

BECOMING BELOVED COMMUNITY

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH'S LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO
RACIAL HEALING, RECONCILIATION AND JUSTICE



THE
Episcopal
CHURCH



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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)

Q: What is the mission of the Church?

A: The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

Q: How does the Church pursue its mission?

A: The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love.

Q: Through whom does the Church carry out its mission?

A: The Church carries out its mission through the ministry of all its members.

– An Outline of the Faith (Book of Common Prayer, p. 855)

Introduction

“Last summer, the 78th General Convention of our Church did a remarkable thing: the General Convention invited us as a church to take up this Jesus Movement. We made a commitment to live into being the Jesus Movement by committing to evangelism and the work of reconciliation – beginning with racial reconciliation ... across the borders and boundaries that divide the human family of God. This is difficult work. But we can do it. It’s about listening and sharing. It’s about God.”

Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry
Sermon Preached on November 1, 2015
Installation of the 27th Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church

The Apostle Paul reminded the people of first-century Corinth: “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18). If we have ever needed a community of Jesus followers to take up the ministry of reconciliation and healing across the racial borders that mark the human family of God, we need it now.

Widespread hostility to immigrants from Latin America has led to the deportation of millions and ripped families apart. Structural poverty in indigenous communities has led to alarming youth suicides. Throughout Latin America, indigenous and Afro-Latino peoples still suffer after centuries of systematic devaluation. Videos regularly detail the detention and killing of unarmed black men, women, and children by the state. Across the United States and into Europe, people from the Middle East are profiled as terrorists and enemies of “Western” values. And human trafficking enslaves the most vulnerable in Asia, the Americas, and Europe.

Given these realities and given the call of the gospel of Jesus Christ, many Episcopal dioceses, seminaries, and networks have discerned a fresh commitment to racial justice, reconciliation, and healing. Perhaps because of this church-wide stirring, the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church urged the whole church to take a major stride forward by passing [Resolution C019 \(Establish Response to Systemic Injustice\)](#) and allocating \$2 million to fund this ministry. C019 charged the leaders of the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies to “lead, direct, and be present to assure and account for the Church’s work of racial justice and reconciliation.”

In February 2016, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, House of Deputies President Gay Jennings, House of Bishops Vice Presidents Mary Gray-Reeves and Dean Wolfe, and House of Deputies Vice President Byron Rushing and Secretary Michael Barlowe met in Austin, Texas, to follow through on that charge. On March 12, 2016, they shared their initial direction and priorities with the House of Bishops, the House of Deputies, and the wider church, and updates have come before Executive Council throughout the process. After a year of listening, learning, and discerning – in close partnership with the Presiding Bishop’s staff and in conversation with Executive Council, individuals, and networks across and beyond The Episcopal Church – the Church’s Officers approved a comprehensive strategic vision on February 14, 2017, including a program budget detailing the \$2 million allocation. That vision – titled “Becoming Beloved Community: The Episcopal Church’s Long-term Commitment to Racial Healing, Reconciliation, and Justice” – is outlined in the coming pages.

The end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the Beloved Community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opponents into friends. ... It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men.

– The Rev. Dr. Martin L. King, Jr.

Along the way, we have learned from and been gifted by many brothers and sisters deeply committed to this work. Here is a partial and growing list:

- The General Convention Legislative Committees on Social Justice and U.S. Policy and Ms. Diane Pollard
- Executive Council's Standing Committee on Advocacy and Networking for Mission and Dr. Anita George
- The Beloved Community: Commission on Dismantling Racism in the Diocese of Atlanta and Dr. Catherine Meeks and Bishop Robert Wright
- The Committees on Antiracism and Reparations in the Diocese of New York and Ms. Cynthia Copeland and Brother Reginald Martin
- VISIONS, Inc., founder Dr. Valerie Batts, and consultant the Rev. Dr. Bill Kondrath
- The Kaleidoscope Institute and the Rev. Dr. Eric Law
- The Executive Council Committee on Antiracism
- Latin American bishops in the Episcopal Church's Ninth Province
- The network of Episcopal provincial coordinators and officers
- Leaders of the House of Bishops' engagement around racial justice and transformation, including Bishops Mark Beckwith, Ian Douglas, Brian Prior, Prince Singh, and Wendell Gibbs
- Washington National Cathedral and the Rev. Dr. Canon Kelly Brown Douglas and Ms. Michelle Dibblee
- The Anne and Chris Flowers Foundation and the J.C. Flowers Foundation and Ms. Susan Lassen
- The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music's Subcommittee on Racial Justice and Mr. Chris Decatur
- Trinity Episcopal Church-Wall Street and the Rev. Winnie Varghese
- The Organization for Procedural Justice in the Diocese of Southern Ohio and Dr. Merelyn Bates-Mims
- Leaders in the Episcopal Church in Minnesota, including Ms. Amanda Ziebell-Finley, Ms. Rachel Babbit, and Mr. Steve Mullaney
- The Rev. Dr. Michael Battle and the Tutu Center for Reconciliation at General Theological Seminary
- The Rev. Dr. Phil Groves
- The Rev. Hershey Mallette Stephens
- Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Rev. Mpho Tutu

We also give thanks for the tireless staff who have supported and concretized our work: the Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers, Ms. Heidi Kim, the Rev. Charles "Chuck" Wynder, and Ms. Tara Holley, along with the Rev. Canon Mark Stevenson, the Rev. Glenda McQueen, Mr. Kirk Hadaway, and Ms. Bronwyn Skov.

Each of these partners has reinforced what we have learned in our own spiritual journeys: that this work is less about walking a linear path and more about engaging in a reflective, deliberate spiritual practice. Like walking the labyrinth, we engage and reengage the commitments that lead toward reconciliation, healing, and justice: Telling the Truth, Proclaiming the Dream, Practicing the Way of Love, and Repairing the Breach. We never have the sense that we have mastered or completed any one stage, nor are we naïve enough to imagine anyone ever truly "finishes" the work. The commitment is long-term; the formation is lifelong.

[T]his slow, arduous work is good news because we no longer have to think of reconciliation as a term paper that we have to write ourselves and turn in on time. Think of it as an oak tree growing from a small seedling into a large tree, a process that takes many years and happens only when water, sun, and nutrients are provided. ... [U]ltimately, the final work is God's, and it will be enacted if we cooperate in the process.

– The Rev. Dr. Michael Battle
Practicing Reconciliation in a Violent World

Why Beloved Community?

Jesus laid out the fundamentals for any who would follow him when he said, “The first [commandment] of all is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Mark 12:29-31). The Beloved Community is the body within which we promote the fruits of the spirit and grow to recognize our kinship as people who love God and love the image of God that we find in our neighbors, in ourselves, and in creation. It provides a positive, theologically and biblically based ideal toward which we can grow in love, rather than framing our justice and reconciliation efforts as fundamentally “against” (as in antiracism, anti-oppression, etc.).

Charles Skinner describes the vision this way: “Beloved Community is not an organization of individuals; it is a new adventure of consecrated men and women seeking a new world ... who forget themselves in their passion to find the common life where the good of all is the quest of each.” Quoting Karl Barth, Charles Marsh writes of the Beloved Community, “[T]he Christian regards the peaceable reign of God as the hidden meaning of all movements for liberation and reconciliation that ‘brings us together for these days as strangers and yet as friends.’”

In other words, Beloved Community is the practical image of the world we pray for when we say, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” We dream of communities where all people may experience dignity and abundant life, and see themselves and others as beloved children of God. We pray for communities that labor so that the flourishing of every person (and all creation) is seen as the hope of each. Conceived this way, Beloved Community provides a deeply faithful paradigm for transformation, formation, organizing, advocacy, and witness.

The Journey Ahead

Becoming Beloved Community represents not so much a set of programs as a journey, a set of interrelated commitments around which we as Episcopalians may organize our many efforts to respond to racial injustice and grow a community of reconcilers, justice-makers, and healers. As you continue to read about this strategic vision, we encourage you to imagine a labyrinth.¹ On the road toward reconciliation and healing, we move around corners and double back into quadrants we have indeed visited before, each time discovering a fresh revelation or challenge ...

Telling the Truth

Who are we? What things have we done and left undone regarding racial justice and healing?



Proclaiming the Dream

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

Repairing the Breach

What institutions and systems are broken? How will we participate in repair, restoration, and healing of people, institutions, and systems?

Practicing the Way of Love

How will we grow as reconcilers, healers, and justice-bearers? How will we actively grow relationship across dividing walls and seek Christ in the other?

¹ We borrow the labyrinth image gratefully from Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Rev. Mpho Tutu’s work in *The Book of Forgiving*, although we have surrounded this labyrinth with The Episcopal Church’s long-term commitments.

There is no single path for every person or even every Episcopalian. People will draw on different resources and experiences and come to diverse answers to similar questions. At the same time, we hope you find it energizing to take up a common spiritual practice of walking and reflection. As the Kenyan proverb states, we will walk further together than we could apart. Transformation may run deeper and broader if/when we pool our wisdom and resources as the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement.

For this reason, we have also identified concrete, church-wide initiatives that we hope will 1) root our journey in the Baptismal Covenant, 2) make real the general practices and questions that encircle the labyrinth, and 3) complement and advance related work already emerging in dioceses, networks, provinces, and congregations.



Telling the Truth about the Church and Race

- **Baptismal Promise:**
We will persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord.
- **Core Questions:**
Who are we? What have we done and left undone, regarding racial justice and healing?
- **Church-wide Initiatives:**
 - Census of the Church
 - Racial Justice Audit of Episcopal Structures and Systems



Proclaiming the Dream of Beloved Community

- **Baptismal Promise:**
We will proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.
- **Core Questions:**
How can we publicly acknowledge things done and left undone? What does Beloved Community look like? What behaviors and commitments foster healing, reconciliation and justice?
- **Church-wide Initiatives:**
 - Regional, Public Sacred Listening and Learning Engagements



Practicing the Way of Love

- **Baptismal Promise:**
We will seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves.
- **Core Questions:**
How will we grow as reconcilers, healers and justice-bearers? How will we actively grow relationship across dividing walls and seek Christ in the other?
- **Church-wide Initiatives:**
 - Beloved Community Story-sharing Campaign
 - Reconciliation and Justice Pilgrimages
 - Multi-lingual Formation and Training
 - Liturgical Resources for Healing, Reconciliation and Justice



Repairing the Breach in Society and Institutions

- **Baptismal Promise:**
We will strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.
- **Core Questions:**
What institutions and systems are broken? How will we participate in the repair, restoration and healing of people, institutions and systems?
- **Church-wide Initiatives:**
 - Criminal Justice Reform
 - Re-Entry Collaboratives with Formerly Incarcerated People Returning to Community
 - Partnership with Episcopal Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

The commitment outlined here is intentionally focused on church-wide efforts that support and complement local, diocesan, provincial, and network efforts. It seeks to nourish multiple venues for engaging in the work of justice, healing, and reconciliation, understanding the complexity and specific structural and historical challenges facing a multinational and multilingual church like ours.

Some of the concrete initiatives above are already part of the Church's life and will only grow. New initiatives will launch between now and December 2018, in an iterative, flexible process that responds to

realities on the ground and the wisdom of partners who share the work. Timelines notwithstanding, the Officers recognize that structural racism is centuries old, which means our commitment must last for generations, not triennia. We will always be committed to tell the truth, proclaim the dream, practice the way of love, and repair the breach. The only question is how.

In presenting this long-term commitment, we Officers are committed to growing circles of engagement, partnership, and prayer across and beyond the Church, understanding that we are participating in a multistage journey toward transformation, justice, and healing. While General Convention tasked us with providing leadership and casting a vision, it never said that vision would be the only one, nor did it say all the work of racial reconciliation, justice, and healing should be organized at the church-wide level. We have sought to fulfill our charge as leaders of the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement, drawing Episcopalians and neighbors across many lands, languages, and cultures to share stories, practices, and transformative action. Together, we can share the journey and become instruments of the healing and reconciling love of Jesus, whose loving, liberating, and life-giving way we follow.

We have been given the power to invoke goodness and light, darkness and sorrow. We are endowed by the Creator with power to live our lives for the well-being of all. Heaven and hell are about living (or not) in right *relationship* with all of creation, of honoring or dishonoring all, and knowing the love of God by sharing it with all of our relatives: human, plants, trees, four-legged, winged, water, and earth all woven together.

– The Rt. Rev. Dr. Carol Gallagher

Back to Our Roots: The Baptismal Covenant

Finally, we have said all along that the goal is not simply to present a unified strategy to be applied similarly in all places. Ours is a commitment, an intentional spiritual practice we take up as individuals and as a body who have been baptized into the life, death and ongoing ministry of Jesus. It seemed fitting that, near the conclusion of our work, members of our team looked back and realized that each element of the journey is itself a response to one of the five queries at the conclusion of the Baptismal Covenant.

- The desire to form Beloved Community flows from the first of the five promises:

*Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?*

- Telling the truth about our Church's historic and present story around race – who we are and what we've done – is part of how we fulfill the second promise:

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

- Naming the dream of God in a particular place, casting a compelling vision of Beloved Community, and committing to the work necessary to live into it are directly linked to the third promise:

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

- As we practice the way of love, listening for the voice of God in the voice of the other and honoring the presence of Christ in all those we meet, we take up the fourth promise:

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

- And as we expand the circle of God’s love and take responsibility for repairing the brokenness in our communities, our society, and our world – we also affirm the fifth promise:

*Will you strive for justice and peace among all people,
and respect the dignity of every human being?*

The ministry of reconciliation rests at the heart of God’s mission and belongs to everyone who has been baptized into the body of Christ. We welcome our whole Church to move forward with humility, compassion, and prayer, trusting that God who has reconciled us in Christ will also lead and equip us for this great call.

In the deep love of Christ,



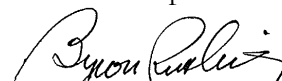
Presiding Bishop Michael Curry



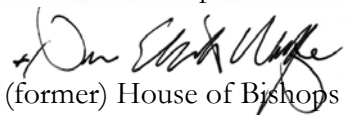
House of Deputies President Gay Jennings



House of Bishops Vice President Mary Gray-Reeves



House of Deputies Vice President Byron Rushing



(former) House of Bishops Vice President
Dean Wolfe



House of Deputies Secretary Michael Barlowe

TELLING THE TRUTH

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

A: We will, with God's help.

I. A Census of The Episcopal Church

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, especially given the Church's relationship to the complex history of race in the 17 nations our Church calls home.

Beginning in 2017 and continuing over the next three years, we plan to conduct a more comprehensive, multination, church-wide census and thus to gain a clearer understanding of the demographics of the Church, likely using selective sampling from a smaller group of churches in each province.

Before embarking upon an extensive and complex process of gathering data on the racial, ethnic, and cultural makeup of The Episcopal Church, the Officers engaged the following questions and discussion.

- Why do we want a census? What question are we asking that might be answered by knowing more about the ethnic, racial, and cultural makeup of our Church?
- House of Deputies Vice President Byron Rushing shared the article "[Desegregating Our Spiritual Lives](http://www.episcopalcafe.com/desegregating-our-spiritual-lives/)" by Edwin Smit and Louie Crew (<http://www.episcopalcafe.com/desegregating-our-spiritual-lives/>). The article sparked discussion around the questions: Should The Episcopal Church resemble the diversity of the communities where it is based? What barriers prevent our becoming more racially and ethnically diverse and welcoming? Should the Church value the level of engagement with diverse neighbors who may not join for worship? We invite the whole Church to sit with these queries, as well.
- Another fundamental question: Who is counted as an Episcopalian? Our current data-gathering methods limit the definition of countable Episcopalians to those who are in a parish in the United States that can respond to a survey in English. This excludes a wide range of persons who might identify as Episcopalian, including participants in homeless ministries, prison ministries, some campus ministries, and other non-parish ministries.

Currently available figures describing the racial makeup of the Church are admittedly unreliable. These include studies conducted by the Pew Research Group (PRG), which interviews thousands of people across America and asks them to self-report their religious affiliations and histories with religion and, increasingly, their disaffection from organized religion. The most recent of the PRG surveys posited that, of the group who identify with The Episcopal Church, only 10 percent identify as being of African, Asian, Hispanic, or Indigenous descent, or some mixture thereof. These numbers suggest that our Church may not be as inclusive or diverse as the dream of Beloved Community invites us to become. And yet, the available numbers suffer from a significant undercount of people of color in The Episcopal Church, given the limits of our data-collecting methodologies. Where, then, is the truth?

There could be no reconciliation between South Africa's past and South Africa's future without the truth. The truth prevents us from pretending that the things that happened did not happen. How we begin is by first letting the truth be heard in all its rawness, in all its ugliness, and in all its messiness. ... Telling the facts of your story is the most important element of this first step.

– Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Rev. Mpho Tutu
The Book of Forgiving

Our research indicates that conducting an exhaustive, accurate census of the Church would require millions of dollars and numerous partners. We look instead to borrow research methods common in politics and sociology, which tend to conduct counts with smaller bodies and then extrapolate with surprising accuracy. We also recognize the need to change fundamentally the type and method of data-gathering in our Church, both via the Parochial Report and the Church Pension Group.

We can also broaden the research methods employed by Smit and Crew and study the Church’s major institutions and leadership bodies to create a useful picture of the Church’s racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity. We will begin this undertaking in the next 12 months, relying in part on the wise counsel and support of Provincial leadership and the Executive Council Committee on Antiracism. We think the results of such a study would spark important conversation and grow support for the church-wide effort to conduct a full census. It would also produce data suitable for analysis in an audit of participation in racial injustice and justice.

1. Gather data on race, ethnicity, culture, and other categories from major Episcopal organizations such as:
 - a. House of Bishops
 - b. House of Deputies
 - c. Episcopal Church Center staff (including Presiding Bishop’s staff)
 - d. Episcopal Relief and Development
 - e. Episcopal Church Foundation
 - f. Church Pension Group
 - g. Executive Council
 - h. Cathedral deans
 - i. Seminaries (faculty, administration, and student bodies)
 - j. Executive Council Committee on Antiracism
 - k. Episcopal Church Women
 - l. Diocesan leadership bodies (with cooperation of bishops and/or deputations)
 - i. Standing Committees
 - ii. Commissions on Ministry
 - iii. Trustees/Other chief elected leadership bodies
 - iv. Canons, chancellors, and bishops’ staffs
2. Gather information on “ethnic” congregations in all their manifestations (historic, predominantly, largely, transitioned from predominantly white to “ethnic” congregation, and “national” congregations that are largely from one nation). This could be done in partnership with the Council of Diocesan Executives, transition ministers, ethnic missionaries, missionaries for Province IX, and organizations like the Union of Black Episcopalians.
3. Pay special attention to:
 - a. Frequency and characteristics of predominantly and/or historically white congregations led by black, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and/or Native American clergy
 - b. Frequency and characteristics of predominantly and/or historically “ethnic” congregations led by white clergy (including size, region, etc.)

People, in general, cling to the familiar – habits and people – and of course, cling with all tenacity to their power, both personal and institutional. ... Thus, we must be prepared for this struggle for justice. We must find our breastplates of righteousness, our shields of understanding what the true nature of the work is.

– “Seeing the Face of God in Each Other”
training manual

2016-2018 Budget Allocation for Census: \$330,000

II. Racial Justice Audit of Episcopal Structures and Systems

The census and data gathering detailed above will show much about who we are. There is also the need to assess what things we have done and what we have left undone. In other words, we need the quantitative and qualitative data to understand how, as a church, we perpetuate systems of racial injustice and how we foster racial justice and inclusion. [Resolution A182 at General Convention \(Using Education, Community Dialogue, and Internal Audit to Respond to All Forms of Racial Injustice\)](#) rightly called out this need by asking for an “internal audit.”

Some of this work will eventually occur via interpretation of our own census data. Some will require further, targeted data collection and research. And some of it will occur as we create spaces for people to share stories and tell difficult or surprising truths.

1. Audit of Participation in Racial Injustice and Justice

a. Interpretation of Data:

- i. What are the implications for the data gathered during the census? Specifically, what are the patterns of representation in major Episcopal bodies? Why might these patterns exist?
- ii. If it is difficult to conduct a census on race/ethnicity, and if communities of color are systemically undercounted/underrepresented, what might this indicate about our structures, culture, and ways of being church?

b. Further Data Collection and Research (qualitative and narrative data gathering and analysis)

- i. Examine processes of selecting, hiring, and recruiting for staff, committee service, church-wide ministry, etc. How might these contribute to differential access to institutional presence and participation?
- ii. Request that Church Pension Group collect and share information on pay differentials, etc., for clergy and staff of color, with assistance from the Presiding Bishop, Presiding Officers, and allies affiliated with Church Pension Group.
- iii. Research barriers to ordination for people of color, with an intersectional lens (age, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, etc.). Aggregate data collected by diocese, province, and church-wide.
- iv. Research barriers to lay and ordained leadership experienced by people of color at the local, regional, and church-wide level. This research should also look at the particularities of women of color and men of color.
- v. Engage youth (for example the Episcopal Youth Event) and young adults to discuss their questions and experiences of race as a means of teaching/guiding the rest of the Church.

He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

– Luke 4:17-21

2. Asset Map of Participation in Racial Reconciliation and Justice

- a. Using the data-gathering processes and strategies described above, map church-wide assets (that is, current ministries and resources).
- b. Continue to strengthen networks among dioceses and provinces within the Church, and highlight those case studies as examples (e.g., Diocese of Atlanta's work with the Dioceses of Louisiana and Chicago, collaboration in Provinces I and IV).
- c. Deploy the Asset Map (www.episcopalassetmap.org) process to build networks. As ministries are logged on the map, groups with common interests should be encouraged to reach out, build relationship, share resources, and grow impact.
- d. Evangelize and share what is already happening, affirming current and ongoing ministries as a way to model what is possible throughout the whole Church. Note existing resources and networks such as:
 - i. Executive Council Committee on Antiracism
 - ii. Seeing the Face of God in Each Other training networks
 - iii. Diocesan and provincial efforts around racial reconciliation and multicultural ministries (including Province IX)
 - iv. Presiding Bishop's staff engagement with congregations, dioceses, synods, and networks related to racial justice and reconciliation
 - v. Called to Transformation Asset-based Community Development program
 - vi. Kaleidoscope Institute, Crossroads, VISIONS, and other antiracism training partners
 - vii. National Association of Episcopal Schools (especially regarding curricula, admissions, diversity, service, and community relations)
 - viii. Various networks beyond The Episcopal Church

2016-2018 Budget Allocation for Racial Justice Audit: \$185,000

PROCLAIMING THE DREAM OF BELOVED COMMUNITY

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

A: We will, with God's help.

I. Regional Public Sacred Listening and Learning Engagements Around Race

An essential part of our work for racial justice, transformation, and reconciliation is the intentional gathering of Episcopalians and our neighbors to consciously share about the history and reality of race in a particular place. This process of “re-remembering, retelling, and reliving”² is necessary to create space and time to collectively discern a shared, renewed narrative and vision of Beloved Community.

Again inspired by Resolution A182, the Church's Officers seek to engage Episcopalians in a dialogical process that examines our history around race; listens to the lived realities of race and racism in a place; listens for innovative and effective ministry and opportunities emerging in area congregations and communities; affords the Church an opportunity to “make meaning” of what is heard, seen, and discerned; and grounds the whole movement in deep prayer.

Almighty God, You bring to light things hidden in darkness and know the shadows of our hearts. Cleanse and renew us by Your Spirit, that we may walk in the light and sanctify Your name through Jesus the Messiah, the Light of the world. Amen.

– The Kenyan Book of Common Prayer

This Sacred Listening and Learning Engagements project should be informed by The Episcopal Church's prior experiences of deep listening, dialogue, and change. Examples of such engagements include “To Hear and To Heed,” sponsored by the Urban Bishops Coalition; “The Blessing Project” and the church-wide consultation around developing resources for blessing a lifelong covenant in a same-sex relationship; and various experiences with Indaba-influenced processes. We are also especially eager to pay attention to the issues of race, class, and neocolonialism that shape the Church's internal and external relations in the Global South.

In the next two years, The Episcopal Church will organize at least three Sacred Listening and Learning Engagements in three locations, each of which should be accompanied by videoconference/webinar learning opportunities. These public sessions will involve six components:

1. *Examination of the history of race and racism in the area and in The Episcopal Church*

The Sacred Listening and Learning Engagements will include remembering and retelling of the history of race and racism in select regional and local contexts. Participants will also study The Episcopal Church's role and involvement in the racial history of the particular location.

2. *Listening to the lived realities of race and racism in the context*

People will share sacred stories about the current and ongoing realities and dynamics of race and racism in their contexts. Participation should extend beyond The Episcopal Church to include participants from nonprofits, foundations, governmental entities, business entities, education, and ecumenical and interreligious partners.

² From Walter Fluker, Ph.D., Senior Editor and Director, The Howard Thurman Papers Project, and Director of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Initiative for the Development of Ethical Leadership (MLK-IDEAL) at Boston University School of Theology.

3. *Exploration of innovative ministry, action, and opportunities emerging in congregations and groups*

Individuals, congregations, dioceses, and organizations will be invited to share particularly innovative and meaningful work addressing race, racism, racial justice, healing, and reconciliation in the local context. Key participants would include ecumenical and interreligious partners and foundations.

4. *Meaning Making and Discernment*

Participants will join to discern and make meaning of what they have jointly heard, seen, and witnessed during the earlier parts of the engagement. They will debrief their learning in a process that echoes the Indaba processes used throughout the Anglican Communion.³ They will use these fruits to collaboratively shape a vision for what Beloved Community would look like and determine what behaviors and commitments would foster it.

Beloved Community is not an organization of individuals; it is a new adventure of consecrated men and women seeking a new world ... who forget themselves in their passion to find the common life where the good of all is the quest of each.

– The Rev. Clarence Skinner

5. *Worship*

Worship will be integrated throughout the engagement. Liturgy, prayers, preaching, and the Eucharist should ground the experience of re-remembering and eventually rewriting our narrative around race.

6. *Online Broadcasts and Webinars*

All the engagements will include webinars and study guides for broader, ongoing engagement both on-site and off-site. Livestreaming and sharing will be facilitated by social media and the many communications platforms of The Episcopal Church, dioceses, the Episcopal Communicators network, and Episcopal News Service. The formats could be like the Trinity Institute annual conference, the racial justice and reconciliation webinars of Province I, or the race conversations held in 2016 by the Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

An adapted version of the Sacred Listening and Learning Engagements is being organized at Washington National Cathedral. Racial justice now rests at the heart of the Cathedral's ministry, and its leaders are eager to join the Jesus Movement and to serve as a more public partner around the wider Church's priorities. Leaders have already begun work on a yearlong series of learning events, cosponsored by The Episcopal Church and Washington National Cathedral. The Washington program also holds promise as a project around which to raise new monies. Cathedral and Episcopal Church staff for program and development have begun to discuss just such a collaboration.

Additional locations should include sites whose stories and histories resonate broadly and which are relatively convenient for travel. It is important to note that the host sites need *not* be large cities. We have much to learn from dioceses and partners who have begun such journeys, including the Diocese of Atlanta's emerging project on slavery, lynching, and the death penalty in Georgia; the Diocese of Los Angeles, the Anglican Church of Korea, and the Anglican Church of Japan's ongoing work of justice and reconciliation around the oppression of Koreans by the Japanese government under colonialism; the Diocese of Panama-led reconciliation process with Anglicans in Mexico and Central America; and emerging work in Province IX to discover the history and impact of race, classism, colonialism, and imperialism in Latin America.

³ <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/article/lambeth-participants-reshape-indaba-process>

Anticipated Outcomes

The public Sacred Listening and Learning Engagements would be invaluable for helping the whole Church to reimagine its role in responding to the sin of racism. The communal learning would “connect the dots” between history, current dynamics, and the biblical/theological sources that ground the vision of Beloved Community. Finally, the public nature of the work – inviting our neighbors and partners to participate, to witness our own humble reckoning, and then to help us to discern the shape of Beloved Community in a specific place – could prove transformative for our Church and for the communities where God has planted us.

Every time we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we are praying revolution. ... Help people to pray it, with all the cost and promise of that. “Thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” A call for a world turned upside down – or as one young man said to me, “No, Verna, it’s a call for a world to be turned right-side up.” A fallen world lifted up, a new heaven and a new earth. That’s the end of the story, and we are called to be a part of that.

– Ms. Verna Dozier

**2016-2018 Budget Allocation for Sacred Listening and Learning Engagements:
\$250,000**

PRACTICING THE WAY OF LOVE

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

A: We will, with God's help.

Complete the training; collect the certificate; move on. This “punch card” mentality is common throughout the Church and society when it comes to talking about racism. The journey can be exhausting and painful, especially when we approach it as work. We welcome Episcopalians to flip that narrative and instead to approach the process of learning and training as ongoing spiritual formation.

Michael Battle's words are especially useful here. He says in *Practicing Reconciliation in a Violent World*:

[T]his slow, arduous work is good news because we no longer have to think of reconciliation as a term paper that we have to write ourselves and turn in on time. Think of it as an oak tree growing from a small seedling into a large tree, a process that takes many years and happens only when water, sun, and nutrients are provided. ... [U]ltimately, the final work is God's, and it will be enacted if we cooperate in the process.

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 grow constantly in our relationship with God and with each other, being formed by sacrament, spiritual discipline, and sheer grace into the likeness of Jesus Christ. 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 cultural and racial lines, examine structures of oppression and their impact on our own and others' lives, and ultimately nurture Beloved Community.

The House of Bishops has spent more than a year preparing to teach and lead the Church around racial reconciliation. Its Spring 2016 meeting emphasized small-group storytelling, and the Spring 2017 meeting included nearly three days of facilitated formation with leaders from VISIONS Inc. and the Presiding Bishop's staff. Together, the bishops have explored a framework for understanding structural oppression, learned to listen to each others' sacred stories around race, and increased their capacity to lead their dioceses and communities toward transformation and healing. Committed bishops have stepped forward to guide their body's work regarding racism, reconciliation, and Beloved Community.

The heart of reconciliation is honoring the dignity of difference.

– The Rt. Rev. Dr. Allen Shin

Leaders of the House of Deputies have expressed interest in similar formation. Also, the Executive Council regularly builds intentional personal and interpersonal work related to race and racism into its meetings and common life.

The question, however, remains: How can we strengthen and deepen the wider Church's commitments to the kind of formation that strengthens us to be reconcilers and healers within our congregations, in our communities, and in the society where we live and move?

I. Beloved Community Story-sharing Campaign

One of the most powerful practices for fostering personal, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural transformation is story-sharing: offering and receiving stories about the things that matter most to us. Launching in the winter of 2017, the Beloved Community Story-sharing Campaign will encourage all Episcopalians to engage in brave listening within our churches, between diverse churches, and beyond the Church in community sessions and individual meetings.

Rather than merely telling people to “talk to each other,” the campaign seeks to grow Episcopalians’ capacity as both storytellers and story-receivers. Bolstered by a Constable Grant to foster storytelling around faith and race, the campaign will partner with the Presiding Bishop’s Office for Evangelism Initiatives and incorporate wisdom from leaders in counseling and therapy, journalism, community organizing, Public Narrative, the Biblical Storytellers Guild, StoryCorps, and the Moth Radio Hour. It will also leverage and (if necessary) adapt the “Called to Transformation” program, which hosts four trainings a year to teach Episcopalians about asset-based community development and, more fundamentally, about the arts of storytelling and community mobilization. It should, of course, encourage identification and use of local and regional tools for storytelling and reconciliation, including those created by the Kaleidoscope Institute and the Diocese of Minnesota, and many more.

Can you hold that space open for me?
Can you keep your questions and suggestions
and judgments at bay
Can you wait with me for the truths that stay
hidden behind my sadness, my fear, my forgetting, and my pain
Can you just hold open a space for me to tell my story?

– Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Rev. Mpho Tutu
The Book of Forgiving

The Beloved Community Story-sharing Campaign will send people across the many divides that separate communities today: race, class, region, age, ideology, political party, and more. Imagine equipping people and facilitating the link between a church in a small town in Nevada with a church on Chicago’s South Side. Together, with the help of technology and some facilitative support, grounded in their common Episcopal faith, groups could reach across and listen as each shares what they’ve lost, how they hurt, what they love, what they dream, and what they’ve thought about each other. We hope to contribute to meaningful dialogue in a world where too many of us operate in echo chambers that limit exposure to the wisdom and presence of different others.

Such a campaign aligns with projects among our ecumenical partners, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and National Sojourners, Inc. It also would create an ideal platform for intentional collaboration with denominations comprised mostly of people of color. It could eventually grow the Church’s public identity as a community of reconcilers, not so different from the Mennonites or Quakers.

**2016-2018 Budget Allocation for Beloved Community Story-sharing Campaign:
\$52,000**

II. Lifelong Formation for Transformation

Formation and worship are two areas where Episcopalians already have the infrastructure and momentum to make significant gains. Many dioceses, congregations, and networks have benefited from the Church’s “Seeing the Face of God in Each Other” training program. In addition, Episcopalians have welcomed a wide variety of effective formation and transformation opportunities led by groups like VISIONS, Kaleidoscope, Crossroads, and others. With the passage of [Resolution D040](#), General Convention identified the need for antiracism curriculum for all ages. General Convention also called on the Standing Committee for Liturgy and Music (SCLM) to form a subcommittee to identify and share more worship resources for racial reconciliation. And leaders in Spanish-speaking communities – those in the United States and in Latin America – have urged the development of a wider variety of spiritual formation resources for racial justice and reconciliation in their contexts.

At base, the Church needs a model of integrated ministry – something like a “food pyramid” (a simple and transparent graphic or visual model) – for understanding racial reconciliation and justice. Instead of focusing only on training, which is vital, it would incorporate all parts of our spiritual lives.

1. Reconciliation and Justice Pilgrimages

a. Young Adult Pilgrimage

The Church will replicate experiences like the Young Adult Pilgrimage to Ferguson in October 2015, inviting past participants to design and implement future events. The project includes promoting and supporting pilgrims’ ministries upon their return to their home. Standing Rock would be the ideal focus for a 2017 pilgrimage. The struggle to protect the Sioux people’s waters, burial lands, and sovereignty speaks directly to the intersecting issues of racial and economic justice and creation care, all major Episcopal Church priorities. The Presiding Bishop, staff, and other Church leaders have visited, learned, and grown trust among local leaders. The United Thank Offering/Young Adult Service Corps has also placed an intern in Bismarck, North Dakota and expressed the desire to partner in ongoing work of this kind.

b. Other Pilgrimage Opportunities

We can also leverage other pilgrimages that highlight racial reconciliation, including the Episcopal Relief & Development Ghana Reconciliation Pilgrimage, the Diocese of Atlanta’s Lynching Pilgrimage, the Trail of Souls in the Diocese of Maryland⁴, and the Feast of Frances Joseph Gaudet in the Diocese of Louisiana, in addition to celebrations of Martin Luther King Day and Absalom Jones Day⁵.

For those of us who cannot physically join one of these pilgrimages, there are still ways to walk the pilgrim way. Members of the Presiding Bishop’s staff took part in the January 2017 Ghana Reconciliation Pilgrimage and are now producing film and teaching resources about it. We expect a similarly comprehensive approach to future pilgrimages in order to welcome the wider church to share the transformative journey.

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself. ... So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

– 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

⁴ The Trail of Souls pilgrimage: <http://trailofsouls.org/>

⁵ <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/article/louisiana-diocese-announces-first-official-commemoration-feast-frances-joseph-gaudet>

2. Multilingual Formation and Training

The Diocese of Atlanta's Beloved Community: Commission on Dismantling Racism has provided essential resources for many provinces, dioceses, and congregations embracing the work not only of becoming antiracist but fostering the Beloved Community of God. Using the "Seeing the Face of God in Each Other" curriculum, the diocesan leaders also bring a keen awareness of spiritual and pastoral care to the formation process. The Presiding Officers experienced firsthand how effective this model can be for personal, spiritual, and institutional transformation, and the Church has now entered into partnership with the commission and the diocese to launch a Center for Racial Healing this fall. We trust it will grow the whole Church's capacity for racial formation and healing.

We have called for the assembly of a comprehensive, multilingual, multicultural set of formation resources for Episcopalians, in partnership with Atlanta's Beloved Community: Commission; with staff dedicated to Ethnic and Hispanic Ministries; with networks like the Provincial Antiracism Commissions, the Executive Council Committee on Antiracism, and the Executive Council Standing Committee on Advocacy and Networking; and with organizational partners like VISIONS, Kaleidoscope, Crossroads, and the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond. The set would include formation resources such as those listed below.

a. An online resource hub for learning and reflection

Maintain a robust online portal that helps Episcopalians to access a wealth of tools, resources, and opportunities for racial justice, healing, and reconciliation.

b. Resources for leadership development

Gather and publish leadership development resources that support the value of pastoral, prophetic, and priestly roles in both lay and ordained ministry.

c. Resources for reconciliation, justice, inclusion, and equity geared to the following:

- Children and youth (see Resolutions D040 and A182) as well as young adults (members of the Presiding Bishop's staff have begun collaborating on this work)
- Staff and participants in the Young Adult Service Corps, in collaboration with Global Partnerships (should also consider collaboration with Episcopal Service Corps)
- The Episcopal Church staff

I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, Christ may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

– Ephesians 3:16-19

3. Liturgical Formation

Episcopalians are fond of the saying, "Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi." Loosely translated, "If you want to know what we believe, watch how we pray." Our commitment to racial healing and transformation at all levels demands that we gather and commission liturgical resources so that our prayers contribute to healing the heart of a broken world.

In collaboration with the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, we will share more resources for a variety of services and spaces: services of repentance for the Doctrine of Discovery and the

500th anniversary of European entry in what is now Virginia; rituals for healing and lament after acts of public violence; and many more.

We urge the development of toolkits that link the themes of reconciliation and healing with specific liturgical seasons. These could include Bible studies and lectionary resources. It would also be helpful to identify Feast Days for celebration that support the work and ministry of building Beloved Community. Finally, we believe the Church would be enriched by a collection of sermons, reflections, and lectionary meditations on Becoming Beloved Community.

2016-2018 Budget Allocation for Lifelong Formation for Transformation: \$306,000

REPAIRING THE BREACH

Q: Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

A: We 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. The good news transforms people's hearts and grows Beloved Community among Christians. It also transforms a world. It is a word of freedom for all who are oppressed, all who are in shackles today, all who have descended from people bound in shackles, and all who have been rejected and cast from their homelands.

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.

The Episcopal Church has committed to structural justice and healing in a variety of ways, especially through the work of vibrant local and diocesan networks, the Office of Governmental Relations, and Episcopal Migration Ministries. The Church's Officers do not seek to replace these efforts, but we are convinced this is a moment for deep, broad, coordinated commitment to transformation in two targeted areas.

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
The Lord will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.
Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations
of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

— Isaiah 58:6-12

I. Criminal Justice Reform and Healing the Impact of Mass Incarceration

It can feel overwhelming to tackle “systemic racism” in all its depth and complexity. Criminal justice reform – however much an uphill battle – is a project many of us can wrap our minds, hands, and hearts around. Prisons tell the truth about racism more clearly than almost any other institution; black, Latino, and indigenous people make up such a disproportionate percentage of the group detained by the criminal justice system that it is difficult to even apply the word “justice” to the conversation.

Several General Convention 2015 resolutions urged action in this area: C019 (Establish Response to Systemic Racial Injustice), [A183 \(Recommended Book Study of the Triennium: The New Jim Crow\)](#), [D068 \(Dismantling School-to-Prison Pipeline\)](#), and [A011 \(Recommit to Criminal Justice Reform and Study\)](#). In addition, the Office of Governmental Relations has identified criminal justice reform as a

focus area, and it regularly calls Episcopalians to action around sentencing laws and policies supporting formerly incarcerated people, as well as partnership with interfaith and ecumenical coalitions. On the ground, many dioceses, congregations, programs, and offices are engaged or interested in work to prevent young people from being swept into the criminal justice system and to support people who are now exiting prison and struggling to reenter community. Of note are programs at Washington National Cathedral, St. Augustine's University in Raleigh, a circle of New York ministries funded by the Anne and Chris Flowers Foundation and the J.C. Flowers Foundation, All Our Children, the Episcopal Prison Ministries Network, and the Office of Black Ministries' RISE project. We are not surprised at the proliferation of these ministries. Early childhood and reentry programs provide an opportunity for Episcopalians to engage in mutually transformative relationship with people targeted for detention. Churches – as well as schools, camps, and conference centers – often have the space and resources to support mentoring/companion programs.

True community is based on upon equality, mutuality, and reciprocity. It affirms the richness of individual diversity as well as the common human ties that bind us together.

– The Rev. Pauli Murray

A church-wide effort to convene and network these ministries could have extraordinary impact on churches and on people and communities threatened by what Michelle Alexander calls “The New Jim Crow.” The Episcopal Church can play a significant role as a convener of these ministries, helping them to establish best practices, link and scale their efforts, and expand their relationships with civic partners. In conversation with groups like the Anne and Chris Flowers Foundation, the Presiding Bishop's Office has developed a plan for a comprehensive effort to grow capacity in this area.

Titled “Partners on the Way: Mutual Transformation and Renewal with People Returning from Prison to Community,” the plan proposes forming communities of practice composed of formerly incarcerated people along with clusters of Episcopal congregations. Together, they would do the following:

- 1) Conduct research and populate a Program Map of current projects partnering with formerly incarcerated people.
- 2) Develop “Innovation Hubs” – three pilot sites where cohorts of formerly incarcerated people and clusters of Episcopal congregations collaborate to develop and implement best practices in new and existing projects.
- 3) Build capacity for sustained ministry. To incentivize adoption of new models, congregations would have access to modest grants that allow them to attend the convening and to reconfigure their ministries for the sake of mutuality and partnership.

2016-2018 Budget Allocation for Criminal Justice Reform, Healing the Impact of Mass Incarceration, and Overall Racial Justice Engagement: \$580,000

II. Partnership with Episcopal Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

The Episcopal Church could also embody racial healing, justice, and reconciliation through a renewed commitment to the two Episcopal historically Black institutions of higher learning – St. Augustine's University and Voorhees College. Both were founded following the emancipation of enslaved Africans in America. Both have great potential but now struggle after a history of uneven support and marginalization from the Church that once claimed them as a significant part of our shared ministry. The Officers are excited to turn the corner and support a strong new partnership – one that includes a

contribution of \$1 million in funding (part of it via joint fundraising) and programmatic and missional partnerships that could transform the schools, The Episcopal Church, and the communities within which we live and serve.

The Episcopal Church’s Task Force on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, the Development Office, the Finance Department, the Staff Officer for Racial Reconciliation, and the Presiding Bishop’s Office have all visited one or both of the schools and have begun to help to grow capacity around recruitment, fundraising, financial management, and organizational development. In addition, Episcopalians in the communities surrounding the schools have expressed excitement about investing energy, prayer, and funding in the schools.

Several more opportunities for partnership await at the program level. One is focused on the Department of Education at St. Augustine’s University (SAU). SAU’s faculty and administration are engaged in scholarship and collaborations around teaching in a multiracial classroom, with special emphasis on educating young black men. It would be fruitful to explore partnerships with the National Association of Episcopal Schools (NAES) for mutual benefit.

In addition, SAU’s criminal justice program is one of the most popular majors on campus, sending graduates into local, state, and federal law enforcement, as well as the legal profession and other social service professions. Students across the campus are reading and engaging around criminal justice, and the school is exploring hosting a summer program for young people who have been detained by the authorities. Ultimately, the school could be a center for convening this important work for the whole Church.

2016-2018 Budget Allocation for Partnership with HBCUs: \$300,000 (in addition to \$400,000 in existing commitments)

* * *

Becoming the Beloved Community will take more than one triennium; 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, we set out now on a lifelong commitment to follow the loving, liberating, and life-giving way of Jesus.

And now, to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Almighty God, who created us in your own image: Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations, to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

– The Book of Common Prayer