

R-10a A Resolution to Begin the Work of Reparations in the Diocese of Virginia

WHEREAS in our Baptismal Covenant we have promised to strive for justice and peace among all people, to seek and serve Christ in all persons, to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to respect the dignity of every human being; and

WHEREAS the Episcopal church and the Diocese of Virginia have a long history of support for and complicity with chattel slavery, violence against Indigenous peoples and land, segregation and other racist systems, including slave ownership by our first four diocesan bishops and 82% of priests by 1860, chapels built on stolen Native lands, parishes that rented and gifted slaves, parishioners whose wealth, tithes, and offerings came from the slave economy, deliberate diocesan measures to segregate Black Episcopalians and block Black churches from being full and equal members and leaders of the diocese, and more - all directly affecting the lives of the people and communities they serve; and

WHEREAS, the Diocese of Virginia, as the site of the “chapel of the Confederacy” and the “capital of the Confederacy”, is home to numerous church buildings constructed by enslaved people and many parishes within the Diocese of Virginia are grappling with their history of support for slavery and white supremacy, and their ongoing complicity in racial injustice; and

WHEREAS repentance and repair are necessary steps toward the racial reconciliation that we, the Diocese of Virginia have stated as a primary focus of our Diocesan ministry and the people whom we have wronged through our offenses against God and our neighbor, particularly enslaved people of color, indigenous peoples, and their descendants, have not received just amends; and

WHEREAS, various options exist for funding reparations work without any negative impact on current or future operating budgets of the Diocese, including as one example, using a portion of the approximately \$19 million in existing unoccupied diocesan real estate assets which currently generate little or no income; and

WHEREAS the General Convention has passed no fewer than (10) resolutions in the last 70 years, opposing discrimination, expressing regret for its past and present discrimination, prohibiting racial discrimination in churches, proclaiming that racism is inconsistent with the Gospel and a sin that must be eradicated, apologizing for the complicity of the Church in the slave trade, and seeking to repair these injustices "both materially and relationally; and

WHEREAS the Episcopal Church Racial Justice Audit recommends the church institute reparations on a churchwide level for communities directly affected by the exploitation of and profiting from the “free” labor of people of color; and

WHEREAS the dioceses of Maryland, Long Island, New York, Georgia, and Texas as well as Virginia Theological Seminary, Princeton Seminary, Georgetown University, and others, have begun the work of reparations through substantial investments of human, material, and financial resources, providing examples for others to follow; and

WHEREAS, reparations can be defined as bringing repair and healing to those who have been wronged in processes of historical reckoning to repent, restore, and work toward reconciliation, and reparations should be determined by and made to people directly affected by such evils and may include but are not limited to honoring and recognizing those we attempted to erase; mental health, counseling, care, and renewal; educational opportunities, scholarships, and job training; homebuying and housing assistance; funding BIPOC owned and focused institutions; investing in existing communities; or direct monetary payments;

Now be it resolved...

1. This 227th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia direct the Ecclesiastical Authority to appoint a Reparations Task Force to identify and propose means by which repair may begin for those areas of our structures, patterns, and common life by which Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) within the original bounds of our diocese still carry the burden of theological, social, cultural, economic, and legal injustices, exclusions, and biases born out of white supremacy and the legacy of slavery.
2. This task force shall be appointed no later than Dec 31 , 2021, and work to carry out its mandate over the next five years, reporting quarterly to the Executive Board and annually to the Convention, reporting their findings, actions, financial status of the endowment fund, and any further recommendations for actions, including but not limited to additional and ongoing funding, institutional change, and theological revision.
3. The Ecclesiastical Authority shall appoint the Task Force members subject to approval by the Standing Committee, with a mix of lay and clergy representatives including, to the extent feasible, BIPOC Community Leaders, The Diocesan Minister for Racial Justice & Healing, representatives from Historically Black, Latinx, and Indigenous congregations and communities, liaisons from the Dioceses of Southern Virginia, Southwestern Virginia, and West Virginia, one member of the Standing Committee, and one member of the Executive Board.
4. This Convention requests the Executive Board to establish with the Trustees of the Funds an endowment over the next five years of \$10 million to be set aside as an initial investment to begin reparations. The Trustees of the Funds shall, acting with their legal obligations as fiduciaries, and in consultation with the Task Force, the Executive Board, and the Bishop, take the necessary steps to establish such an endowment.
5. The proceeds of the endowment shall be disbursed by the Task Force, subject to review and veto by the Executive Board for grants and loans in furtherance of such reparations. The objective of such reparation grants and loans is to provide direct benefits to BIPOC communities, people, programs, business, and institutions with preference for any which may have been specifically harmed by past unjust actions by the Diocese of Virginia, its institutions, or churches.

Signed:

Ms. Ernestine Armstrong

The Rev. David P. Casey, OP
Mr. Larry Clark
The Rev. Marlene Forrest
The Rev. Shea Godwin, Deacon
The Rev. Valerie Hayes
Ms. Edwina Mason
The Rev. B. Cayce Ramey
The Rev. Colleen Schiefelbein
Ms. Jean Mary Taylor
Ms. Beka Wueste

Background:

The Church in Virginia in the 17th and 18th Centuries

- The Church of England is the established church of the Virginia colony. All free residents are members by default. In 1619, 20 Africans are brought to the Virginia colony and sold in Jamestown.
- By 1640 chattel slavery is embedded in the law.
- In 1667, the Virginia General Assembly decides that baptism does not alter a slave's status.
- The Church is dependent on a tobacco-based economy supported by slave labor. Tobacco is taxed to provide support for parishes and clergy. Church buildings are constructed with slave labor. There is no way to benefit from the economy without also benefitting from the institution of slavery.
- Per 1860 U.S. Census records, 82% of Episcopal clergy in Virginia and most laymen own slaves. U.S. Census records also document slave ownership by the first four bishops of Virginia.

The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Virginia in the 20th Century

- 1910 - Canon law is amended, without mention of race or color, to permit the election of suffragan bishops. Two bishops are elected for ministry to Black parishes.
- 1919 - The General Convention adopts the first churchwide anti-lynching resolution
- 1931 – The Diocesan Council amends its Constitution to give Black clergy seat and vote.
- 1936 – Black congregations obtain the same right of lay representation as White congregations.
- 1952 – The General Convention adopts a resolution opposing any form of discrimination based on color or race in the Church, country, and world.

- 1955 – The Roslyn Board of Trustees votes to integrate camps for pre-college-age campers.
- 1955 – The Diocese's Department of Christian Education votes to integrate the 1956 Family Conference at Shrine Mont.
- 1956 – Virginia's U.S. Senator Harry Byrd calls for Massive Resistance to the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling that public schools be desegregated. Virginia passes laws to prevent this. The governor has authority to close schools rather than integrate them. The Calvary Episcopal Church Vestry in Front Royal offers parish classrooms to White students when Warren County High School is closed.
- 1958 – The General Convention approves a resolution supporting equal opportunity in education, housing, employment, and public accommodations.
- 1961 - The General Convention adopts a resolution declaring that prejudice is inconsistent with the Gospel, expressing regret for past and present discrimination within the Church, and encouraging all parts of the Church to establish worship and study programs addressing these issues.
- 1964 - The General Convention adopts a policy prohibiting racial discrimination in churches.
- 1966 – The Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity (ESCRU) charges the Church with heresy for racism in the parish system, clergy placement, religious education, and church investments.
- 1968 - The Union of Black Clergy and Laity (now the Union of Black Episcopalians) is formed to oppose racism in the Church.
- 1982 – The Church takes its first action on institutional racism through the recommendations of a churchwide Conference on Racism.
- 1982 – Virginia's Bishop Robert Bruce Hall appoints a diocesan Racial Audit Committee (later called the Committee on Race)
- 1984 –The Committee reports on the audit at the Annual Council and makes twelve comprehensive recommendations which are approved by the Council.
- 1991 – The Commission on Race reports to the General Convention that it will focus on developing resources and assisting dioceses in creating anti-racism and affirmative action programs.
- 1994 – The House of Bishops issues a pastoral letter entitled “The Sin of Racism”.

The Episcopal Church and Diocese of Virginia in the 21st Century

- 2006 – The *General Convention affirms the Church’s commitment to become an anti-racist church and urges support for legislation initiating study and dialogue regarding the legacy of slavery and proposals for monetary and non-monetary reparations to the descendants of slaves.*
- 2006 – The General Convention also approves a resolution apologizing for the Church’s complicity in slave trading and seeking to repair the injustice "both materially and relationally." It directs the Executive Council to initiate a program where each diocese collects and documents the Church’s complicity in slavery, the economic benefits, and the subsequent discrimination and segregation. It also directs the Committee on Anti-Racism to monitor and report on each diocese’s progress.
- 2007 – The Rt. Rev. M. Thomas Shaw (Diocese of Massachusetts) represents Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori in testifying before Congress on behalf of H.R. 40, calling for the establishment of a federal Commission to Study Reparations Proposals for African Americans.
- 2008 – The Episcopal Church holds a Day of Repentance and publicly apologizes for its complicity in slavery.
- 2009 – The General Convention passes a resolution repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery.
- 2009 –The General Convention extends the 2006 resolution through the 2013-2015 triennium and instructs each diocese to consult with the Church’s anti-racism officer for help with implementation, hold a Day of Repentance, and report results to the next two General Conventions.
- 2016 – The Church implements "Becoming Beloved Community", an anti-racism resource tying racial justice and reconciliation to the Baptismal Covenant. It includes “repairing the breach” as part of the program’s framework.
- 2018 – The Annual Convention passes Resolution R-1: Adoption of the “Way of Love” Rule of Life, resolving to ask: a) all parish vestry members, convention delegates, rectors and vicars to publicly commit to following the Way of Love Rule of Life, b) parishes to focus congregational work and ministry on the Rule in the coming year, and c) the Office of the Bishop to designate a Diocesan staff person to assist congregations in implementing the Rule of Life.
- 2020 – The House of Bishops Theology Committee decides to focus its work on reparations. The committee presents a paper entitled “White Supremacy, the Beloved Community, and Learning to Listen” in 2020 and follows it up in 2021 with “Reparations and Beloved Community”.
- The Episcopal Church Racial Justice Audit recommends that, “the church institute reparations on the churchwide level for communities directly affected by the exploitation of or profiting from the labor and resources of Black and Indigenous people.”

A partial list of parishes and dioceses making substantial progress *specifically* toward reparations include: The Episcopal Dioceses of Massachusetts, New York, Maryland, Long Island, Texas, and

Georgia, Virginia Theological Seminary, Memorial Episcopal Church, Baltimore, St. James Episcopal Church, NYC, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Annapolis

