respect and love for every other human being, on the basis of a shared need for and commitment to endlessly expanding boundaries of care. It is loyalty to this idea that is the "nerve center" for the realization of authentic, open-ended human community, and such sacrificial loyalty is the dynamic that gives the word "beloved" its ballast and thrust. But Thurman moves beyond Royce to insist that loyalty must move beyond individual commitment to organized action. Beloved community is not merely an ideal, but a present struggle. Royce was a pacifist, and Thurman was an advocate for non-violence. This was consonant for both thinkers with a willingness to be in genuine dialogue with the stranger or even the enemy. But for Thurman, this embrace of peace over war had to go hand in hand with practical strategies for common action, and a response to white supremacy that embraced non-violence not as docility but active resistance.

God Calls Us to Beloved Community

Now that we understand the primary barrier to beloved community, as well as precisely what our goal of beloved community entails, we can begin to explore the theological grounding of beloved community, and how we may begin to achieve and how, by God's grace, we may begin to participate in it.

In Christ the entire cosmos is being reconciled to God, forming all creation into a beloved community. This great work of atonement is the mission of God, and the Church is called to participate in this mission.

We recognize that God's mission takes place in a world that is broken and far away from the *shalom* that God seeks to establish in Christ. Both as individuals and as a Church, we are mired in brokenness and sin. For example, white supremacy has, in our history, been manifested both as "actual sin," the sins we commit, and as "original sin," the inherited stain that disfigures and corrupts subsequent generations. We acknowledge that the white official leadership confess that The Episcopal Church has fully participated in white supremacy, and this participation has been a barrier to forming beloved community.

The white Church has often landed on the side of division and alienation rather than reconciliation. Nevertheless, we recognize that sin and brokenness are not the last words on our situation. The good news of the Gospel is that in Christ, God is reconciling all things, and we take our place in this holy work.

Listening as an Imperative First Step Toward Beloved Community

Having defined the critical problem of white supremacy, and having begun to reflect on the goal of beloved community, we will consider how the practice of listening moves us away from white supremacy, and towards beloved community.

At this stage in its history, The Episcopal Church cannot simply announce to the world that we are now ready to take up our place as a site of God's beloved community. To become such a site The Episcopal Church must listen. Listening, however, cannot simply be an act of will. We white Episcopalians are so deeply enmeshed in the whiteness of our society that our capacity to listen has been compromised, rendering us selectively deaf to many of the voices we should be hearing.

Thus, whites must first need to hone and reform our listening skills in order to truly hear the stories of others, and to become aware of their journeys. All Christians need to listen to scripture, to the patristic writings, to our liturgical formulae, and to the stories of the silenced, both in the past and in contemporary society. We must do so in order to better learn the shape, life, and practices of God's beloved community.

In learning to listen with the ears of the beloved community, we listen not only for what can be heard, but also for what is left unsaid. Using the lens of gender for example, in the story of the Great Flood, when Noah listens to God and becomes an instrument by which humanity is saved from destruction, the names of half of the humans saved (that is, the names of the women) are not recorded (*Genesis 6*). The Book of Judges is another example of a text containing stories both told and untold, as is the account of the woman who anoints Jesus. In the Gospel of Matthew remains unnamed. We also need to hear clearly that the disciples doubt the women's witness of the resurrection in both Luke's and John's Gospels, insisting that they must see for themselves in order to believe (*Luke 24, John 20*), just as we must hear how in Mark's Gospel, the women tell no one what they have seen at the tomb because they are afraid (*Mark 16*). In this anonymity and incredulity, the women of Scripture mirror and participate in the Incarnate Word, who was a sign to be opposed, and who was nothing to those who passed by.

Listening: The Scriptural Witness

Throughout scripture, we see how communities have struggled with exclusion and inclusion, and we read the painful stories of insiders and outsiders scattered throughout the sacred texts. Listening brings us to a deeper understanding of our own role in the reality of racism and the dynamics of privilege, and allows the white Church fully to own its failure to hear, appreciate, and incorporate the stories of the marginalized.

We believe listening is a key part of our mandate both to embrace the work of building beloved community and to broaden our understanding of community. Scriptural texts repeatedly emphasize the importance of listening and inform our understanding of how beloved community is created and how we participate in it. They also provide numerous warnings as to the consequences of not listening.

The Call of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3):

In this passage, God calls a people into being, promising them blessings, and assigns them the vocation of being the vehicle by which God's blessing will come to all nations. Abraham listens to this call to participate in God's mission. Abraham and his descendants are not always successful in their listening, but they persist in trying to listen and respond to God who first called them.

"Hear, O Israel!" (Deuteronomy 6:4-9):

This passage, which contains the call to single-minded, whole-hearted love of God, begins with the call to listen. The passage continues in 6:6-9 with a set of practices for speaking about, listening to, and remembering God's words.

Isaiah's Warning (Isaiah 6):

We can learn much about God's mission through the prophetic writings. When we fail to listen to one another, God sends the prophets to call the people of God back to listening and attending to God's mission. Ironically, when we most need to listen to the prophets, our sin renders us unable to hear. The prophets point out and struggle against our inability. This is especially clear in the call of Isaiah in Isaiah 6. Isaiah is called to speak to a people who cannot, and will not, hear and respond. Nevertheless, he speaks, calling the people to a renewed and expanded vision of God's beloved community (*Isaiah 60*).

The Spirit and the Disciples (Matthew 17:5):

The outpouring of God's Spirit for our hearing is emphasized in the transfiguration of Jesus, a pivotal moment in his ministry. After the disciples are overshadowed, presumably by the Holy Spirit, the Father's voice announces, "This is my son whom I dearly love; listen to him."

The Promise of the Spirit (John 14:26):

At the end of his ministry, Jesus promises his followers that the Spirit will be sent to help them to listen to and remember his words. One of the many outcomes of listening is that it moves us to a place of action, seeking to expand our participation in the beloved community.

Becoming doers of the Word (James 1-2):

James calls us to be quick to hear and slow to speak, and to receive with meekness the implanted word. The scriptures move us to a place of action. In James 1:22, we learn that when we hear the word, we are called to be doers of the word as well. So often in our history, we have begun our ministries from a place of doing, acting from assumptions about ourselves and others. James reminds us that while our doing is important, unless we begin by listening, our ministries are not ones that seek to serve the beloved community.

James 2 helps the elite keep focused on the importance of listening, particularly to the stories of the marginalized. Our easy default can be to pay attention to those in power, but James calls the whole Church to listen to those who have been moved aside, ignored, and overlooked in our partiality to the powerful.

Wisdom and Foolishness (Matthew 7:24):

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reminds his audience of the importance of being doers of the word as well. Jesus celebrates the occasions when our sharing of the word bears fruit. This occurs when that sharing is grounded in our call to listen to the stories of others, especially those whose stories have been ignored or passed over.

Listening leads to Inclusion (Acts 10-15):

Although Jesus and his first followers were all Jews, one part of one part of the promise to Israel was to be a light to all nations. The early Church participated in the universalism of Israel when it called all people to God. These first communities brought Jews and Gentiles of all different ethnicities into a single body of diverse believers who were united in Christ. This was by no means an easy task, and Acts 10-15 relates some of the challenges of executing it. God calls Cornelius to send for Peter, whose vision of a sheet has challenged his understanding of community. Ultimately, Peter listens to God and eats what is set before him, understanding that he must listen to God even against the traditions of the Elders and the Torah. When Peter's Jewish friends hear that he has eaten with Cornelius, a Gentile, they are scandalized. But Peter tells his angry friends that Cornelius and his family have received the Holy Spirit, just as they have. The friends listen to Peter's testimony and change their minds about what constitutes community.

As more and more Gentiles join this predominantly Jewish group of followers of Jesus, the stresses of bringing these two traditionally hostile and alienated groups together become so challenging that the early church gathers in Jerusalem to resolve matters about how, and under what conditions, to embrace Gentile followers of Jesus. Peter again plays a crucial role, telling the story of how Gentiles have received the Spirit just as they have, advocating for his Gentile brothers and sisters in Christ. James and the others listen to Peter's testimony and give voice to the movement of the Spirit: Gentiles are welcomed into the Church.

Listening Through Liturgy

Liturgy provides a venue in which we can begin to practice listening. While much of liturgy involves us talking to and about God in prayer and praise, there are spaces in which we are invited to listen, particularly the many silences possible within the liturgy. Too often, presiders and communities rush through or omit these silences, missing opportunities to hear the voice of God.

Furthermore, liturgy presumes a context of individual spirituality, in which we are already listening for God through individual prayer and Bible reading. There is a contemplative dimension to Christian spirituality that individual believers cultivate through silent prayer in God's presence, which then becomes the context for our liturgical participation. Reflecting on the writings of John of the Cross, and as well the prologue to John's Gospel, Thomas Keating argues that God's first language is silence and that everything else is a translation. As John of the Cross put it, God spoke one Word (the Logos), and that Word speaks "ever in silence, and in silence it must be heard by the soul... wisdom enters through silence."¹⁰ In our individual and corporate lives, we listen for God in silence as well as in the liturgy.

Listening through liturgy can help us reform our listening as White Christians repent of our participation in white supremacy. What role do the sacraments play in helping us overcome all sin, so that we might move towards the beloved community we wish to be?

¹⁰ John of the Cross, "Spiritual Sentences and Maxims," in *The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross, Doctor of the Church.*, ed. E. Allison Peers (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1934), 3:252-53.

Sacraments and the Beloved Community: Baptism

White supremacy is about identity. Baptism forges a new people, conferring on the baptized person a new identity. All of our old identities and roles are subsumed under our identity as a baptized person, a member of the Body of Christ. In contrast to what the world teaches, baptismal water is thicker than blood, and through it all ties of race, tribe, clan, and nationality are displaced by our new baptismal identity. Baptismal water is thicker than blood, and through it the ties we continue to honor, of tribe or clan or nation, are lifted up into the universal Body of Christ.

Baptism's purpose is multifaceted. In the water of baptism, we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection; we are washed from sin and reborn. We are also adopted as God's children and formed as a royal priesthood out of every family, language, people, and nation, erasing the dividing walls between us (Eph. 2:14). After baptism, there truly is no longer slave or free, Greek or Jew, male and female, but all are one in Christ (*Galatians* 3:28). Therefore, if we take our baptism into Christ seriously, we can no longer regard others from a human point of view, because in baptism we each become a new creation (*2 Corinthians* 5:15-16). Thus, after baptism, we no longer live for ourselves, slaves to sin, to "our competitive instinct", instead we live for Christ who reconciled us, making us members of his body. We see others as members of this same body to whom the message and ministry of reconciliation has been entrusted, all of us united as ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. *2 Corinthians* 5:14-20) White supremacy, along with racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, classism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia, violates the new order established by our common baptism and refutes our claim to follow Jesus.

Baptism washes away sin, and, when lived into, also washes away privilege, which is a primary obstacle to the beloved community. Properly understood, baptism transforms all of our markers of status and other characteristics under our identity as followers of Christ and members of his body. Privilege stubbornly persists when Christians forget our common baptismal identity and fail to recognize that in place of privilege, all of the baptized are drawn into a shared, royal priesthood. This is good news to all: both to those who have been marginalized and to those who have perpetrated that marginalization. Baptism washes us from the sin of human constructs, such as white supremacy, and points us towards a new way of being and living as the beloved community.

Baptism is both punctiliar and linear: it is a one-time event, but it is also something we spend our lives living into. For those old enough to choose baptism, it requires preparation, as it does for the parents and sponsors of baptized infants. Post-baptismal formation is required of us all, both child and adult, as we seek to live out the life-defining promises and new life made in baptism.

Because the baptism of adults and older children involves changing one's commitments and reorienting one's life around a new identity in Jesus Christ, baptismal preparation must be serious, substantive, and lengthy. It is about acquiring new habits, with reflection upon experience, that provide tools for a new way of living. It must also engage with the disruption that this change in identity can entail. Good preparation functions, as the scholar Aidan Kavanagh puts it, as a sort of "conversion therapy."¹¹ Baptismal preparation should emphasize that the new identity assumed in baptism takes precedence over all other commitments and identities, no matter how important or dear those allegiances may have seemed in the past.

Because baptism makes a total claim on the life and identity of the candidate, the liturgy itself should be enacted with boldness and with serious joy. Baptisms with minimalistic use of water do not convey the all-consuming, overwhelming change that baptism means and that the church intends. Minimalist symbols and practices imply minimal change, and perhaps also reflect our own discomfort with the reorientation of life to which baptism calls us. Baptism, in its use of water, should evoke the drowning of the old identity; it should, when chrism is used, evoke the royal anointing of priests and prophets.

Because white supremacy is such a pervasive reality, in different dimensions and ways, for whites and people of color, living the baptized life means taking seriously the promise in the baptismal covenant to repent when we fall into sin. We are called to repent both of our individual transgressions and of any participation in systems of oppression, those "evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God." (BCP, 302). The baptismal covenant calls us to recognize that sin is more than conscious, individual choice alone.

¹¹ Aidan Kavanagh, "Catechesis: Formation in Stages," in Michael W. Merriman, ed., *The Baptismal Mystery and the Catechumenate* (New York, 1990), 39.

Sacraments and the Beloved Community: Eucharist

Our baptism is renewed each time we receive the eucharist, which is itself the repeatable, third component of the baptismal rite of washing, handlaying, and first communion. Therefore, each time we share in the eucharist we are put in mind of our unity in the Body of Christ. We are given eucharistic companions, those with whom we break bread, not of our own choosing. We are reminded of Augustine's invitation to the newly baptized: "Be what you can see, and receive what you are."¹² As we receive the Body of Christ, we are molded into the Body of Christ. But this participation in the sacrament of the Body also carries an admonition, as Augustine also reminds us: "Any who receive the sacrament of unity, and do not hold the bond of peace, do not receive the sacrament for their benefit, but a testimony against themselves."¹³ Eucharistic participation undermines the dividing walls that we establish between ourselves, as we share in the one loaf and one cup. This participation is itself an anticipation of the messianic banquet at the end of the age, at which the guests are drawn from every people and nation. This is God's vision for all of humankind.

Systems of privilege, such as white supremacy, threaten the eucharistic assembly. Those who choose to remain divided by old allegiances when they come to partake of the Body and Blood eat and drink their own condemnation (1 Cor. 11:29). Conversely, the occasion of persons of all races sharing the common cup has been a historical witness to unity.¹⁴ This unity does not erase our heterogeneity, but rather draws diverse individuals together as members of the Body of Christ and servants of the beloved community.

¹² Augustine, Sermon 272 "On the Day of Pentecost to the Infantes, on the Sacrament", John E. Rotelle, O.S.A., ed., *The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Sermons*, Part 3, Vol. 7, trans. Edmund Hill, O.P., (Hyde Park: New City Press, 1993), 301.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ "A Sermon Preached by the Most Reverend Michael B. Curry, [at] The Installation of the 27th Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church and Primate," Nov. 1, 2015. <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/posts/michaelcurry/sermon-installation-27th-presiding-bishop>, accessed 5/16/2018.

The White Church has historically struggled to realize this baptismal vision, and the odious disparity between the rhetoric of unity in Christ and the institutional history of racial discrimination is particularly pronounced. For example, to assuage the anxieties of slave owners, the Church of England declared that baptism did not give slaves a claim to freedom. Slave owners in colonial America often were reluctant to receive communion at the same altar as their slaves, and in the nineteenth century South, it was common for black parishioners to receive communion only after it had been received by white parishioners.¹⁵ After the Civil War, white southern Episcopalians continued to obstruct African-Americans from taking their rightful place in the Church, and as late as the 1950s and 1960s, white Episcopalians at parishes throughout the South sought to bar African-Americans from worshipping.¹⁶ Once bishops began to enforce canons that forbade segregation, some whites simply left. Nor are the white members of The Episcopal Church in the North immune from this critique. Throughout the United States northern dioceses, and indeed throughout the nation, there are historically African-American congregations forged in the crucible of segregation.

The Episcopal Church has often failed to live into the unity that our baptism demands and that our eucharistic fellowship is supposed to enact. But past failures by institutions and individuals do not negate the obligations of baptism. The white Church must repent of its failings, acknowledge our complicity in past oppression, and resolve to do better.

Together, we can recommit ourselves to the witness of unity in baptism, lived out each week as we gather as the Body of Christ to receive the Body of Christ. As we pattern our lives on the sacramental witness of baptism and eucharist, we point towards our shared identity as sisters and brothers in Christ, adopted children of God.

Having reflected on the sin of white supremacy, the goal of beloved community, the scriptural and liturgical mandate to listen to God and to one another, and the role of the sacraments in bringing about reconciliation and healing, we turn to the role stories play in bringing about beloved community.

¹⁵ See Nicholas M. Beasley, *Christian Ritual and the Creation of British Slave Societies, 1650-1780* (Athens, GA, 2009), 80, 99, 106-7

¹⁶ Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., *Episcopalians and Race: Civil War to Civil Rights* (Lexington, Ky, 2000), 12-15, 105-6, 153-54; Stephen R. Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour: The Memphis Kneel-Ins and the Campaign for Southern Church Desegregation* (Oxford, 2012), 11-17, 25, 31, 44-6.

Why Narrative Matters to God's People

For narrative theologians, stories are the framework for meaning. They are the principle way we interpret our worlds. By itself, the present has little meaning if it is not grounded in a larger story that has a past and a future. Indeed, this is part of what ails us as a society. With little sense of past or present, it's hard to make sense of now. Stories and storytelling hold a central place in the cultures of all peoples, each with a rich tradition and understanding of its life-giving sacred power.

Narrative is our connection with others in both time and space. We meet someone and start learning about them – where they are from, what they do, who their relations are. Then we weave together a narrative about them and connect it with ours. After an encounter, the story expands as we call our spouse or friend and say, “I just met the most interesting person. She’s on her way to San Francisco and likes opera and grew up in New Jersey.” Then the person on the other line says, “Really? I was once driving through New Jersey listening to an opera,” and we’re off. One story leads to another story as a communal story gets told. Conversation leads to communion and, if it’s deep enough, it also leads to conversion.

Humans are wired for story, and without story we’d live in a meaningless universe. We could not locate ourselves in space or time or community. In order to locate ourselves and to build community, we have to build a narrative that gives some meaning to our current state. Story is the glue of community, the means of being human, and the mode of understanding the world. To quote Maya Angelou, African-American author and poet, “There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”

Stories can also provide an entrance into the holy, helping us manage and understand some of our faith’s deepest and most profound mysteries, which require an indirect approach. For example, when people asked Jesus about the deepest mysteries, he could not answer them directly. Instead, he said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field.” Stories are what we remember. If you ask someone at the end of a sermon what they remember, it will be a story.

What we have is our story and what we seek to do is to connect it to the never-ending story of the Lord dying and rising, which in turns connects us to the Body of Christ. Our story is death and resurrection; our story is that history has a trajectory; our story is that God is working the divine purpose out, here and now, and invites us to participate in that divine work. To our amazement, something happens to the teller as the story is told. Martin Buber, the great Jewish thinker, wrote, “The story is itself an event and has the qualities of a sacred action.... It is more than a reflection. The sacred essence to which it bears witness continues to live in it. The wonder that is narrative becomes powerful once more.” He told this story to illustrate his point:

A rabbi, whose grandfather had been a pupil of Baal Shem Tov, was once asked to tell a story. ‘A story ought to be told,’ he said, ‘so that it itself is a help,’ and his story was this: “My grandfather was paralyzed. Once he was asked to tell a story about this teacher and how he told how the holy Baal Shem Tov used to jump and dance when he was praying. My grandfather stood up while he was telling the story and the story carried him away so much that he had to jump and dance to show how the master had done it. From that moment, he was healed. This is how stories ought to be told.¹⁷

We don’t just tell a story; we enter a story. We enter its world and become part of it. In a much more exalted and realistic way, this is what we do as Christians. We come together to reenact the story. “On the night before he died, he took bread and when he had blessed it...” When we hear that, we are in a room in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago, and we are here, and we are at the great banquet with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven.

Therefore, if we as a Church are to go deeper in our faith, we need to recover story as the center of our faith. But we need to ensure that the story we proclaim is wide enough and deep enough to be true. Christianity is a love affair with the living God – and the entrance is the stories of that love affair as it has played out over these many centuries. This means we need to know the story. Then we need to share our stories to discover the breath, depth, and width of salvation. The heart of evangelism is sharing stories. People want to know what difference Jesus has made in our lives, and our calling is to make the connection between our story, their story, and the gospel story. Therefore, the story we tell must be reviewed and revisited, and because we are always in process, it is right that our story is always being revised. The Church’s story in 1970 is not its story in 2019. How can we have a story without Gene Robinson or Katharine Jefferts Schori or Michael Curry? Then we must widen our own story by connecting it with others and their story. It’s not only the means to get to a true story, it is a means of growth.

17 Johann Baptist Metz, “*A Short Apology of Narrative.*” In *Readings in Narrative Theology*, edited by Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, 253. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 1997.

It is difficult to embrace the story of others in their fullness, but it is a sin not to do so, and a sin to ignore our own tendency to create self-serving narratives. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie a Nigerian writer describes this beautifully, “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story. “

https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/transcript?language=en In addition, we must avoid reaching to grasp some transcendental truth in our narratives that is devoid of the warp and woof of our daily lives. If we do, then we will live in abstractions or we will shrink the Christian mystery to a small story that merely advantages us.

Furthermore, our calling is not merely to proclaim the story, but to live it by reorienting our vision. As St. Augustine said as he held up the host: “Behold who you are; become what you see.” That becoming happens through enlarging our narrative so that it is connected to the sacred narrative and thereby to the narratives of others. It’s the only way to have a coherent universe. It is time for us to acknowledge how self-serving many of our corporate stories are and open them up instead by listening to other voices. This is our calling as the Church.

Why Narrative Matters to the Building of Beloved Community

The building of community is a spiritual practice of relationship through sustained effort of the will, aided by grace, to envision and create a network of non-competitive relationships grounded in a common devotion to Jesus.

One way to begin this spiritual practice is through the listening and sharing of stories, allowing truth-telling to dismantle the narrative of white supremacy that is a barrier to our building beloved community. Narrative is one of the primary ways of connecting with others. What we have is our story, and what we seek to do is to connect it to the never-ending story of the Lord’s dying and rising. Doing so connects us to the Body of Christ and informs our interpretation of our shared story. The narratives of the grief and hope of God’s people in the Episcopal Church come not only from within the institutional church, but also from within the daily lives of the people who share them. These stories vividly illustrate the intersectionality of racism, sexism, homophobia, and xenophobia, among other prejudices, all of which have been sustained by an institutional deference to whiteness.

We cannot deny that too often our white institutions have acquiesced to the larger cultural narrative of white supremacy. Thus, becoming beloved community will require a committed, intentional coalition of faithful leaders who fully understand the historical elements that have led to white supremacy in America.

The Episcopal Church's Narrative about its Life and Witness

Understanding the important role narrative plays in bringing about positive change is critical, but of equal importance is coming to recognize the narratives that already exist within our culture, and the negative impact those narratives have on our lives as a Church and as a people.

Narratives are constructed. A labyrinth of meaning organizes the complex realities within which human beings find themselves. Narratives also inspire a way of living in a world of other human beings and creaturely life forms. An ongoing infusion of reason makes the meaning-system seem true, enduring, and beneficial for all life. Christian narratives, specifically, confer meaning, provide instruction on how to live, and create a worldview and way of life centered on the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In our present context, there are competing narratives in circulation. Each of these narratives vies to capture the imagination and allegiance of individuals and communities. The teaching of TEC Bishops must make manifest the Gospel of the word and sacrament among these various narratives, of which there are three major contenders:

The Narratives of the Nation State

Nationalism has been the scourge of the 20th century, and many elements of racialized (pseudo) science and racialized accounts of national purity have arisen from its strong undertow. The narratives of the nation state are propped up by violent systems and toxic religious and secular subtexts. Not confined to the United States, these narratives rely on the bonds of citizenship and include a vision of an Empire. Domination replaces self-emptying, and rituals of violence – rather than reconciliation – are routinized. Coercive power over its people complements a nation's aggressive stance against other nation states. The nation exists as a dominant idol that demands that all other divinities serve its expansion.

The Narratives of the National Church

The narratives of the national churches sprout and grow within the ethos of the nation state. These narratives assure a special people of a great country's blessings promised by God. These narratives have often been embedded in the culture of privilege. The gods of the nation-state dance elegantly with the idols of Mammon, upheld by the bonds of national religion. The Word is sacrificed for soothsaying and the sacraments are beholden to the piety of the age. To invoke Martin Luther King, Jr., the national churches are "content with being *the thermometer* that records the ideas of popular opinion" rather than serving as "*the thermostat* that transforms the mores of society."

The Narratives of the Blessed Kingdom-People

These narratives are whispered, chanted, drummed, lamented, and told by the folk that live between the categories of "the poor in spirit" (*Matthew 5: 3*) and "the reviled and persecuted." (*Matthew 5:11*) They are usually murmured by victims of the nation state and the national church. Bonds of affliction knit these stories together. Those who tell these tales of pain and joy, despair and hope, fracture and faith, bear the marks of systemic violence and systematic violation. They are the poor, the outcast, and the losers in the eyes of the worldly. Yet they are the blessed in the community of Jesus. In the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "The fellowship of the beatitudes is the fellowship of the Crucified."

Many communities of such blessed kingdom-people are connected with The Episcopal Church, some as clients, others as members. So, the question is: How do we as Episcopalians speak the word and perform the sacraments by incorporating the narratives arising out of our fellowship of the crucified?

Personal Narrative: Grief and Hope

Becoming beloved community requires relationships built and nurtured through the sharing of narratives of grief and hope. Many of the lived experiences of God's people reflect the pervasive obstacle of white supremacy in their lives. These personal stories provide the contextual crucible of historic institutions whose worldviews are permeated by the larger dominant cultural narrative of white supremacy. What follows is a story, told by a member of The Episcopal Church:

Recently, I interviewed an Episcopal woman of color – a published scholar, full-time faculty member, and naturalized immigrant of ten years – going through a nightmare at a private college. Her classes centered on socially sensitive subjects: women’s writings, racism, sexism, and international anthropological narratives written from vantage points that do not share capitalistic worldviews. In one of her undergraduate courses, a white student was quiet, except to react belligerently to reading materials about cultures outside the U.S. Wearing a baseball cap in the front row, he stared at her whenever a discussion critiquing American establishments occurred. The professor was constantly preoccupied and afraid of what might occur in this class. This intimidating young man was ex-military, going through a divorce, and his family had left The Episcopal Church over the ordination of Bishop Gene Robinson.

While all this was happening at the micro level, the broader campus was the site of aggression against people of color. A statue of a Civil Rights icon was destroyed, posters in the college dorms asked immigrant students to leave the country, and white supremacist propaganda material appeared in the local neighborhoods when border issues were prominently featured in the news.

Against this background, the fearful professor went to her department chair for advice. The department chair and the professor reached out to college security, enlisting an officer to walk the near-empty corridors during this 8 am class. This move proved disastrous, however, because the college security force, composed-of retired white police officers, shared the complaints against the student with him. Now the student was actively angry at the professor! She felt her life was in danger and the institution was not being helpful. Security further intimidated her when she confronted them about betraying her to the student, suggesting that because “no other professor” had complained about this young man, her fears were baseless. In addition, the student was allowed to register for a class with her the following semester, because it was required for his graduation.

Although on pins and needles until his graduation, the professor showed enormous courage, integrity, and grace through this entire saga, but this story clearly illustrates what can happen when an institution acquiesces to the larger cultural narrative of white triumphalism. This national trend shares many characteristics with other oppressive social systems, such as the Brahmanism that has informed and sustained the caste system in South Asia for several centuries. In this story, The Episcopal Church provided the professor with a spiritual home base throughout the chaos. But being bridge-builders is too heavy a cross to bear for leaders of color alone. The work of becoming beloved community needs a coalition – a more extensive, deep, and intentional community of fearless leaders.

Personal Narrative: Pentecost

In scripture, we find an antidote to the cultural trends of dehumanization. Pentecost blends the rigors of diversity with the discipline of unity, “the disciples were all together in one place” (Acts 2). It is the feast of the great democratization of Christianity; the Spirit gets to the root of the wildness, not just the wideness, of God’s mercy and curious love for all people and all creation! It is a contextualized call to open wide the gate of God’s love to all and insists that *all means all!* It moves the church to become more curious, compassionate, and hospitable.

Pentecost made the Church more curious of the other by recognizing the Spirit in Gentiles, thus including other worlds that would enrich everyone (*Acts 10:45*). Including other worlds assumes a willingness to change our world views. When a deaf person who uses American Sign Language joins a circle, it changes how we live and move and have our being. Within different languages are worldviews to be mined, challenged, savored, and allowed to act as agents of change. In Tamil, the translation for “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil” (*Enggalai Sothanaikul Piravesikkap Pannamal Theemaiyinnindru Ratchithukollum*) is, loosely, *Save us from evil by protecting us from entering the realm of temptation*. That is different from a theology that assumes God leads us into temptation and is responsible for our deliverance from evil.

The curious Spirit of Pentecost led to Church growth (*Acts 6:1*). More people, and more diversity, led to more clarity about the needs of the world because more worlds were in closer proximity. The ordination of deacons nurtured the practice of loving service, making the Church more compassionate, and prioritizing the needs of the neighbor. Finally, Pentecost opened the Church to be more hospitable. The first threshold that the Church crossed was one of hospitality, in the negation of dietary restrictions. In the Messianic age, when the Spirit is poured out on all flesh, even the Holy Commandments of Torah are taken up and at times, set aside. Peter's vision of the eschatological purity of all creatures became the new Messianic law for the community. In one fell swoop...unconditional love.' Then perhaps we could introduce the next distinction: 'Like every good gift of the Good God, purity laws can become defiled and entangled by sin. The roots of racism, casteism, ableism and gender and sexuality discrimination are forged out of this corruption of the ancient distinction between the sacred and the profane. Would it perhaps help to frame and reflect on our narratives of grief and hope around themes of curiosity, compassion, and hospitality -- three key portals of the inclusive beloved community?

Unheard Voices: Telling and Listening to Stories from the Past

Having heard stories from the present-day Church, it is useful now to look at how historical narratives, stories from our past as a Church and as a nation, can help move us toward the beloved community we seek to build.

The Broadway musical *Hamilton*, with its multicultural cast and hip-hop lyrics, raises the question of who owns history, who gets to be in charge of the narrative. The brilliant storytelling of the show's creator, Lin-Manuel Miranda, and the stunning experience of listening to those stories told by African-American and Latinx performers, changes our understanding of who we are, where we have come from, and why our nation is the way it is—and perhaps inspires us to do better in the future.

Our archives – both the Church Archives in Austin, Texas and the archives in dioceses and parishes across the country – are full of similarly rich stories that can change our understanding of ourselves as a Church. These archives are a trove of what has been left out of the prevailing narratives. If we are to be reconciled into the beloved community, we must listen to these stories from the past that have been omitted from the official record, stories that tell the truth but have never been heard before.

These are not dry historical narratives or dusty material in file folders. These are vibrant stories of real people: African-American Episcopalians and other Episcopalians of the African diaspora, Native American Episcopalians, Asian-American Episcopalians and Latinx and Latin American Episcopalians. They are stories of what our marginalized communities were doing to be faithful members of the body of Christ. They are much more than stories of oppression.

Furthermore, in addition to hearing these stories, the Church must, whenever possible, hear these stories in the voices of those who lived the experiences related within them. We elites must listen to the voices, the stories, the songs, the pain, and the hope as legitimate facets of the Church's narrative, not as mere footnotes to the majority "official version" of what took place. To reduce the history of others to a single story, stereotype, or lone image from the past, we deny the richness of heritage, the diversity of the beloved community, the dignity of every human being whose experience differs from the majority experience.

In his book *Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow*, Henry Louis Gates Jr. describes opening up family history to African-Americans, who learn of their ancestors' pasts as slaves, military leaders, statesmen, heroes and heroines of history. Indigenous/Native Peoples are also finding creative ways of sharing their sacred stories with new generations, understanding that these stories are the life-blood of their peoples.¹⁸ They wonder why they have never heard these stories, why the history they were taught in school filtered them out. The white church cannot continue to be thieves of others' memories. Only in hearing and telling the stories, and in acknowledging the pain and white church's part in it, can the Church become the people God calls us to be.

¹⁸ (For example the *Niipáitapiiyyssin*, was written specifically for Blackfoot youth to learn their sacred stories, by Caroline YellowHorn, Medicine Trails Publishing, Alberta, Canada, 2002)

How We Can Bring the Past to Light

Finding new archived stories of people whose experience has been left out of mainline narratives of The Episcopal Church liberates us from the burden of the past by helping us to understand the past more fully. This project calls us to an enrichment of historical understanding and will allow us to illuminate the soul of The Episcopal Church through a process that moves us toward the beloved community. We propose two steps:

* **Telling the stories** – fearlessly owning lived experiences by saying what went on behind closed doors; sharing what it felt like to be excluded; talking openly about who was or was not at the table and why some people’s experiences were excluded; and revealing the complexity of the forces that make up the life of the church, including faith, theology, love, politics, ambition, money, and class.

* **Listening to the stories** – being aware of what the Church did not know or would not hear; revising our understanding of what happened; honoring the experiences of others; discovering how God has been present in ways we could not or would not see; growing in our own abilities to reconcile and to be reconciled.

The Indigenous/First Nations/Native American Experience in the Episcopal Church

When the Jamestown Charter was written in 1606, the Crown and the Colonial government which it established, already long considered those living on the lands now known as Virginia, in the present-day United States, as savages and infidels, folks who were in no way equal to those invading their shores. From the beginning of contact the subjugation of First Nation people was a commercial and real estate venture first, and a religious endeavor a late second.

“We greatly commending, and graciously accepting of, their desires for the furtherance of so noble a work, which may, by the providence of Almighty God, hereafter tend to the glory of his divine Majesty, in propagating of Christian religion to such people, as yet live in darkness and miserable ignorance of the true knowledge and worship of God, and may in time bring the infidels and savages, living in those parts, to human civility, and to a settled and quiet government.” Jamestown Charter 1606.

Although a great society and hospitable and life-saving hosts, the Powhatan Confederacy was treated with suspicion and outright violence not three years after saving the lives of the ill-prepared city folks who came to find a colony and a plantation enterprise. “Why should you take by force that from us you can have by love? Why should you destroy us, who have provided you with food?” Wahunsonacock or as the English referred to him, King Powhatan, in 1609, names the disrespect and violence that was their lot for being compassionate and merciful in the face of great need. These same invading people, who included the progenitors of the Episcopal Church, did not show the love of Christ to those they were sent to share that same love. It was from the beginning encounters, that The Powhatan Confederacy people showed greater divine love and creativity, while the colonists reacted with disrespect and violence.

The ongoing narrative for Indigenous People, from state and church was that they were to be either removed and changed or destroyed. Robert Warrior (Osage) writes, “thus the narrative tells us that the Canaanites have status only as the people Yahweh removes from the land in order to bring the chosen people in. They are not to be trusted...they are wicked, and their religion is to be avoided at all costs...The covenant of Yahweh depends on this”. The entire colonial enterprise, particularly here in the Americas, so affirmed the righteousness of the invaders, that it became the bedrock of the American culture to this day.

By the time of the American revolution, many of the tribal peoples of the eastern seaboard had been destroyed by genocide and biological warfare. Early on, the new arrivals learned how quickly our Indigenous people died of diseases that were non-fatal to them. All of the original colonies had outlawed any and all First Nation religious traditions, often imposing a sentence of death for any offender. Religious tolerance, so lauded in modern history books as essential to American culture, had no place when it came to Indigenous people.

Throughout the early missionary period, the westward expansion and the “frontier spirit” days, First Nation people were seen as a problem. White Supremacy became the laws of a new nation, which negated any treaties that had been made with the crown, removed Indigenous people from their homelands, encouraging land grabs and violence throughout. The church and her missionaries in some places tried to help “the pitiful Indian” but were often too closely tied with territorial governors and wealthy politicians in Washington. The Word of God is not chained, and many tribal peoples received the Gospel with joy, despite the frailty of the proclaimers. Many tribes have been faithful for generations.

In 1995, a group of Indigenous Episcopalians drew on the deep well of their own strength and resilience, to make further claims on their own destiny. Dr. Owanah Anderson (Choctaw), long-time Episcopal Native Ministries Staff Officer writes, “ the assembled from 22 tribes affixed their signatures to a Statement of Self-Determination which proclaimed ‘ we respect spiritual traditions, values and customs of our many peoples, and we incorporate them as we celebrate the Gospel of Jesus Christ’.” Twenty-five years later, from the pinnacle moment in Indigenous ministries, we have found that, over and over, the culture of the white church leans always towards white supremacy rather than self-determination and unique expressions of faith. Anderson continued in her preface to 400 years, “from the legacy of ‘ecclesial colonialism’ – during which missionaries denounced all aspect of native spirituality, and then denied converted native communities the freedom to shape their own churches in response to the Gospel – to a declaration of self-determination has indeed been an arduous journey covering four hundred years.” Unfortunately, looking back after twenty-five years from 2020, we find that there has been little progress among elites in respecting that self-determination. The white church has too often turned a deaf ear on the hopes and dreams of Indigenous people, rejecting their many gifts and desiring only a token or two to assuage any guilt.

To First Nation, stories are sacred, and we chose time and place to share our stories. We have often been asked to tell “a” story by the church. Most often a story of comfort and support is what is desired. Yet the church cannot begin to be whole until the stories, the real stories are told and taken in. When the real story becomes the new bed rock of our common culture, then and only then can we live and serve God as holy people.

The Asian-American Experience in The Episcopal Church

Having defined white supremacy, its historical origins, and its sinful existence within The Episcopal Church, we would be remiss if we did not point out that white supremacy has taken many forms: most virulently in the form of anti-blackness, but also as an embedded prejudice against Asian-Americans, First Nation Americans, and many other ethnic groups.

In the history of The Episcopal Church, for instance, the stories of Asian Americans have also been neglected. The history of the Asian mission in The Episcopal Church is marked by the church's apathy and silence in the face of the anti-Asian immigration policies instituted by the United States government from the 1880s to the 1940s.¹⁹ The first Asian-Episcopal congregations were founded in the Diocese of Nevada in 1874. Evangelized by a Chinese lay missionary named Ah Foo, Good Shepherd Chinese Mission in Carson City and House of Prayer in the neighboring town of Virginia City grew to include several hundred Chinese laborers. Unfortunately, House of Prayer in Virginia City burned down in 1875, and when Congress passed the Chinese Exclusionary Act in 1882, which excluded the Chinese immigrant laborers from naturalization and land ownership, Good Shepherd Mission did not survive the backlash that came with this immigration act and was closed.

Despite anti-Asian policies and sentiments, the Asian mission in The Episcopal Church continued to take root and eight new Asian congregations – Chinese, Japanese, and Korean – were founded in Hawaii and in dioceses on the west coast. But as more anti-Asian policies were enacted from 1910 to 1940, culminating in Japanese Internment in 1942, no new Asian missions were developed in The Episcopal Church, except for a couple of missions in Oregon and Nebraska, which were not sustained. An apathetic silence was the White Church's response to the plight of its Asian communities, both in the local dioceses and in The Episcopal Church nationwide. Despite this, the Japanese Episcopalians who had to leave their own churches during the Internment eventually returned and rebuilt their churches, which remain open today, and in the wake of the 1965 Immigration Act, which opened the doors to new immigrants from Asia, the atmosphere of anti-Asian sentiment and violence began to diminish. Many new Asian congregations of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds were established, and today there are more than 140 Asian churches in The Episcopal Church.

The Asian-American experience in The Episcopal Church contains stories of grief and hope, of death and resurrection. These stories and experiences witness the resilient spirit and the redemptive grace of God in Jesus Christ, who did not forsake them in the trenches of racist policies and acts. The white members of the Episcopal Church must recover and listen to the painful stories and the grief of the Asian-American experience – not as a burden of guilt, but as a light illuminating our common walk toward that beloved community to which all God's beloved children are called.

¹⁹ See three part video presentation of Asian Americans by PBS. <https://www.pbs.org/show/asian-americans/>

Resources for Moving Forward

We are people of the book, of the story, of the parable. In our liturgy, we listen to stories and learn, and this is a sacred activity. To listen to the stories long unheard of our fellow Episcopalians is also a sacred activity. In the words of the poet Alma Luz Villanueva, “The sacred is not in heaven or far away. It is all around us, and small human rituals can connect us to its presence. And of course, the greatest challenge (and gift) is to see the sacred in each other.” Listening to stories helps us create a narrative of events, a description of situations, an examination of motives, and an analysis of character to form a coherent picture of the truth and to contribute to our knowledge of how God has been acting in history through the experience of God’s people.

A fellow Episcopalian, the daughter of a Tuskegee Airman, recalls the times, in the 1960s, when she and her parents would drive from their home in Ohio to visit family in Florida. They had to plan their trip carefully so that at mealtimes they would be near restaurants that served African-Americans, and in the evening could find motels where they would be welcome. This woman, a university professor, tells us this about the value of storytelling: “Don’t hoard your story,” she says. “No one can argue with your story. They can dispute other things – interpretations, statistics, theology – but no one can dispute your story. Stories are the best teachers. What we remember is how we learn.”

The Role of Archives in Telling the Story

Recovering the stories of non-elite and non-white culture in the U.S. has been a historical and archival project that has its roots in the Social History movement of the 1970s. The recruitment of people of color into the historical profession, and the humanities professions as a whole, has introduced voices that precede The Episcopal Church’s white members reluctant discovery and acceptance of its role in marginalizing those voices.

Like other establishment institutions, The Episcopal Church has benefited from a narrative that, with few individual exceptions, ignores the achievements of minority cultural groups and relegates their stories to a distant past experienced by long-ago generations of non-white members. For example, a brief survey of *Anglican and Episcopal History* for the last 20 years shows that fewer than 20 major articles on the historical experiences of people of color have been published; of those articles that have been published, the majority center on the Church’s attempt to come to terms with slavery.

Historians within The Episcopal Church have, for the most part, attempted to extend the status-quo narrative by simply incorporating the story of non-white members rather than seeking out representatives from within those communities. This is especially true of local parish and diocesan histories but is also evident in decades of conferences of the church's historiographical bodies. This dominant assimilationist historical approach of the twentieth century has been slow to realize that racism is not a historical remnant of the past to be studied with detached regret, but an ongoing realignment of ideological and spiritual significance.

The historical profession has recently been exposed to the conversations around what is generally labelled the ideology and practice of white supremacy. Michele Caswell of UCLA, in her work on *Identifying and Dismantling White Supremacy in Archives*, has made great strides in uncovering the historical complicity with white supremacy practiced by historians and archivists. Caswell's work has received wide exposure, including on the website of the Beinecke Library at Yale, where it highlights the white supremacy of the Yale collections.

Resources on the Need to Diversify Historical Writing and Archives

The literature on the need to expand the vision of both archives and historical writing dates back to the 1970s, but most of those earlier works are not available online. Here are several resources that might be of use:

- **“Archival Amnesty: In Search of Black American Transitional and Restorative Justice,”** by Tonia Sutherland, *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, (Sacramento, CA: Litwin Books, 2017).
- **Through the Archival Looking Glass: A Reader of Diversity and Inclusion**, eds. Mary Caldera and Kathryn M. Neal, (Chicago: Chicago Society of American Archivists, 2014).
- **Latinos in Libraries, Museums, and Archives: Cultural Competence in Action! An Asset-Based Approach**, by Patricia Montiel-Overall, Annabelle Villaescusa Nūñez, and Verónica Reyes-Escudero, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group, 2015).
- **Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice**, by Randall Jimerson, (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2009).

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Listed below are some additional resources that can be used or adapted in your local context to unearth the stories that have been buried, and to create a new, more inclusive narrative that can be shared, through preaching and teaching.

- *Lewis and Clark the Unheard Voices*
<https://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/lewis-and-clark>
- From the National Museum of African American History and Culture/Smithsonian: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race>
- Layla F. Saad, *Me and White Supremacy Workbook*, pdf from Sourcebook (2018): <https://www.sourcebooks.com/uploads/1/1/5/5/115507011/9781728209807.pdf> **and/or** *Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor* (Naperville: Sourcebook, 2020) <https://www.meandwhitesupremacybook.com/>

An activist program for confronting white privilege and dismantling white supremacy. Building on a workbook downloaded by nearly 90,000 readers, multicultural writer Saad, born in Britain and now living in Doha, Qatar, delivers “a one of a kind personal antiracism tool” that is meant foremost to teach white readers how to recognize their privilege and “take ownership of their participation in the oppressive system of white supremacy.”

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/layla-f-saad/me-and-white-supremacy/>

- **Anti-Defamation League (ADL.org Anti-bias education** <https://www.adl.org/what-we-do/promote-respect/anti-bias> **and**
- **Teaching Tolerance** <https://www.tolerance.org/>

The anti-bias educational materials on these websites can be easily adapted for use in formation sessions in our churches. Although the material is listed as K-12, most of this material, especially the historical material, has not been covered in the classrooms today’s adults attended as children, and can be used with little adaptation with young adults and adults. “The Lewis and Clark: The Unheard Voices” resource for example provides important perspectives from Indigenous communities on this piece of U.S. history.

Speaking Up Against Racism Around the New Coronavirus

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/speaking-up-against-racism-around-the-new-coronavirus>

Anti-Bias Tools & Strategies

<https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/anti-bias-tools-strategies>

For Leadership and Listeners:

The work of becoming beloved community requires a committed, intentional coalition of faithful leaders. For models of this kind of engagement, see:

- Sacred Ground (<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/sacred-ground>)
- Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing (<https://www.centerforracialhealing.org>)
- Becoming Beloved Community Vision and Resources (<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/beloved-community>)

Additional resources on leading and listening:

- The StorySharing Project (<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/storysharing>)
- <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/storytelling>
- <https://www.intergroupresources.com/race-and-racism>
- The Storytelling Project Curriculum: Learning About Race and Racism through Storytelling and the Arts created by Lee Anne Bell, Rosemarie A. Roberts, Kayhan Irani, and Brett Murphy. (https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/stp_curriculum.pdf)

Resources and References within the Church

The Archives of The Episcopal Church hold an extensive but dispersed representation of published and unpublished resources documenting members and groups that have been significantly under-represented in the Church's historiography and in its public acts of remembrance.

Following multiple resolutions passed at General Convention to address the need for historical research and archival collecting on racism and slavery, the National Archives of The Episcopal Church built a web microsite on anti-racism to serve as a resource for the whole church. The site traces General Convention's approaches to the problem of racism over the years and brings together archival documents pertaining to diocesan efforts to seek repentance and remembrance by white members or white elites about their involvement in racism and the benefits unjustly accrued from slavery (as directed by General Convention resolution 2009-A143).

The Archives also document the Church's most recent lackluster response to the Convention's call for reconciliation and we need to find a way to call on the proper audience for this repentance; it is not the Church in general. Of particular relevance is a document on the anti-racism website prepared by the National Archives to help Episcopalians research the impact of slavery in their congregations and communities: *Consulting the Past Through the Archival Record: A Guide for Researching the Impact of Slavery on Church Life*.

- As an example of how this archival material may be made accessible to the wider church, see:

The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice,

<https://www.episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/>.

In recent years, archivists have begun work on an exhibit on First Nation Americans in The Episcopal Church. This initiative was instrumental in helping the First Nation American Ministries group produce a widely shared online video, *Exposing the Doctrine of Discovery*, which opened the discussion of the church's legacy of cultural imperialism, rooted in white supremacy, in 2011. A brief overview and history of the Episcopal Native American experience also serves as an introduction to our First Nation American holdings guide.

- See *First Nation American Episcopal Experience*, <https://www.episcopalarchives.org/holdings/native-american-episcopal-experience>.

Resources and References outside the Church

There are many examples in the secular historical world of archives that document specific diverse communities or have expanded their work to include such activity for the secular community. The academy is most active in documenting race and ethnicity in America, and much of what it does influences other archivists. Frequently, the stories of religious groups are swept into these documentary projects, but they are seen as tangential to the academy, laced with condescension that emphasizes oppression and fails to call forth the theological and spiritual motivations.

A few highlights of important collections and projects include:

- **Emory University:** Department of African American Studies and African American History Collections.
- **Princeton University:** Payne Theological Seminary and A.M.E. Church Archive
- **The Amistad Research Center** (with other partners): “Diversifying the Digital Historical Record: Integrating Community Archives in National Strategies for Access to Digital Cultural Heritage.” The project’s explicit purpose was to work with community archives to “help ensure that traditionally absent voices will be represented as a National Digital Platform continues to be developed.”
- **The Schomburg Center** for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library and its online exhibits.
- **The Japanese American National Museum** in Los Angeles, which interprets the past in a traditional museum setting, but also seeks to connect visitors to the vibrant and continuing Japanese American culture of Los Angeles by sponsoring film festivals, art workshops, walking tours and other interactive events in addition to its museum programming.
- **The Library and Archives of the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center**, which has the specific mission to “build Pueblo identity and self-knowledge while securing a place for Pueblo people in the national historical narrative.” It is only one example of the local First Nation American collections across the U.S. and Canada, which are often administered by tribal governments.

- **The Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian Archive Center**, whose holdings tend more towards colonial and exterior views of First Nation Americans, but whose mission statement now emphasizes working “through partnership with Native people and others” central to members of our committee whose trustees consist almost entirely of Native Americans representing a wide range of peoples.

Literature on Issues of Race and White Supremacy

Much has been written about race and white supremacy in America. Here are several of those works, with reviews to guide the reader:

- James H. Cone, **The Cross and the Lynching Tree** (New York: Orbis Books, 2015). *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* is the most significant theological perspective on lynching – which includes not just hanging, but also “burning, beating, dragging, and shooting – as well as torture, mutilation, and especially castration.” Based on impressive research, Cone argues that the lynching tree is a viable reality/symbol for reflection on the cross of Christ. According to Cone, understandings of the cross and lynching tree can mutually inform one another and explain how events of trauma and injustice can still inspire hope for the African American community [Bruce Fields, “When He Died Upon The Tree,” a review of *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, *Christianity Today*, August 16, 2017.]

- Robin DiAngelo, **White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism** (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018).

According to the sociologist, Robin DiAngelo, “white people live in an isolated environment of white privilege which builds their expectations for racial comfort while lowering their ability to tolerate racial stress.” The result is white fragility: when racism comes up for discussion even the most well-meaning whites often react defensively, in displays, for example, of anger, fear, and guilt that hinder cross-racial understanding and work to shore up racial inequality. “The book underlines how wildly difficult it is for mere conversation to break through layers of defensiveness among whites. The sedimented debris of past injustices conspires with current patterns of white advantage to make white employers and even white activists very hard to coach toward any mature questioning of racial oppression. Their practiced resort to defensiveness . . . adds to opportunities for race talk to devolve into a need to validate the good intentions of individual whites at the expense of serious consideration of either structures of white supremacy or its impacts on victims.”

(David Roediger, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, Sept. 6, 2018, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/on-the-defensive-navigating-white-advantage-and-white-fragility/>)

- Gary Dorrien, **Breaking White Supremacy: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Black Social Gospel** (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

Breaking White Supremacy provides a historical and theological overview of the social gospel movement as it emerged from within the black church and community. With King as most representative of this movement, Dorrien argues that, though ignored because it was black, no movement has had a greater legacy or impact on civil society and theological ethics. The work of black Episcopalians such as Alexander Crummell and Pauli Murray are placed at the center of this movement, allowing us to appreciate their tremendous, yet often overlooked, contribution to church and society.

- Henry Louis Gates, Jr., **Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow** (New York: Penguin Books, 2019).

Setting the stage for understanding contemporary racial politics, Gates uses narratives and images in equal measure to document the rise of white supremacy over the last two centuries in the US. “An essential history for our time, ‘Stony the Road’ does a kind of cultural work that is only now becoming widespread in the United States but that Germans have been undertaking for decades. The German word for this effort is *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – coming to terms with the past—and it carries connotations of a painful history that citizens would rather not confront but that must be confronted in order not to be repeated.”

(Nell Irvin Painter, *New York Times Book Review*, April 28, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/18/books/review/stony-the-road-henry-louis-gates.html>)

- Willie James Jennings, **The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race** (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

In this work, Jennings delves deep into the late medieval soil in which the modern Christian imagination grew, to reveal how Christianity’s highly refined process of socialization has inadvertently created and maintained segregated societies. A probing study of the cultural fragmentation – social, spatial, and racial – that took root in the Western mind, this book shows how Christianity has consistently forged Christian nations rather than encouraging genuine communion between disparate groups and individuals. Touching on issues of slavery, geography, Native American history, Jewish-Christian relations, literacy, and translation, he brilliantly exposes how the loss of land and the supersessionist ideas behind the Christian missionary movement are both deeply implicated in the invention of race.

[Review by Yale Books of The Christian Imagination, May 17, 2011, <https://yalebooks.yale.edu/book/9780300171365/christian-imagination>].

- Ibram X Kendi, **Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America** (New York: Public Affairs Books, 2016).

Stamped from the Beginning centers on five figures: Cotton Mather, Thomas Jefferson, William Lloyd Garrison, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Angela Davis. Through their lives . . . Kendi details the American construction of white supremacy as a three-pronged tragedy of religion, government, and activism.” *The Strange* (<https://www.ibramxkendi.com/more-praise-for-stamped>)

- Nell Irvin Painter, **The History of White People** (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010).

Painter puts to rest the idea of a post-racial America by situating the American experience within a wide-ranging two-thousand-year history of the social construction of the idea of a white race and the various purposes it served. “Perhaps the definitive story of a most curious adjective. [The book] is a scholarly, non-polemical masterpiece of broad historical synthesis, combining political, scientific, economic, and cultural history . . . Painter leaves no stone unturned in her search for the origin of the idea of whiteness.”

(Paul Devlin, *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 28, 2010, <https://www.sfgate.com/books/article/The-History-of-White-People-3194794.php>)

- Richard Rothstein, **The Color of Law: The Forgotten History of How the Government Segregated America** (New York: Liveright Books, 2017).

The Color of Law exposes the disturbing history of residential segregation in America and its impact on generations of black lives, revealing the insidious nature of systemic and structural racism. Rothstein contends that government “...created a caste system in this country, with African-Americans kept exploited and geographically separate by racially explicit government policies. Although most of these policies are now off the books, they have never been remedied and their effects endure.” (paraphrased from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/20/books/review/richard-rothstein-color-of-law-forgotten-history.html>).

- Forrest G. Wood, **The Arrogance of Faith: Christianity and Race in America** (New York: Knopf, 1990).

Slaveholders like U.S. President Andrew Jackson used the Bible as justification for the master-slave relationship. Christianity, contends Wood in this extensive, hard-hitting critique, played a fundamental role in shaping the white racism undergirding black slavery and made possible the near-extirpation of the American Indian. Beginning with Puritan colonists preaching their superiority over Indians, down to race-motivated sectional divisions in the three mainline Protestant churches (Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist), this challenging historical study . . . confronts a neglected aspect of the Christian experience in America. Wood explains how Christians' attempts to convert "heathens" or "infidels" attacked the foundations of non-Christian cultures. Plantation songs, Quakers, white phobia toward black sexuality, and Social Gospel, a 19th-century liberal Protestant reform movement, also come under scrutiny.

(*Publishers Weekly*, Review of *The Arrogance of Faith*, <https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-394-57993-1>).

Literature on the Asian Experience

- Asiamerica Ministries in the Episcopal Church https://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/asiameria_ministries_brochure.pdf
- Rosalind Chou and Joe Feagin, **The Myth of the Model Minority** (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2010).

Asian Americans have long been viewed by white Americans as the "model minority." Yet few Americans realize the lives of many Asian Americans are constantly stressed by racism. This reality becomes clear from the voices of Asian Americans heard in this first in-depth book on the experiences of racism among Asian Americans from many different nations and social classes.

- Madeline Hsu, **Asian American History: A Very Short Introduction** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Madeline Y. Hsu shows how Asian American success, often attributed to innate cultural values, is more a result of the immigration laws, which have largely pre-selected immigrants of high economic and social potential. Hsu deftly reveals how public policy, which can restrict and also selectively promote certain immigrant populations, is a key reason why some immigrant groups appear to be more naturally successful and why the identity of those groups evolves differently from others.

- Erica Lee, **The Making of Asian America: A History** (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

An epic history of global journeys and new beginnings, this book shows how generations of Asian immigrants and their American-born descendants have made and remade Asian American life in the United States. Over the past fifty years, a new Asian America has emerged out of community activism and the arrival of new immigrants and refugees. No longer a “despised minority,” Asian Americans are now held up as America’s “model minorities” in ways that reveal the complicated role that race still plays in the United States. The book tells stories of Japanese Americans behind the barbed wire of U.S. internment camps during World War II, Hmong refugees tragically unable to adjust to Wisconsin’s alien climate and culture, and Asian American students stigmatized by the stereotype of the “model minority.” This is a powerful and moving work that will resonate for all Americans, who together make up a nation of immigrants from other shores.

- Gary Okihiro, **Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture** (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).

While exploring anew the meanings of Asian American social history, Okihiro argues that the core values and ideals of the nation emanate today not from the so-called mainstream but from the margins, from among Asian and African Americans, Latinos and American Indians, women, and the gay and lesbian community. Those groups in their struggles for equality, have helped to preserve and advance the founders ideals and have made America a more democratic place for all.

- Ronald Tatakai, **Strangers from a Different Shore** (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1989).

The author writes of the Chinese who laid tracks for the transcontinental railroad, of plantation laborers in the canefields of Hawaii, and of “picture brides” marrying strangers in the hope of becoming part of the American dream.

Literature about the Latinx/Latin American Experience

Information about Latinos/Hispanic Ministries in the Episcopal Church

<https://episcopalchurch.org/latino-ministries>

- America Ferrera, **American Like Me: Reflections on Life Between Cultures**(New York: Gallery Books, 2018)

Ferrera took the opportunity to create a platform for her story—in addition to others—in an anthology that shares stories of immigrants, children of immigrants, and indigenous people with the purpose of being a resource to people in similar situations. Ferrera contributes her own story of her Honduran family and includes essays from famous and almost-famous public figures of all ethnicities who share personal stories of growing up in

America. <https://www.latinobookreview.com/american-like-me-reflections-on-life-between-cultures---america-ferrera--latino-book-review.html>

- Valeria Luiselli, **Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions** (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2017)

An inspiring and necessary book by the renown Mexican author Valeria Luiselli. *Tell Me How It Ends* speaks boldly about the painful reality undocumented, and many times unaccompanied, children face in the U.S. immigration system as well as their traumatic journeys. <https://www.latinobookreview.com/valeria-luiselli---tell-me-how-it-ends--latino-book-review.html>

- Ray Suarez, **Latino Americans: The 500 Year Legacy that Shaped a Nation**(New York: Penguin Random House, 2013)

George Santayana once said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Latino Americans by Suárez is an inspiring read, thoroughly documented, that enlightens the reader regarding our Latin American heritage and legacy in the United States. Making use of stories of both victims and heroes, he introduces us to a meaningful and relevant history that relates to us: Hispanics, Latinos, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, Central Americans, etc. It is a 500 year story that helps us understand our roles in this magnificent country that is our own. <https://www.latinobookreview.com/ray-suarez.html>

- Zaragosa Vargas, **Crucible of Struggle: A History of Mexican Americans from Colonial Time to the Present Era** (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Crucible of Struggle: A History of Mexican Americans from Colonial Times to the Present Era, by Zaragosa Vargas, provides the reader a detailed chronological account of the Mexican American historical experience and how it takes its place in American History. Vargas focuses this experience within the geographical location of what is now the United States.

<https://www.latinobookreview.com/zaragosa-vargas.html>

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the House of Bishops Theology Committee,
(The Rt. Rev.) Thomas E Breidenthal, Chair

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APPENDIX: Working with this document in your own context

This document provides a starting point for the work that needs to happen in each local diocese of The Episcopal Church. It frames the conversation and names the complexities. In this document there are several archival resources and texts that can be read to continue thinking about these issues. There are also links to resources prepared by The Episcopal Church that can be used by congregations, church organizations, and leadership bodies, to engage in storytelling as a way of learning about the narratives that have been marginalized and silenced in the dominant narrative that supports white supremacy.

We invite bishops to take advantage of local resources to help complete this study for their own contexts. Local historians and archivists can complete the picture of how this narrative has developed in the local context, and how local Christian institutions have been involved in that history. Reading material on the history of indigenous communities, minority communities and marginalized communities in your own context will also help supplement this document and inform the preaching and teaching activities within your dioceses.

Seasonal studies are especially conducive to communities reflecting more deeply on this important issue, for example hosting watch parties during Lent of the Amazon Prime documentary “White Savior: Racism in the American Church,” and using some of the conversation processes offered by the Episcopal church to discuss the movie. These can be accessed with the URLs listed below.

Beloved Community StorySharing Guidebook:

https://episcopalchurch.org/files/documents/beloved_community_storysharing_guidebook_reader_single_pages_0.pdf

Documentary: White Savior: Racism in the American Church:

<https://www.amazon.com/White-Savior-Racism-American-Church/dp/B07VMYTLBJ>