

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN DELAWARE

Becoming Beloved Community in Delaware

The events of the past few years have made it imperative that the Church strive with all its might and courage to become the Beloved Community. Scripture tells us that our Lord's message of love and inclusion is for all. The gospels are replete with accounts of Jesus going out of his way to engage those at the margins of society.¹ He then challenged the powers that be to change the systems that pushed their neighbors to the fringes.² When his earthly ministry was over, Jesus commissioned us, his disciples, to take this message and His work out into every corner of the earth.³ In Baptism we covenant to strive for justice and peace, and to respect the dignity of every human being. We are commissioned to take our place in transforming our world into one that reflects the beloved community of the body of Christ.

In our own time and place, this commission has taken on a special urgency. The world watches as Black and Brown citizens are disproportionately harassed and even killed by law enforcement officers. We are witnessing the ravages that the Coronavirus pandemic is inflicting disproportionately upon people of color because of the racist disparities in our healthcare and economic systems that perpetuate inequality. Our educational and criminal justice systems have created a school-to-prison pipeline that traps many Black and Brown members of our communities into generational poverty with no hope of breaking the cycle. In the face of these truths, the Gospel of Jesus calls us to action. The action is to become the Beloved Community.

The Beloved Community is one in which

- Each person is valued for who they have been created to be by God;
- Differences are celebrated and honored;
- Opportunities for education, employment, housing and healthcare are equally accessed by all;
- Criminal justice is fair and just, and recognizes the potential for repentance, forgiveness and restitution;
- The common good is embraced, and our economic structure provides for the needs of the people;
- Clean air, water and soil are ensured for generations to come by being good stewards of creation.

The Church cannot turn away from the events we have witnessed and the ugly truths that they reveal about racism in our country, our church, and ourselves. We will strive within ourselves and our church to recognize, understand, and confront our racism and to change to better reflect the love of God for each and all of us. We will strive to internalize our Baptismal Covenant so that our thoughts, words, and actions reflexively proclaim the good news of the Gospel. When we fall short in this work, which we will, we will have the courage to repent and try again. This is our work as disciples of Jesus. We in the Episcopal Church in Delaware commit ourselves and our resources to do this Holy work with God's help.

¹ Jn. 4:7ff., Jn. 5:1ff., Jn. 9:1ff., Mt. 8:2ff., Mt. 15:21ff., Mk. 5:1ff., Lk. 5:27ff.

² Jn. 2:15ff., Lk. 6:17ff., Jn. 8:30ff., Jn. 18:28ff.

³ Mt. 28:18ff., Jn. 20:21ff., Acts 2:1ff.