

Ministry for Racial Justice and Healing – Report to the 228th Annual Convention of Diocese of Virginia

“Our only chance at dismantling racial injustice is being more curious about its origins than we are worried about our comfort. It’s not a comfortable conversation for any of us. It’s risky and messy, it’s haunting work to recall the sins of our past. But is this not the work we have been called to anyway? Is this not the work of the Holy Spirit to illuminate truth and inspire transformation? It’s haunting, but it’s also holy.”

-Austin Channing Brown

The Ministry, in conjunction with our Bishop and Ecclesiastical Authority, has developed a vision of a Diocese filled with *Christians boldly speaking truth to power and working for a world free from the evils of white supremacy, racism and colonialism*. The Ministry has likewise purposed itself to *actively engage the Diocese of Virginia in creating sustainable programs to dismantle racism, white supremacy, and the legacy of colonialism through education and advocacy with social, governmental, and ecclesiastical systems*.

This report is submitted by the Reverend Dr. J. Lee Hill, Jr., Missioner for Racial Justice and Healing, with the support of Ms. Carolyn Lanier of St. Philip’s Episcopal Church in Richmond, Chair of the Ministry for Racial Justice and Healing and the Ministry for Racial Justice and Healing.

In 2021, the Ministry offered several programmatic opportunities to learn about the work of anti-racism, racial justice, and healing through webinars on topics such as Implicit Bias, the Doctrine of Discovery, and a book study on *The Four Vision Quests of Jesus* by Steven Charleston. In addition, an electronic survey was submitted to 159 churches and campus ministry focused on racial justice and praxis.

Throughout 2022 the Diocese partnered with Courageous Conversation, an award-winning agency that is focused on effectively engaging, sustaining, and deepening interracial dialogue to help organizations and institutions address persistent racial disparities intentionally, explicitly, and comprehensively. Working with the Rev. Dr. LaKeisha Cook of Richmond, Virginia and Ms. Courtney Caldwell during the Spring and Fall Clergy, Spouses and Lay Professional Conferences at Shrine Mont, over 275 members of our Diocese receiving training in the Courageous Conversation protocol which focused on intra-racial and inter-racial dialogue about race. Among the clergy of the Diocese there were 45 persons who participated in the Spring Conference only, 49 persons who participated in the Fall Conference only, and 61 persons who participated in both the Spring and Fall Conferences. While this represents a small fraction of the clergy of the Diocese, there was grand acclamation among those who attended and an overwhelming desire to continue our partnership with Courageous Conversation.

Throughout 2022 the Diocese advanced its ministry of Sacred Ground, a program of The Episcopal Church that creates space for difficult but respectful transformation dialogue about race and racism. Welcoming persons from across the Diocese we had 92 persons register to participate in our Diocesan virtual Sacred Ground Circles, and several new communities to launch in-person Sacred Circles. We remain deeply grateful for the leadership of Dr. Chris Cameron and Ms. Diane Wright who organized and empowered a dynamic group of Sacred Ground facilitators. During the summer of 2022 the program revised the curriculum offering of session 10 which focuses on *Grief Reckoning and Repentance* and added session 11 which focuses on practical ways individuals and communities might live out our commitment to building Beloved Community and being anti-racist. At the invitation of the Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers, Canon to the Presiding Bishop for Evangelism, Reconciliation and Creation Care, Dr. Hill shared in a nation-wide panel about how participants might utilize the new curriculum to discern

steps toward action, engagement, deeper reflection, and formation at the intersection of faith, race and justice.

In the Fall of 2022, the Diocese a retreat was held for members of the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) community to reconnect, rest and seek healing from institutional, interpersonal, and internalized racial oppression. Building upon the signature training program offered by the Office of African Descent Ministry (formerly, the Office of Black Ministries), the Diocese developed “Standing in the Need: Healing from Internalized Oppression.” With 27 BIPOC persons attending, Dr. Urseline Bankhead led participants in individual and group experiences, and shared practical skills and strategies that promote healing from internalized racial oppression. A follow-up virtual gathering is being planned for January, to provide additional sustained support for those who attended the in-person gathering in the Fall, and there has been much energy for planning a second event in 2023. The Ministry for Racial Justice and Healing remains grateful for our Chair, Ms. Carolyn Lanier, and the Reverend Marlene Forrest who provided visionary leadership, and our Diocesan Treasurer, Mr. Ted Smith, who ensured financial support for this new ministry endeavor.

With the arrival of our Missioner for Racial Justice and Healing, education and sharing about the ministry of racial justice and healing has grown in our Diocese. Since arriving Dr. Hill has had the privilege of visiting with individuals, congregations, regions, and institutions throughout the Diocese of Virginia offering a ministry of presence, preaching, and teaching with in-person visits to more than 30 Episcopal-related congregations and/or institutions. In advancing the Ministry of Triangle of Hope, and in preparation for the 2023 summer youth pilgrimage, Dr. Hill traveled with a small delegation to the Diocese of Liverpool for the retirement of Bishop Paul Bayes.

The Ministry for Racial Justice and Healing remains encouraged and excited for the work of ministry in 2023. As we look to the upcoming year, we look forward to creating and developing an Anti-Racism training program for those serving in diocesan leadership and will begin work to draft a resolution for the 229th Annual Convention to mandate antiracism training for all serving in leadership roles within the Diocese of Virginia. It is our hope that the training will explore topics such as the Church’s history with race, unconscious bias, systemic racism, white privilege, internalized racism, colonialism, and beloved community.

This summer we welcomed the appointment of Mr. Rushad Thomas of Grace, Alexandria, the Reverend Joe Hensley of St. George’s, Fredericksburg, Mr. Jonathan Perry of Little Fork, Rixeyville, and we remain grateful for renewing their commitment to serve...

Ms. Carolyn Lanier, Chair, St. Phillip’s, Richmond
The Rev. Justin McIntosh, St. Paul’s, Ivy
Dr. Christine Cameron, St. Anne’s, Reston
The Rev. Marlene Forrest, St. Philips ’Richmond
The Rev. Deacon Christine Garcia, Christ Ascension, Richmond
Dr. Mary Palmer, St. Stephen’s, Heathsville
Ms. Gwen Malone, St. Mary’s, Berryville
The Rev. Barbara Marques, St. John’s, West Point