

# BECOMING BELOVED COMMUNITY

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

## The Context

- Rooted in The Jesus Movement: The ongoing community of people centered on following Jesus into loving, liberating, life-giving relationship with God (evangelism), with each other (reconciliation), and with creation (environmental stewardship).
- Called forth by General Convention [Resolution C019 \(Establish Response to Systemic Injustice\)](#)
- Crafted by the leaders of the House of Bishops and House of Deputies – Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, House of Deputies President Gay Clark Jennings, House of Bishops Vice President Mary Gray-Reeves and (now former Vice President) Dean Wolfe, and House of Deputies Vice President Byron Rushing and Secretary Michael Barlowe – with staff and many partners
- Frames a multi-year journey as part of a long-term, multi-generation commitment
- Moves beyond the United States and beyond black and white, to consider racism in many nations, among many races, ethnicities and cultures
- Deploys \$2 million allocated by General Convention, along with other resources
- Designed to support, complement, and amplify local, diocesan, provincial and network efforts

## The Long-term Commitment

*Becoming Beloved Community* represents not so much a set of programs as a journey, a set of interrelated commitments around which Episcopalians may organize our many efforts to respond to racial injustice and grow a community of reconcilers, justice-makers, and healers. The labyrinth may be an even more useful image for engaging the vision.<sup>1</sup> On the road toward reconciliation and healing, we move around corners and double back into quadrants we have visited before, each time discovering new revelation and 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?

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 this common spiritual practice of walking and reflection. Transformation may run deeper and broader if/when we pool our wisdom and resources as the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement.

---

<sup>1</sup> 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.

For this reason, we have also identified concrete, church-wide initiatives that we hope will 1) root our commitments in the Baptismal Covenant, 2) make real the general practices and questions that encircle the labyrinth, and 3) complement and advance work 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 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 Church's 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 are dedicated 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, 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.