

BECOMING BELOVED COMMUNITY WHERE YOU ARE

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



www.episcopalchurch.org/reconciliation
www.episcopalchurch.org/beloved-community

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

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

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With 2022 practical recommendations from the Presiding Officers' Working Group on Truth-telling, Reckoning and Healing and its Report to the 80th General Convention
<https://extranet.generalconvention.org/staff/files/download/31499>

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

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

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

The vision of Beloved Community rises from a commitment to following the Bible’s most important commandments: to love God and love our neighbors, in whom we see the face of God. *Beloved Community is the community that loves as God intends: where truth is told and hierarchies of human value are dismantled, where each person and culture is protected and honored as an equally beloved part of the human family of God, and where we counter human selfishness – the true root of sin and racism – with the selfless love of Jesus.*

When we speak of “Becoming Beloved Community”, we are not referring to a curriculum or a one-size-fits-all path. The Becoming Beloved Community vision – presented by the Episcopal Church’s key leaders in May 2017 and continually revisited since – is a practical and theological framework guiding Episcopalians into racial healing, justice and reconciliation. It is a positive and biblically based ideal – a dream toward which we strive, and not just something we are against. It is the end toward which the Jesus Movement points.



Because this is lifelong spiritual formation, and not simply a training or program, we urge you to allow Becoming Beloved Community to shape your whole life. It may be helpful to imagine a labyrinth as you act, reflect and pray. After all, on the road toward reconciliation and healing, we travel around corners, make sharp turns, pass fellow travelers, and double back into quadrants we have visited before, each time discovering a fresh revelation or challenge. Having come to the center, we discover we are never truly finished, so we stand and return to walk the path yet again.

In our experience, the path toward justice, healing and Beloved Community covers four interrelated areas of engagement and commitment. We lay them out here, like quadrants of a labyrinth:

Telling the Truth about our Churches & Race	<p>Baptismal Promise: Persevere in resisting evil, and whenever we fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord.</p> <p>Core Questions: What racial/cultural/ethnic groups are in our church? Whose culture and story shapes our common life, leadership and worship? How has our church excluded or embraced the presence, story and power of different racial/cultural/ethnic groups over time?</p>
Proclaiming the Dream of Beloved Community	<p>Baptismal Promise: Proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.</p> <p>Core Questions: What does Beloved Community look like for you and your neighbors? How could you preach, pray, and engage in public witness around Beloved Community? How could that vision shape your corporate worship and prayer?</p>
Practicing Jesus’s Way of Healing Love	<p>Baptismal Promise: Seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves.</p> <p>Core Questions: How will we grow as reconcilers, healers, and justice-bearers? What activities, practices, learning, and experiences would (trans)form us? How will we share stories, grow relationship, and seek Christ in each other and our neighbors?</p>
Repairing the Breach in Society and Institutions	<p>Baptismal Promise: Strive for justice and peace among all people & respect the dignity of every human being.</p> <p>Core Questions: What institutions and systems most bear the signs of racial injustice? How will we participate in the repair, restoration, and healing of people, institutions, and systems?</p>

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

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

*Celebrant: Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
People: I will, with God's help.*

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

Core Questions: *What racial/cultural/ethnic groups are in our church?
Whose culture and story shapes our common life, leadership, and worship?
How has our church excluded or embraced the presence, story and power of different racial/cultural/ethnic groups?*

Within the Church

Reflect with the Racial Justice Audit of Episcopal Leadership at www.episcopalchurch.org/racial-justice-audit. How does the audit and the experiences and patterns it reveals apply to your context and leadership bodies?

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

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

Church Participation in Racial Injustice and Justice

What is your church's history of participation in behaviors and structures of racial injustice? In racial justice and also healing? Interview elders, research church and diocesan documents, newspaper accounts, etc. Learn more from truth-telling initiatives below. See a fuller list of recommendations on pp. 15-18 of the [Presiding Officers' Working Group on Truth-telling, Reckoning, and Healing's Report to the 80th General Convention](#).

- Anglican Church of Canada www.anglican.ca/tr/
- Diocese of Chicago <https://episcopalchicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Final-Edited-12-06-2016-Report-Legacy-of-Slavery-Taskforce-issued-May-2017-1.pdf>
- Diocese of Iowa Season of Truth and Healing <https://becomingbelovedcommunity.org/raceiniowa>
- Diocese of Long Island Reparations Committee www.dioceseli.org/diocese-organizations/reparations
- Diocese of New York Reparations Committee www.diocesenyny.org/mission-and-outreach/social-concerns/reparations-for-slavery/
- Episcopal Indigenous Ministries – Native Voices www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/indigenous-ministries/
- Memorial Church-Baltimore Reparations and Justice Initiative www.memorialboltonhill.org/the-memorial-reparations-fund
- Roberson Project on Slavery, Race and Reconciliation <https://new.sewanee.edu/roberson-project>
- St. Paul's Episcopal Church-Richmond (VA) History and Reconciliation Initiative www.stpaulsrva.org/HRI

Church, Neighborhood, and Beyond

Compare your church's racial, ethnic, and cultural makeup to the local area's demographics using this General Convention Office resource: www.generalconvention.org/study-your-neighborhood

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

Proclaiming the Dream of Beloved Community (PROCLAMATION)

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

People: I will, with God's help.

“The process of ‘re-remembering, retelling, and reliving’ is necessary to create space and time to collectively discern and proclaim a shared, renewed narrative and vision of Beloved Community” (“Becoming Beloved Community – Vision Document,” p. 13). We gather to publicly reckon and share about the history and reality of race, and to proclaim the dream of Beloved Community through prayer, preaching, conversation and public witness.

Core Questions: *What does Beloved Community look like for you and your neighbors?*

How could you preach, pray, and engage in public witness around Beloved Community?

How could that vision shape your corporate worship and prayer?

What behaviors and commitments would foster and proclaim Beloved Community?

Transformed Preaching, Worship and Witness

See fuller set of recommendations for individuals, congregations, institutions, dioceses, provinces, and church-wide leadership in the [Report of the Working Group on Truth-telling, Reckoning and Healing](#) (pp. 18-20)

- Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music’s Resources for Racial Reconciliation and Justice <https://liturgyandmusic.files.wordpress.com/2018/01/prayers-sclm-racial-reconciliation-and-justice-final1-3.pdf>
- “Proclamation and Prayer” Resources <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/responding-to-racist-violence/pray/>
- Equal Justice Initiative <https://eji.org/projects/community-remembrance-project/>
- Prophetic Voices: Preaching and Teaching Beloved Community Podcast <https://media.episcopalchurch.org/podcasts/show/prophetic-voices-preaching-and-teaching-beloved-community/>
- Concerts for the Human Family: A Beloved Community Project <https://events.episcopalchurch.org/concert-series/>
- Seminary of the Southwest Liturgy of Remembrance and Truth-telling https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Ksygm_9KqujXHPzb4ttCL0yNK_Izpltz/edit
- St. Ambrose-Raleigh – Dismantling White Supremacy in Worship https://stambroserealeigh.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Holy_Disruption-2.pdf
- Washington National Cathedral – Re-envisioning Stained Glass Windows https://mydigimag.rrd.com/publication/?i=734720&ver=html5&p=6&fbclid=IwAR1VjxGlx7fu5ZRijYRhIXwht816pn2P793jq9q_cyTIZWtxVUEfghIcM
- St. Paul's-Richmond (VA) History and Reconciliation Initiative www.stpaulsrva.org/HRI
- *Preaching Black Lives Matter*, ed. Gayle Fisher Stewart www.churchpublishing.org/preachingblacklivesmatter

Community-wide Public Listening and Learning to Discern Beloved Community

1. *Organize a Listening and Learning Session* in partnership with neighbors, faith partners, justice groups, civic groups, foundations, schools, businesses, elders, young people, etc.
2. *Study the racial history of your area.* With the help of elders and historians, examine the history of race and racism in the regional and local context, including the church’s role.
3. *Listen to the lived realities of race and racism in your context.* All participants should be welcomed to share stories about their current and ongoing experiences of race and racism.
4. *Invite individuals, congregations, dioceses, and organizations to share local and regional work addressing race, racism, racial justice, healing, and reconciliation.*
5. *Discern the shape of Beloved Community.* Collaboratively shape a vision for what Beloved Community would look like in your shared context. What would a diverse community of people growing to love their neighbors as they love themselves look and act like where you are? What would the dream of God look like where you are?
6. *Discern a shared commitment to repair and healing.* Discern together what specific behaviors and commitments from individuals and groups in your wider community would be necessary over time to promote healing, repair and becoming God’s Beloved Community.
7. *Integrate worship and prayer* appropriate to the full group of participants. Liturgy, song, prayers, preaching should ground the experience of re-remembering and rewriting our narrative around race.
8. *Incorporate social media* in order to expand and connect the Listening and Learning Session with others who are making the journey. This wider circle could learn from your experience and also grow it.

Practicing Jesus's Way of Healing Love (FORMATION)

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

People: I will, with God's help.

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

Core Questions: *How will we grow as reconcilers, healers, and justice-bearers?*

What activities, practices, learning and experiences would (trans)form us?

How will we share and receive stories, grow relationship across dividing walls and seek Christ in each other?

Dismantling Racism/Anti-racism Trainings and Related Programs

Even if you've completed anti-racism training or diversity training a while ago, remember that formation is ongoing for those who follow Jesus as ambassadors of healing and Beloved Community. The Executive Council Committee on Anti-racism has created a framework for assessing and shaping trainings, available at www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/bbc_framework_for_anti-racism_training.pdf.

The following programs have been especially useful among Episcopalians (not an exhaustive list):

- Chart of anti-racism/dismantling racism programs: www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/bbc_anti-racism_training_programs_summary.pdf
- Seeing the Face of God in Each Other: The Episcopal Church's original anti-racism training www.episcopalchurch.org/library/document/seeing-face-god-each-other-antiracism-training-manual-episcopal-church
- Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing (adapts Seeing Face of God) www.centerforracialhealing.org
- Courageous Conversation <https://courageousconversation.com>
- Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training www.crossroadsantiracism.org
- Kaleidoscope Institute www.kscopeinstitute.org
- Mission Institute <https://themissioninstitute.org>
- People's Institute for Survival and Beyond (especially the Undoing Racism Program) www.pisab.org
- Racial Equity Institute www.racialequityinstitute.com
- VISIONS Inc. www.visions-inc.org

These programs are not official anti-racism trainings, but they are powerful group experiences for awakening, learning, healing, and community-building around race:

- Doctrine of Discovery Training www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/indigenous-ministries/
- Healing from Internalized Oppression Training www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/black-ministries/healing-internalized-oppression/
- Sacred Ground: A Film- and Readings-based Race Dialogue Series www.episcopalchurch.org/sacredground
- Talking Race – Kids and Race www.talkingrace.org/

Learning Circles

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

- Episcopal Reconciliation Pilgrimage to Ghana www.episcopalchurch.org/reconciliation-pilgrimage
- Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*
- Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous People's History of the United States*
- Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Anti-racist*
- Catherine Meeks, *Living into God's Dream: Dismantling Racism in America*
- Stephanie Spellers, *The Church Cracked Open: Disruption, Decline and New Hope for Beloved Community*
- Jim Wallis, *America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege and the Bridge to a New America*

Engage in Beloved Community StorySharing or Conversations Across Difference

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

Racial Healing and Reconciliation Pilgrimages

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

Additional Resources

- Explore the "Formation and Learning" section of "Racial Justice, Healing and Reconciliation Resources" <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/responding-to-racist-violence/learn/>
- See recommendations specific to individuals, congregations, institutions, dioceses, provinces, and church-wide leadership, in the Report of the Presiding Officers' Working Group on Truth-telling, Reckoning, and Healing (pp. 22-24) <https://extranet.generalconvention.org/staff/files/download/31499>

Repairing the Breach in Institutions and Society (JUSTICE)

*Celebrant: Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?
People: I will, with God's help.*

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

Core Questions:

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

Engage the Spectrum of Racial and Social Justice

- 2021 Inventory of Racial Justice and Truth-telling Ministries, featuring summaries of diocesan and congregational work toward racial equity in housing, education, healthcare, immigration policy, criminal justice and more www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/racial-reconciliation/2021-inventory/
- “From the Pew to the Public Square” and Episcopal social justice and local engagement resources www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/social-justice-advocacy-engagement
- Office of Government Relations and Episcopal Public Policy Network – Action Alerts, Campaigns and Resources www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/office-government-relations/action-alerts/ and www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/office-government-relations/advocacy-resources
- Eco-justice and environmental racism www.episcopalchurch.org/creation
- Action for individuals, congregations, institutions, dioceses, provinces, and church-wide leadership, in the Report of the Presiding Officers’ Working Group on Truth-telling, Reckoning, and Healing (pp. 22-24) <https://extranet.generalconvention.org/staff/files/download/31499>

Participate in Criminal Justice Reform and Healing

- Support federal criminal justice policy reform <https://episcopalchurch.org/office-government-relations>
- Explore the “Justice and Action” section of “Racial Justice, Healing and Reconciliation Resources” www.episcopalchurch.org/responding-to-racist-violence/act
- Accompany and advocate with formerly incarcerated or detained people returning to community and their families, through projects like <https://trinitywallstreet.org/social-justice/take-action/just-reentry-campaign>
- Lead a book study at your church – and invite non-churchgoers – to read and discuss books like ...
 - Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*
 - Kelly Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*
 - Victor Rios, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*
 - Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*

Stand with Immigrants and Refugees

- Actively welcome and protect refugees and immigrants alongside Episcopal Migration Ministries <https://episcopalmigrationministries.org>
- Link with local and regional groups standing in solidarity with immigrants and refugees, like Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, San Joaquin Refugee and Immigrant ministry (www.sjraise.org), Welcoming Congregations/Guardian Angels Network and others
- Track federal immigration and refugee-related policy <https://episcopalchurch.org/office-government-relations>