Sanctifying Antiracism in a
Southern Episcopal Diocese

By

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Introduction: Sanctifying Antiracism in a Southern Episcopal Diocese

Introduction

In August of 2014, just a few days after Michael Brown's killing in Ferguson, MO. and the early emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement, Allegra Jones,[1] a black Episcopal woman, wrote a statement condemning racism and police brutality. Allegra's response to Brown's killing was deeply faith-based—she wanted her church and diocese[2] to take a public, powerful stance on the issue. Her outrage was shared by her fellow (mostly Black) church members, as well as by a few others in the predominantly white diocese. Inspired by her statement, Allegra's church submitted the letter to the diocese's annual convention (January 2015) hoping to have it published as a diocesan resolution (a formal statement on record).

At convention, however, the presenters of the letter were stunned to receive vehement resistance from the larger membership. White participants interrupted the presentation to argue that it was anti-police, inaccurate, untheological, and too political. Over the next two days of convention, the statement was revised multiple times by a small committee; eventually one of the revisions was approved as a formal resolution. The new version removed all references to police brutality, condemning instead the sin of racism broadly, and called for a task force to help foster dialogue about racism across the diocese.

Over the next year, this task force met regularly to discuss the problem of racism within the diocese. By 2017, the task force became a formal diocesan committee, called the Beloved

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[1] All names related to my research—including of individuals, parishes, and the Commission—are pseudonyms to protect anonymity.
[2] The Episcopal Church is organized by dioceses-- geographic districts or regions that have one elected diocesan bishop in leadership. Diocese halve multiple churches (or parishes), as well as staff and leadership committees.

Community Commission for Racial Reconciliation. I joined the Commission is 2018 as a research partner, and my dissertation follows their attempts to address racism in the diocese through education, dialogue, and theological intervention. This dissertation is the outcome of three years of research with the Commission, in which I explore the ways this small Christian group is seeking to confront racism by leveraging specific religious resources within their faith community.

The Beloved Community Commission and The Episcopal Church

The Beloved Community Commission is fascinating for many reasons, not the least because it is a multiracial antiracist organizing group inside one of the whitest, wealthiest, and most educated denominations in America. Ninety percent of Episcopalians are white, and their Episcopal legacy stretches back to the original Virginia colony in 1607 (Ayers, 1981; Pew Research Center, 2014; Prichard, 2014). The Episcopal Church (TEC) has a sordid racial history from colonization through the Civil War and Reconstruction, but by Civil Rights in the 1960s the denomination began to espouse a commitment to racial equality (Bennet, 1974; Graebner, 2009; Lewis, 1998; Shattuck, 2000). Pulled into this work by prophetic Black Episcopalians, such as Thurgood Marshall, Pauli Murray, Desmond Tutu, and Harold Lewis, TEC has over the past few decades increasingly articulated an agenda for racial justice (see Chapter 1 for more on this history). Most recently, in 2015, TEC elected their first Black Presiding Bishop, The Most Reverend Michael Curry, and set aside 1.2 million dollars for the work of racial justice, reconciliation, and healing; in 2019 an additional $5 million was added to this effort (The Episcopal Church, 2015, 2018).

While TEC articulates the official position on racism, local dioceses, congregations, and individuals work out this vision in contextualized and specific ways. Episcopal polity is much like the United States: TEC made up of regional provinces and dioceses whose delegates vote on issues relevant to Church life. In the Episcopal world, this voting largely happens during General Convention, a triennial gathering during which the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies vote on resolutions (which are essentially legislation for TEC), set the budget, and more. Local provinces and dioceses may resist TEC mandates in varying degrees, particularly related to controversial resolutions. For instance, Gardiner H. Shattuck (2000), a historian of TEC, has written at length about how this dynamic took shape during Civil Rights, when TEC required all Episcopal institutions to desegregate. Angered over the mandate to integrate, many Southern dioceses claimed that the national office was exceeding their authority and thus they refused to desegregate for many years. Similarly, today's battle for racial justice (as well as other social justice issues through the years) reveal fractures within TEC—some of which still fall along geographical lines—and display the complicated ways that racial politics get worked out across TEC.

The Beloved Community Commission's diocese is located in the Southeast (Province IV), and is predominantly white and mostly rural, and well known for electing a particularly conservative bishop. As such, the Commission faces a unique set of challenges related to their diocese's historical complicity in slavery and political polarization over race, which have all functioned to make the Commission's work difficult and slow. My research participants regularly remind me that the founding bishop of this diocese enslaved 19 people, and they use this fact to emphasize how deeply racism is steeped into the foundations of the community—into the very buildings, theologies, and practices of the diocese.

Despite all these struggles, however, this small group of Episcopalians remain committed to the cause of antiracism and are working tirelessly to achieve it. My research has revealed that the Commission has a complex set of targets and interventions, all of which are deeply driven by their faith and place. In the following chapters, I will unpack how the Commission approaches racism as a *spiritual* issue, not just a social and political issue. As such, they articulate an often overlooked aspect of racial justice work that engages spirituality and ontology.[3] Their goals are deeply relational, as they seek to heal their community of the spiritual disease of racism. From this theological position, the Commission (re)imagines and leverages their faith resources to frame antiracism as a sacred Christian *mandate* and *expression* of Episcopal faith—creating both an entry point and requirement for community members who are resistant to efforts for racial justice. They operationalize these ideas through a series of activities that invite their diocesan community into the labor of racial healing. Finally, they work to institutionalize these theological claims in their diocese through targeted resolutions.

This dissertation is an exploration of how religious resources—and specifically Episcopal religious resources—can be leveraged in the pursuit of racial justice. In the following chapters, I will argue that Episcopal spirituality offers an intervention in the ontological dyanmics of racism, which is necessary to disrupt the larger system of racism. In so doing, I link Community Psychology literature about the sanctification of social justice (Houston & Todd, 2013; Todd & Allen, 201; Todd, Suffrin, McConnell, Odahl-Ruan, 2015) and religious social movement studies (Yukich, 2013) to Critical Race Theory (powell, 2012), in order to theorize about the importance

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[3] In this dissertation I draw on powell's (2012) use of ontology from *Racing to Justice*, which emphasizes how identity and selfhood are shaped by racism, in turn shaping relationships with others and community. I unpack this theory later in this section and in following chapters.

of spiritual interventions in racism. I use the term "sacred antiracism" to describe these efforts and contend that these spiritual approaches foster new conceptualizations of humanity in order to facilitate the emergence of just social and political systems.

Pertinent Literature and Scholarly Gaps

This interdisciplinary project combines social movement studies, community psychology, and critical race theory. I weave these three literatures together to examine how religious communities pursue social change and racial justice. The broad endeavor of this scholarship is to take seriously the role of religious actors in social change and ask: What do faith-based communities offer to the work of racial justice? Why and how is religion important to racial justice, if at all? What are the limitations of religious efforts for racial justice? I pursue these questions through in-depth ethnographic insider research, as I will outline in my methods chapter.

Social Movement Literature

Social movement literature is the starting point for this line of inquiry because this field has long explored the theories, empirics, and nuances of faith-based social movements. Scholars note that the role of religion in fostering social change is often overlooked (Smith, 1996), but is nonetheless a significant part of American society, advancing agendas for both conservative and progressive political goals—including for instance, Civil Rights in the 1950s-1960s, Pro-Life campaigns after *Roe v Wade*, and contemporary immigration movements. Religious communities have been shown to be formative sites for community organizing, social critique, and systemic

change (Bretherton, 2015; Christens, Jones, & Speer, 2008; Christens, Gupta, & Speer, 2021; Marsh, 2006; Smith, 1996; 2010; Wood & Fulton, 2015; Yukich, 2013).

Most social movements scholars have focused on how religious communities have organized around changing a state target—such as a federal immigration or death penalty policy. These scholars consider the factors that led to the emergence of the faith-based movement, but also how the movement utilizes their religious resources to organize and exert power (for instance, sharing news through congregational networks). However, recent scholarship by Yukich (2013) has opened up a more sophisticated understanding of religious social movements:

> During the past two decades, social scientists, the media, and the wider public have paid greater attention to religion's role in shaping politics, including movement activism, though most have emphasized the role of conversative religion and neglected progressive religion. However, this research assumes that the government is the primary target of collective action among religious people—that they use religious resources like church buildings and membership networks to change the thing that *really* matters to them: politics. What if religious actors have more complex set of targets than scholars have assumed? (Yukich, 2013, p. 3)

Yukich's (2013) scholarship calls us to carefully investigate and better understand religious activists. Rather than just focus on how religious movements engage the state, she urges us to dig deeper into the motivations, goals, and theories of change that guide religious these movements and larger social change processes.

I draw directly on this research to make sense of the Commission's work, which has helped me to understand that the Commission sees their role in the larger project of racial change primarily as a spiritual intervention. The Commission emphasizes that the problem of racism cannot be understood only through political conditions and material realities but must also be seen as a spiritual issue. As such, the Commission articulates spiritual formation as a crucial component of political change and argues that antiracism is indeed a mandate and expression of Christianity. Yukich's (2013) work takes seriously the complex goals of religious movements,

helping us to make space for social change interventions that go beyond the political realm. This theory also demonstrates why and how the strategy and choices of religious social movements may not make sense to scholars who are only analyizing activity that engages the state. As such, Yukich's (2013) work emphasizes the importance of studying the *theologies* that shape and undergird religious organizing—a piece of the puzzle that social scientists often overlook.

Community Psychology & Community Organizing

Community psychology explores how individuals and communities interact with their social settings and the macro system of social forces. In the past three decades, a robust subfield has emerged to investigate the role of religion in human society at the individual, communal, and structural level (Kloos & Moore, 2000; Maton, 2001; Maton & Wells, 1995). This scholarship has demonstrated that religious institutions (particularly religious congregations) operate as mediating structures between individuals and larger social forces, and can contribute to general wellbeing, prevention, empowerment, sense of community and belonging, the provision of social services, and community mobilization (Kloos & Moore, 2000; Maton, 2008; Maton and Wells, 1995; Houston & Todd, 2013; Todd & Allen, 2011). Many scholars in this field investigate congregational-based community organizing, which bridges community psychology and social movement literature. This line of inquiry explores how local community groups develop social power in order to make political change, with special attention to how they use religious resources (like congregational networks) to foster collective action around a stated target.

Few of these scholars have explored the theological or religious goals of faith-based organizing, although recent scholarship has begun to consider this line of inquiry. For instance, Todd (2011) has suggested that various theological framings (such as feminist, Black, liberation,

and social gospel) articulate Christian responsibility to address social injustice. He argues that

"these theological frameworks interweave systemic social critique as part of theological analysis

and provide the analytic tools to identify broken social systems as cause for social inequality and

to advocate for systemic solutions" (Todd et al., 2015, p. 651-652). Todd and colleagues have

further introduced the concept of "sanctification of social justice," which describes a process of

attributing divine or sacred character to efforts for social justice (Todd et al., 2014). Studies have

shown that attributing sacred character to participation in social justice activities is positively

correlated with activism, interest in social justice, and awareness of white privilege (Houston &

Todd, 2013; Todd et al., 2015). Understanding how individuals and groups connect their

theology to their social activism in an important line of inquiry for social scientists, and speaks

directly into the challenge by Yukich (2013) to consider the complexities of religious activism.

Unfortunately, few scholars have explored this topic, outside two recent examples, Gupta (2021)

and Garcia (2019).

Gupta (2021) has considered the role of theology and sanctification in religious

organizing for racial justice by exploring how Faith in Action's "Theology of Resistance" shapes

political subjectivity. She explains how this theology first provides a social critique of oppressive

social forces, then calls for a reckoning of our complicities in these exploitative logics, and then

offers a path of reimagining the self and the world—as an interdependent self, rather than an

alienated self, one who is invested in collective liberation. Gupta (2021) suggests that the

"Theology of Resistance" creates new political subjectivities that are simultaneously personal

and public, individual and communal. She argues that this work of self-conceptualizing (or

political subjectivity) is a foundational piece of social change work broadly. She explains,

> Transforming people who, through reflexive, relational, and constructive processes, are
> awakened to their social realities, their social and racialized position, and their ability to

engage in social and political struggle represents a fundamental goal of community organizing and critical community psychology (Gupta, 2021, p. 19).

Gupta's (2021) work demonstrates how theological interventions can support change agents to construct new paradigms for how they understand the world, themselves, and their own agency. Her contribution is important because it shows why and how theology (and the sanctification of racial justice organizing) plays a crucial role in Faith in Action's efforts, and by extension, in larger faith-based movements.

Garcia (2019) takes this a step further by exploring Episcopal theology and tradition. He argues that Episcopalianism is oriented toward social justice and introduces the concepts of "Sacred Resistance," which he defines as "deep, consistent political engagement rooted in the most profound spiritual truths of our faith tradition as Christians" (p. 652). Using similar language to the Faith in Action orientation that Gupta (2021) presented, Garcia (2019) describes his involvement in organizing the Los Angeles diocese to become a Sanctuary diocese and the organic development of their "Sacred Resistance" theology. He explains how the emergence of the movement drew on Christian scripture, liturgy, and the Episcopal Baptismal Covenant to critique oppressive immigration policies and articulate a commitment to providing sanctuary. By drawing on these theological resources, "Sacred Resistance" calls on members of the faith to expose oppressive social forces and to organize against them. The group explains,

> One of the core promises of our baptismal covenant is to "persevere in resisting evil." In our work of Sacred Resistance, we have understood that as a call to stand in resistance to the systemic evils that oppress and marginalize any member of our human family—including but not limited to racism, sexism, nativism, homophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Grounded in our baptismal promises, our resistance to public policies that perpetuate those evils is how we put our faith into action in the world (Garcia, 2019, p. 656)

Garcia's (2019) research reveals how the community understood their work as theology-led and a fundamental expression of their faith. He adds that the "Sacred Resistance" movement

"understands this work of the liberation of God's people as central to who God is, and central to our worship of God" (Garcia, 2019, p. 653).

Both of these cases— "Theology of Resistance" and "Sacred Resistance"—exemplify how social change work can and is sanctified through theological frameworks (Todd et al., 2014; Todd et al., 2015). Each of these scholars investigate how community organizing can leverage theology and other religious resources to spur social change. This research demonstrates the importance of studying the *religious* parts of faith-based organizing and reiterates Yuckich's (2013) call to examine the complex goals of religious social movements. However, additional theoretical support is needed in order to analyze the racial dynamics of these movements, which is why I turn to a third body of literature—Critical Race Studies.

Defining Racism and Racial Justice

I define racism as a fundamentally hierarchical and exploitative system of classifying humanity, in which whiteness is preeminent and inherently connected to power and exclusion. I draw from critical race and whiteness theorists in this understanding as I outline below. Racism takes place in material and non-material ways, and pervasively manifests through every level of society—intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, and ideological. That is to say, as individuals, we perpetuate patterns of racism on ourselves and each other; our institutions enforce racial exploitation throughout society; and our ideologies justify these disparate life chances.

I use the terms *antiracism* and *racial* justice interchangeably, to reference a world in which the racial hierarchy is dismantled. Racial justice would be realized when all humans have equitable access to the resources (material and otherwise) that allow for their flourishing. The pathway to antiracism requires transformation of our structures, our ideologies/theologies, our

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relationships, and our selves. As such, these pathways (or processes toward social change) are simultaneously historical and present, material and non-material, internal and collective.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT), which originally developed in legal scholarship in the 1980s, draws upon and influences multiple disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences, examining how the racial hierarchy is created, produced, and hidden (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 1988; Delgado & Stefancic, 2006). Race and ethnicity scholars broadly recognize that race is a social construction that is made real through the material and psychic advantages of one race over another. For example, large social structures—such as education, law, housing, media, and economics—are designed to protect and advance the interests of white people over the interests of people of color (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic 2006; Lipsitz, 2006). Critical Race scholars, however, analyze race as a "master category" (Omi & Winant, 2015) that fundamentally organizes American political life to be hierarchical and exploitative. Omi and Winant's (2015) "racial formation" theory emphasizes that race is a sociohistorical system with economic and political purposes—that is, society is racially organized and ruled such that power follows racial lines. As such, race comes into existence as social, economic, and political meanings are attached to it. Crenshaw (1988) and others have concretized these concepts by interrogating the role of law in producing racial oppression, examining how notions of equal opportunity, colorblindness, merit, and neutrality function to justify white advantage over people of color (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995).

These analyses are grounded in the material conditions of people of color, but also examine the nonmaterial dynamics of the racial hierarchy, such as hegemony, discourse, and

epistemology. Critical race theorists argue that white supremacy is preserved in the economic structures, the legal systems, societal discourses, and dominant ideologies. Additionally, scholars note that the subordinate conditions of people of color intersects with and is compounded by other marginalized positions, such as those of gender, ability, sexual orientation, class, and age, creating unique experiences of intersecting oppressions (Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1991).

Critical Whiteness Studies

Critical approaches to racial studies also examine the construction and functioning of whiteness. Race scholars broadly recognize whiteness as a social position of structural advantage (both materially and nonmaterially) that is shaped and reinforced by cultural practices, discourses, and experiences (DiAngelo, 2012; Frankenberg, 1993; McIntosh, 1989). Critical approaches to the study of whiteness especially consider how whiteness is about *power*—a concept, which has become an identity, and is fundamentally based on exclusion and exploitation of people of color (powell, 2012; Lipsitz, 2006). For example, legal scholar Cheryl Harris, in her foundational piece *Whiteness as Property,* interrogates the entrenchment of personhood and property in U.S. law by tracing how "the very fact of citizenship itself was linked to white racial identity" (Harris, 1993, p. 285), such that rights of personhood (such as self-identity and liberty) are fundamentally grounded in whiteness.

Numerous sociologists have further developed theoretical frames to analyze how whiteness is maintained and justified, such as George Lipsitz's (2006) articulation of "possessive investment in whiteness," which exposes how whites are active participants and recipients of racialized advantages. Bonilla-Silva's (2006) study of colorblind racism is a crucial analysis of contemporary racism, as it demonstrates how notions of race-neutrality are used to frame racism

as *only* explicit and intentional gestures of race-based malice, which functions to minimize systemic racism, allowing whites to be 'innocent' and even potential victims of racial discrimination themselves. Other scholars note that whiteness as a privileged status is deeply embedded and protected in U.S. society, and also how whites are themselves—despite explicit claims to the contrary—often actively invested in maintaining the privileges of whiteness and their access to it (Applebaum, 2010; Harris, 1993; Lipsitz, 2006; Leonardo, 2009; Roman, 1997). In the context of the U.S. Post-Civil Rights Ea, racialized advantages are often unacknowledged by whites, grounded in intentional ignorance, and subtly and strategically justified (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Mills, 1997; Mueller, 2017; Wiegman, 1999; Yancy, 2016). As such, contemporary racism is masked by notions of colorblindness and 'post-racism,' which function to ensure that whiteness and social advantage are perniciously hidden and yet remain deeply powerful.

Ontological Whiteness

All of this literature demonstrates that race is not biological but rather social, political, economic, and—as I will argue through this dissertation— ontological. By ontological, I mean conceptualizations of existence, the self, one another, and God. In particular, I draw heavily on legal scholar john a. powell to consider how identity, self, and imagination, are crucial aspects of racism and antiracism, operating in the nonmaterial spectrum. He explains,

> I have been asserting that the issue of suffering, even in the secular space, is a fundamental spiritual concern, and that, therefore, one must be cognizant of the sources of suffering. This is especially true when one is an active or passive beneficiary of such suffering (powell, 2012, p. 222).

Spirituality, he claims, is a part of understanding the problem and also visioning the alternative. powell (2012) focuses his book on unpacking the social systems that undergird whiteness and

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facilitate its power as an ontological position based in exclusion and otherness. He argues that

engaging this level of ontology and selfhood is crucial to the project of dismantling racism:

> Without an examination of the construction and presence of whiteness, and specifically the role of whiteness in the formation of the modern separate self, inequitable arrangements based on fear and exclusion will endure … Justice involves claiming a shared, mutual humanity (powell, 2012, p. xvii)

Exposing whiteness as an alienated and destructive identity is crucial to the work of justice,

powell (2012) argues. However, he adds that this work must be done carefully:

> For in the context of society's unwillingness to come to terms with its racial organization, to ask people to give up whiteness is to ask them to give up their sense of self. We cannot expect people to expose themselves to ontological death or worse. Instead, we must provide space—institution space, political space, social space, and conceptual space—for the emergence of new relationships and a new way of being that exists beyond isolation and separation (powell, 2012, p. xviii)

Engaging this challenge from powell (2012)—to create the space for transformation—is a key

aim of this dissertation and, I will argue, the primary goal of the Beloved Community

Commission. This group is actively pursuing the bold work of spiritual transformation as their

primary intervention in racism, seeking to provide an ontological rebirth, instead of death, in the

shedding of whiteness. In what follows, I will describe how and why the Beloved Community

Commission understands racism as a spiritual problem in need of theological intervention, how

they operationalize these ideas within their community, and how they pursue institutional

change.

Chapter Summaries

In Chapter One (A Racial History of the Episcopal Church), I provide a brief overview of

TEC's history with race and racism, with a particular focus on Black-white race relations, as this

was largely the focus of the Commission. I summarize this history to outline three themes about

how TEC has engaged race: first, that there is no single approach to issues of race within the denomination, but that ongoing debate and contestation; second, that TEC has considered how to engage race both within and outside the denomination; and third, the national and local leadership often disagree about matters related to race. I conclude this chapter by introducing the contemporary movement for beloved community.

In Chapter Two (Methods: Investigating Sacred Antiracism), I describe the epistemological and methodological choices I made in this research project. I outline the tenets of feminist epistemology that I employ and then describe the details of my own positionality in the research as well as the strengths and limits of insider research. I then describe my process of data collection through participant observation, interviews, focus groups, and textual analysis. I also outline the way reciprocity and relationship shaped my methodological process. This chapter concludes with an explanation of my iterative coding process and a reflection on the trustworthiness of the data.

In Chapter Three (Envisioning Sacred Antiracism: Naming Racism as a Sin and Spiritual Illness), I outline how the Commission has developed a theology for understanding racism and articulates a vision for sacred antiracism. I first explain how racism is framed as a sin that violates the imago Dei and dehumanizes all of us. I then connect this theological concept to ontological whiteness and show how the Commission describes racism as a disease that is harmful for everyone. I argue that the Commission's key intervention is to sanctify antiracism as a fundamental component of spiritual formation and a pathway to spiritual wellness. In closing, I connect the Commission's work to community psychology and social movement literatures, explaining how sacred antiracism is a framing process that enables the Commission to critique racism, claim it as a religious issue, and spur their community into action.

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In Chapter Four (Operationalizing Sacred Antiracism: Creating Spaces for Racial Healing), I describe how the Commission enacts sacred antiracism on the ground with their own community. I first explain how the themes of faith, place, and history are woven into all their activities, and then concretize these ideas in two key events: the Feast Day for Absalom Jones and the Pilgrimage to the Peace and Justice Memorial. I explain how these activities are efforts to create space for racial healing and transformation.

In Chapter Five (Institutionalizing Sacred Antiracism: Writing Resolutions for Beloved Community), I describe how the Commission pursues larger institutional change in their diocese by writing resolutions. I first explain the political dynamics and complexities of diocesan resolutions in order to show how they are used to make change, as well as the challenges they pose. I describe each of the resolutions the Commission has created and demonstrate how they leverage their faith resources within their local polity in order to make social change. I close by describing their future goals of mandated antiracism training for leadership within the diocese.

In the Conclusion (Possibilities and Limitations of Sacred Antiracism), I unpack my key critique of the Commission: the hesitancy to politicize racial healing. I argue that the Commission's focus on individual healing and maintaining unity has prompted them to avoid the political nature of antiracism, which is an essential piece of the puzzle. As such, I suggest that the Commission become more explicit about the ways that social-political critique is an aspect of their spiritual intervention.

Chapter 1: A Racial History of the Episcopal Church

> In order to understand the nature of the involvement of the Episcopal Church in the arena of race relations in any age, it must be stated at the outset that the church's commitment to the cause has been motivated more by default than by design. I have pointed out elsewhere that the Episcopal Church is a 'non-prophet organization,' that is to say, a body that has not, historically, set a moral example for the nation to follow but rather has taken its lead from the mores of the nation with which it has had a unique, symbiotic relationships since they both came into existence, almost simultaneously, as the end of the eighteenth century. - Harold, T. Lewis, Racial Concerns in the Episcopal Church Since 1973, 1998, p.467

The racial history of the Episcopal Church (TEC), as the above quote suggests, is largely one of whiteness: developed as an institution for whites, TEC has for most of its history excluded or subjugated people of color, operated for white interests, and developed white wealth. In spite of the dominance of whiteness, however, TEC has long legacy of Black membership that, although often overlooked, has been tremendously impactful. Much, if not almost all, of the racial analysis of TEC has come from Black church members. In the section that follows, I draw largely from this Black Episcopal thought to synthesize a concise racial history of TEC.

Colonization

England began colonizing the American continent at Roanoke Island, named Virginia after Elizabeth the Virgin Queen (1585-87), and Jamestown, named for James I (1607) (Prichard, 2014, Chapter 1). These colonial efforts were fundamentally religious and geopolitical, seeking both to convert "heathens" and to counter the colonial power of Roman Catholicism (Prichard, 2014, Chapter 1). Many of these early colonists were highly educated clergy from the Church of England, who were vetted by the Virginia Company (Prichard, 2014, p. 8-9). The Company not only funded the political efforts of the colony, but also appointed its clergy and organized the

parish (Prichard, 2014, Chapter 1). The churches of these colonies were protected by the developing political and military powers while religious participation (such as prayer and worship) was simultaneously required by law (Prichard, 2014, Chapter 1).

Throughout the seventeenth century a number of religious and political shifts occurred in England that impacted the colonies, but when Charles II took the throne in 1660, he actively invested in the global slave trade (Prichard, 2014, p. 17-26). While the colonies initially depended on indentured servitude, the enslavement of kidnapped Africans became increasingly embedded in the fabric of colonial life (and required complicated justification in the midst of a nation arguing for its inalienable rights to freedom). This process laid the groundwork for concepts of race to develop, in which the eventual distinctions between servitude and slavery were based on ethnicity. Legal statutes to govern enslavement practices were created during these years and a racial hierarchy was codified into law, religion, and the social imaginary.

Enslavement, Civil War, and Reconstruction

During the centuries of legal enslavement, many Episcopalians owned enslaved Africans and/or directly benefitted from the system of enslavement. Additionally, enslaved Africans were often baptized into Episcopal churches and worshiped in segregated church spaces, such as "slave galleries" (Bennett, 1974; Shattuck, 2000). Initially, there was stark controversy about the act of baptizing enslaved persons, as the enslavers worried that it could destabilize the system of slavery by spiritually equalizing the races. To address this issue, new doctrine was established to organize the baptism of enslaved persons. As such, Episcopal (and larger Christian) theology and evangelism emphasized that conversion did not require manumission for enslaved Blacks, creating a racialized theology of freedom, in which "freedom in Jesus" was disconnected from

"political freedom" (Bennett, 1974, p. 234; Prichard, 2014). Graebner (2009) notes that "the leading proponents of slave evangelism were vitally interested in defending the practice of slavery itself" (p. 88) and worked hard to ensure Christian theology did not undermine the political system. Tisby (2019) notes that this theological approach reflected a dualism between the "physical and spiritual, moral and political, ecclesiastical and social" (p. 86), a dynamic that at times continues to characterize TEC today. Additionally, this theology set the stage for later trends of racial paternalism and social control based on religious claims of Black inferiority (that is, the belief that white supervision and guidance was needed for African-American success), which functioned to structure TEC around white interests and justify Black subordination for decades to come (Shattuck, 2000).

Even once enslavement was socially unacceptable in the north, similar patterns of segregation and subordination continued in churches with free Blacks. Although a number of strong Black Episcopal churches emerged in the north prior to emancipation (such as the St Thomas in Philadelphia, to which Absalom Jones was ordained priest in 1804), they remained separate from whites and were prevented from voting in the diocesan convention or meaningfully participating in the life and governing of TEC. Tisby (2019) has pointed out that abolitionist politics often did not translate to beliefs in Black equality, and many who opposed slavery were nonetheless deeply invested in political and social claims of white superiority.

Although TEC is unique in the fact that is did not formally experience a permanent schism during the Civil War (as did most other denominations), this does not suggest that Episcopalians had a shared approach to the issues of slavery or that the denomination was

abolitionist (Shattuck, 2000).[4] Indeed, TEC made an intentional choice *not* to take a stand on the issue of slavery, in order to avoid a schism. As Shattuck (2000) explains, "Abhorring ecclesiastical schism more than the suffering of people held in bondage, white Episcopalians had argued that slavery was a purely political question and as such, beyond the church's concern" (p. 9). Enslavement had been tied to TEC from its founding (although Episcopal critiques of slavery did exist (Prichard, 2014, p. 25-26; Graebner, 2009, p. 91)) and the leadership were not inclined to take a position on the issue of enslavement. Tisby (2019) argues that the silence of Christian denominations who chose to leave the slavery question up to individual churches and believers, as TEC did, during this time remained profoundly complicit in the system through their convenient separation of religion and politics. Indeed, Episcopalian enslavers, who utilized scripture to justify slavery and paint pictures of harmonious plantations, were not only tolerated by TEC, but ordained and appointed to leadership positions (Graebner, 2009).

After emancipation, many freed Blacks in the south who had been baptized Episcopalian left the white-controlled churches and joined Black-led churches instead (Shattuck, 2000, p. 8; Bennett, 1974). Bennett (1974) explains that, "The official silence of the Church over the slavery issue and split in the Union, coupled with its continued 'hands off' policy with regard to the freed Black Episcopalian during Reconstruction led to mass defections among these churchmen" (p. 239). Concerned with the loss of so many members, TEC organized an Episcopal Freeman's Commission and founded educational institutions for Black Episcopalian leaders in an effort to

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[4] During the Civil War, TEC did have separate conventions that reunited at the end of the war: the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America and the General Council of the Confederate States of America (Prichard, 2014, p. 188; Shattuck, 2000, p.9). Certain diocese did separate over slavery, such as South Carolina, and after emancipation some dioceses created separate districts (subject to white oversight) for its Black membership.

regain Black members (Shattuck, 2000, p. 10). The Commission received pushback from white

Episcopalians and was eventually changed to the Commission of Home Missions to Colored

People, and then ultimately disbanded as the Board of Missions oversaw administration of Black

outreach programs (Shattuck, 2000, p. 11). As TEC struggled with the dilemma of wanting to

keep Black members[5] while also wanting to maintain white governing power (and many whites

demanded strict separation from Blacks in their churches), they developed a variety of

subordinate governing positions (such as a "suffragan" bishop who functioned as an assistant but

was not in the line of succession) and segregated parishes (such as "colored convocations" or

"separate missionary districts") to preserve white control (the early vision of these processes

were developed at the University of the South in Sewanee, TN and are referred to as the

"Sewanee Canon" of 1883) (Shattuck, 2000, p. 13-15; Bennett, 1974, p. 240).

      Black Episcopalians fought for rights of self-determination through organizing

committees, founding and attending seminaries, making convention presentations, and

articulating theological arguments (Shattuck, 2000; Bennett, 1974). They largely argued for the

right to have Black leadership and voting rights (Shattuck, 2000, p. 21; Bennett, 1974). The 1907

Convention denied this request and instead approved a suffragan system, in which a Black priest

would be elected (by white delegates) to serve as an assistant to the white bishop (Shattuck,

2000, p. 24). The suffragan system continued through the Great Migration and WWI (and exists

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[5] The Church largely wanted to keep Black membership for two reasons, one practical and the other theological: Black exodus from TEC dramatically minimized its size and membership, which was a problem for church leaders; additionally, Church leaders articulated a theological mandate to care for Black Episcopalians, who were perceived as inferior, ignorant, and immoral. Thus, maintaining a Black membership was a way to ensure social control (and limit Black-led religious services which concerned whites), meet a theological mandate to care for the needy, and keep TEC in a powerful position (Shattuck, 2000, chapter 1).

today, but is no longer specifically race based), but remained heavily debated. Some in TEC

called for separate Black missionary districts, but others condemned this as a violation of church

unity and segregationist; others argued that racial segregation existed, whether it was biblical or

not, and that TEC must recognize this reality by allowing Black churches to govern themselves;

while still others emphasized the need for local (white) control of Black churches (Shattuck,

2000). These debates reveal some of the key fractures within TEC that was originally founded

upon acceptance of Black enslavement and largely designed for white benefit—fundamentally

struggling to come to terms with Black freedom and equality, this century was marked by an

inability to imagine or accept meaningful Black participation in TEC.

Jim Crow and Civil Rights

By the mid 1900s, TEC—despite a few setbacks in the south—had largely formally

desegregated: Black delegates were admitted to General Convention and given voting power,

seminaries accepted Black students, and increasing numbers of Black priests were ordained as

bishops (Shattuck, 2000). However, TEC remained largely white, and as a whole was resistant to

dismantling the religious or societal structures of Black subordination. As the Civil Right

movement developed, TEC increasingly struggled to navigate these dynamics. Harold Lewis

(1998), a Black priest in the late 1900s, suggested that the Civil Rights movement forced TEC to

"recognize the existence of deep-rooted racial prejudice in its midst" (p. 469) and that TEC

"began, by its actions, to acknowledge what black Episcopalians has asserted for nearly two

centuries—that there had long been a disparity between the denomination's catholic claims and

the unjust treatment of some of its members" (p. 470).

Broadly speaking, TEC at this time was marked by three major fractions: Black Episcopalians who were active in Civil Rights and called for Episcopalian engagement; an elite group of white clergy and theologians (including two presiding bishops: Arthur Litchenberger 1958-1964 and John Hines 1965-1974) who actively oriented TEC toward social reform and Civil Rights activism; and a large segment of conservative whites who resisted Church engagement with 'politics.' Shattuck (1995) argues that serious Episcopalian theologians were calling TEC to participate in the dismantling of racial injustice during this time, but that they faced internal resistance from membership who preferred to maintain the status quo. Drawing largely on incarnational theology, these theologians emphasized that God's choice to become human demonstrated God's concern for all spheres of human life, including social institutions and politics, and thus TEC was required to participate in the alleviation of human suffering and the transformation of human society (Shattuck, 1995). Alongside these efforts, influential Black Episcopalian lawyers, such as Thurgood Marshall and Pauli Murray, were active in judicial and legislative realms to defeat segregation (Shattuck, 2000, p. 62-63). Presiding Bishops Litchenberger and Hines directly led TEC into social reform issues: for instance, in 1967, Presiding Bishop Hines proposed a plan to give one quarter of TEC's operating budget to Black community development groups, a plan that was protested and shut down by the larger church within two years (Shattuck, 1995). An important organizing effort—the Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity (ESCRU) was founded in 1959—which developed into a network of Episcopalians dedicated to racial integration and reform (Shattuck, 1995, p. 335). A notable member of this committee was Jonathan Daniels, who was murdered in 1965 while shielding Black activist Ruby Sales. Many ESCRU members participated in acts of civil disobedience at

Episcopal sites (such as segregated schools or parishes) in an effort to generate social pressure and conviction.

The Episcopal Church efforts for integration and racial justice were not without critiques however, including from Black Episcopalians. Lewis (1998) has argued that the ESCRU's efforts for desegregation promoted "melting-pot type integration" (p. 470), which functioned to close Black congregations and limit committees dedicated to Black concerns. He further suggested that Presiding Bishop Hines' plan to finance Black development "managed to do so by bypassing the loyal and dedicated black leadership of the church" (p. 470). Rather than bringing Black Episcopalians into leadership and working with them to distribute the funds, Presiding Bishop Hine's approach skipped their participation entirely, and gave the funds directly to Black leaders *outside* the TEC. Lewis (1998) contends that this action "displayed an unabashed lack of confidence in its own black membership" and demonstrated that in the mind of TEC, Black members were "neither an integral part of the Episcopal Church, nor an authentic component of the black community" (p. 470). These critiques suggest that even as TEC took a (however partial) stance publicly on the issue of American racism, it largely continued to function as a white-focused, white-dominated institution internally.

Despite the social activism efforts of white activists and Black Episcopalians during the 1960s and 1970s, TEC as a whole shied away from serious support of the Civil Rights movement. After Presiding Bishop Hines' radicalism, which was unappreciated by many white and some Black members, TEC shifted focus away from race almost entirely and turned to "internal ecclesiastical concerns: the revision of the Prayer Book, the ordination of women, and questions regarding sexuality" (Shattuck, 1995, p. 350). Lewis (1998) has argued, however, that important gains came during this time of internal Church focus, particularly during Presiding

Bishop Allin's tenure, who while seen as a very conservative leader, regularly met with the

Union of Black Episcopalians and granted almost all of their requests, including establishing an

Office of Black Ministries, securing funding to Black seminaries, retaining Black staff and

appointing a Black priest to senior staff, and establishing affirmative action hiring policies (p.

471-472). Presiding Bishop Allin's tenure boasted the first Black election to the House of

Deputies, numerous Black appointments to church headquarter staff, and Black representation on

"virtually every commission and committee in the life of the church" (Lewis, 1998, p. 473).

Lewis (1998) suggests that these advancements were more valuable than many of the

integrationist efforts of the previous more radical presiding bishops, and laments that the

following presiding bishops dismantled almost of all of these internal programs in the aftermath

of the Civil Rights movement. Simultaneously, however, important movements in the worldwide

Anglican Communion were having impact on the Episcopal Church and the larger debate about

racism, racial equality, and the role of TEC.

The Worldwide Anglican Communion, Desmond Tutu, and Apartheid

> Any policies that make it a matter of principle to separate God's children into mutually
> opposing groups is evil, immoral and unchristian. To oppose such a policy is an
> obligation placed on us by our faith, by our encounter with God. – Desmond Tutu, 1987
> (see Battle, 1997, p. 123).

During and after American Civil Rights, larger transnational Anglican efforts for racial

justice were increasingly in the public eye and contributed to social pressure for racial equality.

Desmond Tutu, one of the most famous Anglican bishops of the twentieth century, articulated a

theological stance against apartheid and called for political activism in response to state-

sanctioned racism. As the world watched Bishop Tutu and Nelson Mandela fight against

apartheid, the theology of Tutu's Anglican witness became increasingly impactful. Grounded in

"ubuntu" (African concept of community that emphasizes interconnectedness), Tutu's theology was grounded in the imago Dei (image of God) of every human and contextualized that humanity within community—as such, he believed oppression could be broken through the reclaiming of shared humanity and interdependence (Battle, 1997, p. 4-7). The Church, for Tutu, was meant to model and recall this shared humanity in the midst of conflict, in an effort to illuminate the humanity of both the oppressor and the oppressed and remake the conditions of their relationship (Battle, 1997, p. 5). As such, he called on the Church to be a public, spiritual witness that resisted processes of dehumanization in society and politics (Battle, 1997, p. 9). Tutu's beliefs in community and humanity shaped the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in the aftermath of apartheid (which were chaired by Tutu) and have been impactful worldwide. Tutu's writings have been formative for the American Episcopal Church and the legacy of his theology is evident in the Episcopal racial reconciliation efforts that emerged in the 1990s and beyond.

Three Takeaways From The Episcopal Church's Racial History

This history demonstrates three key themes about the complicated dynamics of how TEC has engaged issues of race—patterns that continue to be relevant today. First, there is no single story of this denomination. At times, TEC has been profoundly complicit in issues of racism; other times, it has taken a prophetic stance. This trend take places within membership as well: TEC does not have a single racial demographic (although it is predominantly white), and while much of the membership is invested in protecting whiteness, an important part of the population is not. As such, features of complicity *and* prophetic resistance can be seen in Church as a whole, as well as within the body membership and specific congregations.

Secondly, this history reveals that TEC has and must engage issues of race in two key sites— social/political issues *outside* TEC and social/political issues *within* TEC. Analysis of the racial dynamics of TEC must thus look simultaneously at the larger political sphere (considering, for instance, if TEC is making statements on issues of justice, participating in collective action, divesting from unjust system) and at the internal procedural and cultural sphere (assessing, for instance, whether TEC is valuing and resourcing congregations of color, electing and following leaders of color, articulating theology for racial justice). This internal-external dynamic has been significant to TEC itself, and also reveals ways that justice work takes shape in multiple contexts.

Finally, this history reveals a third ongoing dynamic within TEC: the division between the national leadership/office and the local/regional leadership. Like with the structure of the United States, TEC is make up of smaller entities (provinces, convocations, dioceses, and parishes) who have a complicated relationship with the national headquarters. These smaller entities are both subject to the national office, but also maintain a high degree of autonomy; the relationships between top leadership and local congregations are often fraught with disagreement and power struggles, much like how municipal cities engage with federal policy. The tension about the authority of the national leadership to require particular things of diocese—and on a more micro scale, of a diocese to require things of a parish—is a historical feature that remains relevant and ongoing today. For instance, in the 1960s, southern dioceses argued that the national office had overstepped their authority by requiring desegregation; in the early 2000s, many congregations left TEC when national leadership approved the ordination of a gay bishop; and today, many Episcopalians resist formal condemnation of police brutality. This complicated

relationship, alongside the cultural norms to maintain social harmony, are key features of any Episcopal grassroots endeavor for racial change.

The Contemporary Episcopal Movement for Beloved Community

In the 1990s, TEC turned its attention to the problem of race again and in 1994 (the same year that South African apartheid ended) issued as pastoral letter about "The Sin of Racism." This letter included a definition of racism (the systematic oppression of one race over another), a theological account of racism as a sin, a call to confession, a covenant of personal commitments (which did not include any specific actions steps or policies).[6] In the years the followed, the letter was joined by an anti-racism training manual (*Seeing the Face of God in Each Other*, which is now in its fourth edition) and additional pastoral letters (including an additional "The Sin of Racism: A Call to Covenant"). The Episcopal Church has been critiqued for addressing the optics of racism more than its conditions during these years and many note that TEC publications on the topic lack the teeth need to make serious changes (Lewis, 1998).

The problem of racism gained new traction in 2014, when the issue of police murders of unarmed Blacks erupted in Ferguson and drew inescapable national attention. As a new generation of young Black activists founded the Movement for Black Lives, racial disparities were in the foreground in a way they hadn't been for decades. The Episcopal Church responded by electing their first Black Presiding Bishop, Michael Curry, in 2015 at the 78th General

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[6] Lewis (1998) argued that this letter "fell short of recommending the implementation of any strategies which would dismantle racism in the church" (476) and notes that "even as these words were being read in every congregation in the Episcopal Church, the ethnic desks' commissions had been eliminated, and, as has been shown, the number of minority staff at the denomination's headquarters in New York had been reduced" (476).

Convention. In addition to Curry's appointment, a series of resolutions were passed calling for a committed response to issues of racial oppression, including broader efforts to foster "beloved community" as well as specific ministries to address mass incarceration. This Convention ultimately set aside $1.2 million for the work of "Becoming Beloved Community" (Resolution 2015-C019) a number that has been increased to $6.2 million by later conventions (Resolution 2015-C019) (The Episcopal Church, 2015, 2018, see also Appendix A).

The Episcopal Church has since established Racial Reconciliation as one of its formal ministries (alongside Creation Care and Evangelism) and outlines a national agenda on the issue of racism. In 2016 TEC published their strategic plan for "Becoming Beloved Community" and the process of "racial healing, reconciliation, and justice" (The Episcopal Church, 2017). The plan includes four key areas:

(1) "telling the truth about the church and race," which include initiatives for a church census and a racial audit;

(2) "proclaiming the dream of beloved community," which includes sacred listening initiatives;

(3) "practicing the way of love," which includes story-telling campaigns, pilgrimages, training events, and the development of liturgical resources; and

(4) "repairing the breach in society and institutions," including initiatives for criminal justice reform, re-entry support, and partnerships with HBCUs (The Episcopal Church, n.d.d).

Grounding this commitment in the Episcopal Baptismal Covenant, the plan emphasizes the kinship of God's people in an effort to build "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" (The Episcopal

Church, 2017, p. 5). The Episcopal Church has also passed resolutions that require antiracism training for Church leadership (clergy and lay), and the Executive Council Committee on Antiracism and Reconciliation has published a set of requirements for what these training should include (The Episcopal Church, 2019), although TEC has not developed or outsources the development a standard training program, aside from their Seeing the Face of God in Each Other workbook.

As a religious social movement, TEC's vision for Beloved Community is a site of important research for scholars. As I have demonstrated in this dissertation, religious institutions have a role to play in the project of racial justice. The Episcopal movement for Beloved Community, as I will demonstrate in the following chapters, is one example of how religious resources are leveraged to critique racism, facilitate communal antiracism, and imagine racial justice.

Chapter 2 Methods: Investigating Sacred Antiracism

The methodologies and methods of research, the theories that inform them, the questions which they generate and the writing styles they employ, all become significant acts which need to be considered carefully and critically before being applied.- Linda Tuhiawai Smith, 2012, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, p.41

Epistemology, Methodology, and Ethics

Understanding the structures, causes, and manifestations of racial inequity, as well as theorizing about the pathways to justice, is a complicated endeavor with deeply political implications. These abstracted social realities can often remain generalized in our discussions, but they are also profoundly personal: it is real lives that are destroyed by racism, in very concrete and long-lasting ways. Our social realities are made up of babies and sisters and grandfathers and neighbors and mentors, and our very selves. We all, including myself, are impacted and constrained in the social processes that facilitate racism. And we are all, I believe, a possible contributor to a new social reality, a new world with less destruction.

My approach to research is shaped by these concerns about lives, and complications, and possibilities. My research seeks to understand how and why faith might play a role in racial justice work, and I have chosen to explore this question by working alongside a very real, human, community of Episcopalians asking the same question. In order to do this project, I needed a methodology that could capture the complications of lived reality, analyze the structures and systems at play, center the people, meanings, and contexts involved, and do so in an honest and humble way. As such, I turned to ethnography, which excels as capturing nuanced and localized phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spradley, 1979). An ethnographic approach allows me to get deep and specific, while still having important implications for the larger topic

and debates within our field. Exploring the ways *this particular community* understands racism

and works for racial healing enables us to think about the implications of our larger theories,

forcing us to grapple with the (dis)connect between big ideas and embodied, local, experiences.

Ethnography also prompts us to explicitly engage context and situatedness, in order to unpack

how specific histories and places are crucial to what is happening in the current moment. Finally,

ethnography emphasizes humanity and human experience. The ethnographic project, told

through a series of stories and personal reflections, invites the reader to hear, feel, see, and

resonate with their fellow humans. This is, I believe, an ethical choice of representation and

dissemination, through the path of human-centered research.

Epistemological Commitments

Alongside qualitative methodology, I turned to decolonial and feminist epistemologies to

guide my project. These epistemologies emphasize the concept of feminist objectivity, which

denies that a single objective reality exists and is knowable by the researcher (Haraway 1988).

Rather, feminist objectivity claims that the researcher influences the process and provides only a

particular perspective, which is always partial—other people, with other vantages points, will

have alternative claims (Haraway 1988; Harding 1993; Bhavnani 1993). This epistemological

commitment prompts me to be humble and honest about my claims: to use the "I" perspective in

my writing; to welcome the reader into my data and analysis so they can apply their own lens;

and to appreciate other ways of knowing that might interpret the same event differently.

Additionally, feminist and decolonial epistemologies call for on-going and rigorous

processes of reflection on the researcher's subjectivity (Hesse-Biber, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2014;

Smith, 2012). This requires that I explicitly consider how I am impacting—and being impacted

by—the field of study and the individuals who inhabit it (Al-Hardin 2013). Reflexivity prompts me to examine how my positionality shapes the kinds of people and places I have access to—the interlocutors, participants, stake holders, and field sites. Moreover, reflexivity requires me to rigorously analyze what kind of data are legible to me—whose perspectives I am able to notice and comprehend, what moments stand out to me or do not, and what the assumptions are embedded into my questions and hypotheses.

Finally, I draw on Black and antiracist epistemologies to center resistance to oppression in everyday life (Collins, 2000; powell, 2012; Yancy, 2015). This approach emphasizes that powerful knowledge-making emerges in the midst of resistance to subordination. Black and antiracist epistemologies argue that surviving, countering, re-claiming, and disrupting hegemonic subjugation is a place of knowledge and power. I draw from these epistemologies to specifically explore how the Commission analyzes and resists racial oppression, and what can be learned from their work.

Positionality and Insider Research

Building from these epistemological commitments, I have intentionally pursued "insider research," a method that focuses on investigating a group whom the researcher is a member (Fleming, 2018). I am insider in this research in multiple ways: I am a Christian conducting research about other Christians; I am a member of the church that leads the Commission; and I became, through the research process, also a member of the Commission itself. Simultaneously, I am also an outsider to this community: I was raised in the Pacific Northwest, unlike most Commission members who are life-long Southerners; I am a white passing multiracial person (white and Native, Puyallup Tribe of Indians), unlike most Commission members who are either

white or Black; and my participation on the Commission includes overseeing a research program in the process of obtaining my doctoral degree. These positionalities shaped the dissertation project in multiple ways, as I built relationships with my research participants and learned about the concerns that animate their antiracist work. For the Commission, these concerns were largely focused on anti-Black racism, Black-white relationships, and the ongoing consequences of enslavement and Jim Crow in their specific Southern context. As a whole, the Commission focused on these issues rather than on dyanmics of settler colonialism, the Trail of Tears (which was also local to their context), or issues facing other racialized communities, although they certainly cared about and gestured to these aspects of racial injustice. In this context, I chose to follow the Commission's vision and focused my study on their guding concerns, such as Black Episcopal history, for instance, rather than on colonialism and Native issues in the region.

Insider research is most common in anthropology and sociology, but is gaining in popularity across the social sciences as positivist ideas of "researcher objectivity" are challenged. Scholars who utilize this method argue that it provides unique access to the issue, rich insight about the phenomenon, and deep understanding of the context (Fleming, 2018). As with all research methods, insider research has complexities and ethical concerns. Many of these concerns orient around relationships, as insider research largely occurs within the context of existing relationships and those relationships are meant to continue beyond the research project. Some of these challenges include: participants feeling implicit coercion to participate or to appease the researcher; ensuring confidentiality of the subjects; and navigating researcher access to privileged information (Fleming, 2018). Additionally, scholars note that the insider researcher may have an interest in yielding particular findings or a desire to portray their in-group positively (Fleming, 2018).

While much of the literature has focused on these methodological concerns, few have written about insider research as an ethical choice to study within, rather than without, community. Drawing on feminist and decolonial critiques of research, as well as epistemological approaches to community-based research, I have come to see insider research as an intentional choice about power, representation, and accountability in research. Insider research allows the scholar to talk about her own community, instead of another's. The researcher gaze is turned inward, rather than outward, and the tools of research are employed on ourselves. As such, I pursue insider research because it creates a path for my scholarly identity to join my communal life, and I hope it functions to offer support and accountability to my community.

Insider research thus achieves two important goals for me. On the one hand I see insider research as an important way to utilize my academic resources in the service of my community: as a scholar of race and ethnicity, I can use my knowledge to facilitate reflection, learning, and action; as a teacher with pedagogical training, I can use this expertise to build curriculum; as a scholar with methodological experiences, I can use this skill to research and evaluate our efforts. On the other hand, I see this method as a way to challenge my community and hold them accountable: my scholarly training helps me to contextualize our efforts within broader literature and to issue critiques; it helps me to challenge assumptions and broaden epistemologies; and it helps me to illuminate our failures and missteps. I draw from indigenous scholars to grapple with these ethical implications and think about the larger impacts of this kind of research. To borrow from a quote used by Tuck and Yang (2014),

> "Kahnawake scholar Audra Simpson asks the following questions of her own ethnographic work with members of her nation: 'Can I do this and still come home; what am I revealing here and why? Where will this get us? Who benefits from this and why?' (2007, p. 78). These questions force researchers to contend with the strategies of producing legitimated knowledge based on the colonization of knowledge" (p. 234).

Simpson's questions have shaped my approach to research and ground me in the complications of insider researcher. Insider research, for me, is both an ethical and methodological choice that is intended to yield in-depth knowledge within an communal context.

Ethics of Reciprocity

Additionally, my research is guided by ethics of reciprocity, which I draw from community-based participatory research (CBPR) principles. While this dissertation is not a classic CBPR project—Commission members did not help write the research questions, for instance, or conduct data collection—it does draw on many of the goals of CBPR. I am committed, first and foremost, to ensuring that this research is not exploitative or extractive, and that the Commission receives multiple benefits from working with me. This includes providing compensation for interviews and focus groups; using research time to create resources for the Commission (such as building curricula); offering myself as a support for Commission projects (such as giving feedback or facilitating small group discussion); connecting the Commission to resources within the academy (such as finding grants for their work); and giving key results from the data back to the Commission first (such as a key findings report). Additionally, I shaped my project around the Commission's animating concerns (such as anti-Blackness rather than other important issues like settler colonialism, as I described earlier) as it enabled me to center their goals in the research, which is another example of how I think about ethics recriprocity..

Ethics of Representation

Finally, the nature of this project requires careful attention to the ethics of representation. While this project is designed to have benefit for the Commission, it is also an analysis of their

efforts and I remain the final author of the product. It is possible that participants may feel misrepresented by my analysis; it is possible that my analysis will misrepresent them. I take this responsibility seriously. To this end, I met early on with Commission members to discuss these possibilities and to reiterate that my research may (likely) incorporate a critique of their efforts. I provided them with an example of what that critique might involve, in an effort to ensure that they participate in the project fully informed. Moreover, after analysis, I've done partial member checking in two ways: first, through the development of a research report for the Commission that focused on major themes from the interviews from a strategic development approach (articulating key strengths and weaknesses, for instance, or points of disagreement among membership), as well as a presentation and small group reflection on the report. Secondly, I have had ongoing informal conversations with Commission members, during which I have been able to ask about specific details, such as the timing of a particular event.

The complications of disagreement between researcher and participant is an on-going issue within qualitative research (Borland, 1991; Fine, 2004). I draw from feminist researchers to hold simultaneously two responsibilities: on the one hand, I do the best job I can to deeply understand and represent my participants and their perspectives; on the other hand, I do the best job I can to articulate a charitable critique[7] of the implications of their perspectives, grounding myself in the literatures and theories that shape my analysis. In this spirit, I feel responsible to articulate the vision of the Commission and how I understand their role in the larger movement for racial justice. I focus first on carefully describing their work and then close with critiques that have emerged in the analysis process. I do this in the midst of relationship with them, and as

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[7] Drawing on work by C. Melissa Snarr, who teaches her students to approach a text with both charity and critique.

such, this project is an effort to grapple *with* the Commission in the work of faith-based efforts for antiracism.

Data Collection: Entering the Field

During my early days of graduate school, I struggled to find a church that felt like home. As a multiracial person of faith trying to make a new home during graduate school, I was looking for a community who engaged racial justice issues as part of their Christian culture and ethic. This proved difficult to find. Just when I was starting to give up, a mentor told me about a historically Black Episcopal church in the area, which I call St Absalom's in this dissertation, and in the fall of 2017 I risked a visit. I was not disappointed. The church family was tight, engaged, active, and vocal about many social justice issues. The fellowship hall was covered with pictures of the community through the decades, as well as notable Black Episcopalians. I was welcomed quickly into the fold, and began to feel like part of the family through the coffee hours, Mardi Gras feasts, birthday celebrations, and weekly liturgy. As I learned more about their role as one of only two Black churches in the diocese and as the home of the Beloved Community Commission, I became increasingly curious about ways my graduate training in community organizing and critical race theory might be valuable to their efforts. After a few months of gentle conversation, in early 2018 I was invited to attend a Commission meeting to share more about myself and my vision, and we eventually agreed that I would become a research partner to the Commission.

Reciprocity in Research: Becoming a Catalyst Program

It was important to us that this relationship be reciprocal and beneficial to both parties, and so while I worked on the IRB, I simultaneously looked for opportunities to support their endeavors. By the middle of 2018, I had spent enough time with them to identify two things: first, they were very focused on educational interventions and wanted to facilitate some kind of curriculum about antiracism; and second, that they had not yet developed a shared or formal approach to defining racism, in large part due to limited resources (time, energy, pedagogical training). I volunteered to work on a curriculum that would support this effort. Initially, this curriculum was framed as a train-the-trainers program in order to help Commission members feel more equipped leading dialogue groups across the diocese. My ideas were well received and so I collected the group's broad hopes for the curriculum—that it would talk about white privilege, engage internalized oppression, be faith-based, etc. I then reached out to a colleague in the religion department to see if she wanted to help. I knew that I would need a collaborator who was Black, studied religion, and was interested in community organizing. This colleague, Leah Lomotey Nakon, agreed to join, and I started applying for grants to fund what we were tentatively calling "Train the Trainers."

We facilitated the first cohort in the fall of 2018 and learned two important things: first, that the program was very impactful and generative for the participants; and second, that participants would need more training in order to feel competent taking on a role as a formal "trainer." By this point we had a waitlist for a second cohort, and so we changed the name to "Becoming a Catalyst" and shifted the focus of the program from a "train the trainer" program to a "racism 101" course. The program continued to grow in size and popularity, and I was able to find more grants to fund it. By the end of 2020, Leah and I had facilitated six cohorts to reach over 60 people, and had received exceptional feedback.

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While the primary goal of this program was to bolster Commission presence in the diocese and strengthen their analytic approach to racism, it has also functioned as a research project for Leah and me. Participants of the program were covered in my IRB, so we recorded each session, took collaborative field notes, and saved key artifacts from the small groups. The vast majority of the data from the "Becoming a Catalyst" program (over 100 hours of audio recording) is not included in this dissertation due to scope and size; however it has been an impactful experience alongside my dissertation data collection, particularly because of the relationships developed with participants of the program, as well as the reflective conversations between Leah and me. We plan to work on publishing this project once our dissertations are complete.

Participant Observation and Field Notes

In the midst of developing and facilitating the "Becoming a Catalyst" program, I continued to be active in the regular work of the Commission—attending monthly meetings as a participant, but also as a researcher to record the conversation and take field notes (Spradley, 1979). I also attended all the major Commission activities as a participant observer (Spradley, 1979), which included formal monthly meetings, subcommittee planning meetings, informal conversations, virtual and in-person events, liturgical services, and more. I estimate over 200 hours were spents in these activities. I primarily focused writing (or verbal recording) field notes on formal meetings and events; I had 38 field notes for data anlaysis. In retrospect, I wish that I had been more regimented about writing fields notes and had more to draw from during analysis; because of this limitation, I made sure that I had interview evidence to support any emerging themes and I was not only relying on field note or memory. My field notes focused on four areas:

(1) descriptive notes about what occurred; (2) emerging theoretical questions and hypotheses related to the event; (3) methodological records of the collection event; and (4) personal thoughts and feelings during the event.

Research Questions

In the first year, I had not planned to make the Commission the focus of my dissertation, but as 2018 concluded, I realized that important aspects of the work might be aligning to support a dissertation: I had a great deal of energy and excitement for the Commission's efforts; I had a strong working relationship with the community; and my research questions were becoming clear. In early 2019 I began conversations with the group about my interest in writing my dissertation about their work and was again warmly received. I began to write my dissertation proposal and developed three research questions:

1. Why has this Commission emerged and how does it imagine and pursue "Beloved Community?"

2. How does the Commission use *community engagement practices* to build the "Beloved Community," and what do these practices assume, enable, and foreclose about racial justice?

3. How does the Commission use *theologies and faithful practices* to build the "Beloved Community," and what do these practices assume, enable, and foreclose about racial justice?

These questions are specific to the Commission and emerge out of my larger scholarly concerns with the role of religion in social change and the questions I have listed on page six (What do faith-based communities offer to the work of racial justice? Why and how is religion important

to racial justice, if at all? What are the limitations of religious efforts for racial justice?). My hopes with this project were to investigate the concrete ways that communities leverage their faith resources, such as theologies, faithful practices, and social processes in the pursuit of racial justice.

Reciprocity in Research: Training and Education Subcommittee

Once it was agreed that my dissertation would focus on the Commission, we began another round of discussion how to ensure this was a reciprocal relationship. In this spirit, I continued to facilitate the Catalyst program and also agreed to serve as the chair of the Commission's Training and Education subcommittee. As chair, I facilitated a mission statement process for the subcommittee in order to undergird the Commission educational goals with strong learning objectives and outcomes. In this role I also helped build the Commission's "network" of members by connecting participants of the "Becoming a Catalyst" program to specific Commission projects. For instance, a member of the third "Becoming a Catalyst" cohort eventually volunteered to do administrative work for the Training and Education subcommittee and a year later became a formal member of the Commission.

Additionally, at the end of my data collection time in 2020 I agreed to work as Research and Teaching Fellow for the group (10 hours/week). In this capacity, I developed two more curricula for the Commission, who was eager to start leading workshops across the diocese. I also helped write three community grants which were all awarded and helped fund Commission goals and programs.

Interviews and Focus Groups

Alongside this service for the Commission, I conducted in depth individual interviews and focus groups of Commission members (12 people), which took place near the conclusion of my data collection period after I had done two years of participant observation. I focused on Commission members in order to gather the history of the Commission, collect their varied reflections and motivations, and to attend to each of them individually, after having spent two years working with them collectively.

Grounded in established standards of ethnographic methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I approached these interviews as an open-ended process with some key guiding questions (Charmaz, 2014; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Spradley 1979). For each interview and focus group, I developed a list of questions that were sent to participants ahead of time, but during the interview the process was largely informal and conversational (See Appendix B and C for interview guides). Not every question was covered, our discussions took unique paths that were unexpected, and I often developed a new question in the midst of our conversation. Broadly speaking, however, the interviews were designed to clarify how Commission members understood their work, the racial politics and assumptions that undergirded their efforts, how they grappled with the struggles of the work, and how they navigated differences. Each of these conversations were recorded, transcribed (by a transcription service), edited, and carefully coded. Most interview and focus groups lasted two hours and took place at the Curb Center at Vanderbilt. Participants signed an informed consent document and were compensated.

Textual Analysis

I also gathered a series of texts, documents, and artifacts related to the Commission's efforts. These include resolutions presented by the Commission, resolutions from the Episcopal Church (TEC), theological writings from TEC, and documents from TEC's office for racial reconciliation. These items help provide a history of the Commission's work as well as contextualize their efforts within the larger Episcopal agenda for Beloved Community. Additionally, these documents represent formal and public positions from TEC and serves as guidance for their theological commitments. I drew on these documents to triangulate work by the Commission with larger work happening in TEC, and to consider the ways the Commission is undergirded by the larger movement. For instance, the Commission drew heavily from resolutions that are passed at General Convention (as I will unpack further in the chapter on "Institutionalizing Sacred Antiracism"), but also left out other resources from TEC, such as their liturgical resources for repenting of racism. I also used these documents to clarify particular theological positions, such as the theology of imago Dei, and coded these documents with the same coding structure I used for participant interviews. I have included some of these documents in Appendix A (those that were two pages or less); longer documents I have listed with a web address.

Research Participants

The Beloved Community Commission had 12 participants at the time when I was collecting data. During my three years with them, aspects of the group makeup did shift—one of the co-chairs changed, new members were added, some members stepped back, but overall the group remained fairly consistent. Of these members, all but two were over 50 years old: one in

their 20s, one in their 40s, five in their fifties, three in their 60s, one in their 70s and one in their 80s. Seven participants were white and five were African American. Seven members were female and five were male. Five were clergy and four had an M.D. or a Ph.D. Two members belonged to churches outside of the local city; three participants belonged to St Absalom's; the remaining seven participants were in other Episcopal parishes across the city. Participants are listed by pseudonym in the table below. Some participants who played a very limited role on the Commission at the time of data collection, or who had only been with the Commission for a brief period of time, are quoted only occasionally (one participant is not quoted at all). This does not imply that these participants have had no impact or leadership on the Commission, but rather that their reflections were said more concisely by another participant or that they were still developing their thoughts about a certain topic. In the period after data collection many of these dynamics shifted and less-active participants became more active, as is common in community groups.

Table 1

Participant Pseudonyms

Name	Race	Gender
Raymond Hughes	African American	Male
Allegra Jones	African American	Female
Natalie Nichols	White	Female
Ellen Patterson	White	Female
Victor Black	African American	Male
Jane Hoffman	White	Female
Deborah Lowe	White	Female
Martin Edwards	African American	Male
Annie Wagner	White	Female
Kevin Woody	African American	Male
Marielle Stewart	White	Female
Lee Richards	White	Male

Data Analysis

By 2020, I had completed data collection and was ready to begin analysis. I had been able to win some grants for data transcription and new software, but needed to review and edit all of them, as well as learn how to analyze them in ATLAS.ti. I began by prioritizing my data, as I knew that the amount of data would yield multiple products. I focused first on formal Commission activities: interviews of every Commission member (12), focus groups (3), field notes from meetings and events (28), and primary text items, such as local or national Episcopal resolutions (19). I stopped importing new data gathered after mid 2020, but still made note of important events after mid 2020, for future projects. Everything from the Catalyst program I

bookmarked for another project with Leah. All of the Training and Education subcommittee data was also held back, since it did not involve the whole Commission.

Open Coding

Having established the boundaries of my data, I started a process of recurring coding to organize the data and draw out key themes (Saldaña, 2009). I did a combination of inductive and deductive coding, drawing some codes from my theoretical framework and most organically from the data itself. This allowed me to systematically organize the data while also allowing nuances and unexpected results to emerge (Bernard, 2011; Cummings & Norwood, 2012). As I coded, I kept a logbook on how I was developing codes and what choices I was making in the analysis. I started first by reading and editing every transcript and document, and then shifted into my first round of open coding—an open-ended and inductive process of gathering up the key ideas through initial codes (Charmaz, 2006). For instance, early on I identified a great deal of frustration with the bishop in the data. During open coding, I tracked this theme by putting a "Bishop" code everywhere the bishop was mentioned. During this open coding process, I tried to do broad coding and make notes of ways I might organize or code more closely in the next rounds.

Focused Coding

Ideally, I had planned to do a full round of open coding on all the documents, and then come back for a second round of focused coding, which uses the results of open coding to organize the data and develop subthemes and subcategories (Charmaz, 2006). However, I found that an iterative, more frequent coding process was better for making sense of my data. For

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instance, I had initially planned to read every document and put "Bishop" everywhere applicable, and then return later to nuance. However, I found that after a few transcripts, I was already seeing patterns that I was ready to highlight within the "Bishop" code. Additionally, it felt increasingly important to capture my in-process thoughts and adjustments to the codes, and the logbook wasn't able to do this the way I wanted. So rather than doing a round of open coding on all the transcripts and then coming back for focused coding on all the transcripts, I did my rounds of coding iteratively as patterns developed: Once I was seeing patterns in a major code develop, I paused to iterate those emerging subcodes, then re-code the previous documents with the new subcodes, and then move into the new documents. I repeated this process multiple times for the major codes.

For instance, once I had identified an initial code "Bishop" during open coding and had placed it on various sections in a few transcripts, I was ready to nuance it. I created, for instance, the code "Bishop_Approach-Disengaged" and wrote this descriptor: "This code describes moments were participants expressed frustration with the bishop for being hands off, not investing, distant, lack of communication, not leading, hard to reach, non-pastoral." I then applied this to applicable sections of the transcript that were already marked with "Bishop." I also looked for divergence in the data, and for instance, coded a few sections of "Bishop" as "Bishop_Approach-Supportive" (and defined this code). I then started reviewing transcripts that had not yet been coded and used this new system—I coded large sections still as "Bishop," but then also applied "Bishop_Approach-Disengaged" or "Bishop_Approach-Supportive" when applicable. As a new pattern within the "Bishop" code developed, I repeated the process again: pause; identify and define the new subcode; apply it to previously coded transcripts; move on to new transcripts. I used this same iterative coding process on every major open code (such as

"Diocese" "Commission" "Faith" and "Theory"). At the end of my coding I had a total of 109 codes. My codebook is included in Appendix D.

Writing Process

As I coded the data, I simultaneously wrote memos every week. These memos helped me to nuance codes further, think about connections between codes, and draw out representative quotes. This writing also prompted me to immerse myself in key sections of the data I would be writing about and move into theory creation. Every few weeks I would send a memo to my advisor, and occasionally to Leah, to discuss what I was seeing in the data. Peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) has been an impactful part of my writing process, both for providing accountability, but also for facilitating reflection.

Reciprocity in Research: Commission Reports

My first pieces of writing, after the memo, was a timeline of the Commission's emergence. This helped to orient me to all the moving pieces and the ways the Commission has developed; it also serves as another way to give back to the group, as they were hoping to have their work documented and archived. Second, I wrote up a report for the Commission, outlining key themes, strengths, and weaknesses that came out of the data. For instance, a key strength of the Commission was the relationships and commitment of the members; a key weakness was the lack of resource and compensation for the members, who may burn out from lack of support. This report functioned again as a way to give back to the Commission and offer initial feedback. It was primarily descriptive and pragmatic, and much of that report does not make it into this dissertation, simply because it is too detailed and descriptive. However, both of these pieces

helped me to again wrap my head around the big picture of the project. For instance, by writing the report, it became clear to me that one of the challenges for the Commission is crafting a long-term strategic vision. In the report, I wrote specifically about the dynamics of this—being all volunteer, lack of diocesan leadership, small budget, differences in goals among participants, etc. In the dissertation, I gesture to this theme broadly and write about the challenges grassroots groups face in doing social change work. This is an example of how my writings for the Commission informed the dissertation, but were a separate product.

Dissertation Iterations

After these reports, I visioned an outline for the dissertation based on TEC's three-fold approach: reconciliation, healing, and justice. I spent six months writing these chapters and applying my theoretical framework to the data (which at the time focused on literature about racial reconciliation, intergroup contact studies, and critical race theory). After hitting a series of road blocks in the writing, my advisor encouraged me to stick more closely to the data and take some time off. I took a four month break and thought about my coding structure, and realized that the framework of reconciliation, healing, and justice didn't actually reflect the way the Commission thinks about their work. So I re-started with a more inductive approach to my writing. As I did so, the dissertation came together in the format before you: three chapters focused on the idea of sacred antiracism, and how the Commission envisions, operationalizes, and institutionalizes that idea. I simplified my theoretical framework and condensed my critiques to the conclusion, and this project was birthed.

Trustworthiness of the Data

As with all qualitative studies, the trustworthiness of this project is judged by four criteria: credibility (truth value), transferability (applicability in other settings—such as comparing how my findings help make sense of other Episcopal commissions, or how they apply to other Christian antiracism efforts), dependability (consistency of findings), and confirmability (results the reflect the respondents' views) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I utilize a number of qualitative research practices to ensure this project is rigorous and robust. During data collection I relied on *prolonged engagement* with the Commission to participate in a diversity of activities, build relationships, and have in-depth conversations. Moreover, my data collection processes are *triangulated* and come through multiple pathways (observation, interviews, focus groups, and text) and multiple perspectives (Commission members alone and together; Commission members at events, meetings, and 1:1 interviews; and perspectives from all Commission members).

Through data analysis, I utilized *negative case analysis* to actively look for contradictions and divergences in my emerging results. I employed an *adapted process of member checking* to invite participants to consider my findings and provide their own thoughts about my conclusions. Finally, I relied on *peer debriefing* to discuss my emerging thoughts with outside perspectives and to explicitly examine how my hidden assumptions are shaping my analytic conclusions.

In the writing stage, I used *thick description* to contextualize my findings and allow the reader to draw her own conclusions. *Story-telling* is a key way that I communicate the conclusion of my research, inviting the reader into a moment that allows us to explore broader themes and dynamics. I also include *detailed explanation of the methods and analysis*, including a natural history of the methodological choices made and concrete examples of analytic decisions, to provide the reader with specifics about my data collection and analysis process. All of these choices serve to clearly show the ready why and how I have drawn my conclusion, as well as

allow the reader to immerse herself in my data and draw her own conclusions. This project is the

result of three years of careful relationship development, in-depth data collection and analysis,

and reflective writing.

Chapter 3 Envisioning Sacred Antiracism: Naming Racism as a Sin and Spiritual Illness

> If there would ever be such a thing as healing and or reconciliation, it would require a confession, some kind of confession of wrong done on the part of white people. It would have to be some kind of serious recognition of sin. I like healing because I guess I keep coming back that orthodox theological view as sin as a disease. You can get sick, but you can get better. – Lee Richards Commission Member

Introduction

When Allegra Jones wrote her letter condemning police brutality, she never knew it would trigger such activity within the diocese. Social movement scholars would call it a political opportunity: her letter built on a shift in the informal power relations of the U.S. and the diocese (McAdam McCarthy, & Zald, 1996). January of 2015 was only five months after Michael Brown's death, which stirred the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement and contemporary critiques of American racism, and as such the issue of race was on people's minds. As I got to know members of the Commission and slowly heard the story of how the Commission came into being, I was struck by how many people vividly remember the 2015 convention, and how profoundly that specific moment got race on the diocesan agenda in a new way. Raymond Hughes, a Black male who attends the same church as Allegra, was the delegate tasked with presenting the resolution at convention. When he got to the room that day, it was completely full. He remembers, "It was a small room, but there were a minimum of 70 people in that room. They were just packed in there." Raymond began to introduce the resolution and the audience became increasingly agitated. Another Commission member, Natalie Nichols (white female), recounted,

> And so I went to that session and Raymond was presenting it and people were angry. They were standing up and shaking their fist at him and talking about 'our sons and

daughters are policemen and how dare you,' you know? And Raymond was just like cool as a cucumber.

After Raymond finished his presentation, the audience responded with a round of negative comments: some said the references about policing in the document were illegitimate, others felt it stereotyped police and was disrespectful to law enforcement, and others argued that the diocese did not have enough information about the situation to make any kind of statement. After the audience comments ended, Raymond took a different tactic: "And I asked the group, 'do you think racism, and its adjunct, police brutality, is a sin?' Then it got quiet."

At the end of that session, a small committee, including Raymond, met to work on the resolution wording to help it pass. This is a typical process for resolutions, especially controversial ones. The goal is to get something passed that is acceptable to both proponents and opponents of the document; in rare cases, this is not achieved and the resolution is thrown out. In this case, one piece of the revision included bringing more theological language to the forefront. Deborah Lowe, a white female, was also present at the session and explained,

> But I can remember looking at the Baptismal Covenant and replacing some of the language of censure [in the original resolution] with more positive language, regarding, um, resisting evil and coming back to Christ. The evil, not being police, but abuse of power. And, and that was implied without actually saying it.

Reframing the language to draw on theology, and particularly Episcopal baptismal vows, was an important way to bring opponents of the resolution on board. The Commission drew on their own language and traditions to frame the resolution as part of Episcopal spiritual calling and formation. Framing processes are a key part of social movements, providing meaning and definition to a situation to facilitate collective action (McAdam McCarthy, & Zald, 1996; Benford & Snow, 2000). Framing gives movements the shared language, ideas, and understandings to legitimate action. The Commission's key work has been articulating a spiritual frame to understand the problem of racism and the urgency of antiracism. This chapter outlines

how the Commission's work to sanctify antiracism takes shape and why framing antiracism as a sacred endeavor is important to the work of disrupting racism. I will argue that religious communities, as shown in this case, are uniquely prepared to intervene in the ontological dyanmics of racism and foster antiracist spirituality.

Theologizing Race and Racism: The Sin of Racism

Explicitly naming racism as a sin is the foremost piece of the Commission's framing efforts. I encountered language about the sin of racism in resolutions, both local and national; in pastoral letters from the House of Bishops; in sermons from the pulpit; in interviews and focus groups; in Commission workshops and events; and during Commission meetings. The concept undergirds the Commission's theory of change and method of intervention and is the most crucial piece to understand how and why they spiritualize the work of antiracism.

As demonstrated by the above quote, the Commission has been clear from day one that racism is unequivocally a sin, that it is counter to the Christian faith, and that its existence reflects a deficient spiritual formation. By naming racism as a sin, the Commission uses their theological resources to articulate their vision of why and how antiracism must be part of Christian practice. In this chapter I unpack the Episcopal approach to racism as a sin and concretize how the Commission makes antiracism a "sacred" endeavor (Houston & Todd, 2013; Todd et al., 2014; Todd et al., 2015) that can transform ontological whiteness (powell, 2012).

The Theology of Imago Dei

Episcopal approaches to the sin of racism are largely built on the theology of imago Dei (that humanity is made in the image of God) and subsequently a claim that racism is a violation

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of this theology. In almost every instance where I encountered a call to Beloved Community and antiracism, it was attached to a theological claim about inherent human value. Numerous participants emphasized that "we're all God's children," "we're all beloved," "we're all created in God's image and worthy" of "dignity and respect." The emphasis, again and again, that every human is valuable—sacred, as an image-bearer of God—and thus has inherent value and rights, is the theological foundation of the Episcopal movement for racial healing, justice, and reconciliation. It is from this place that the calls to action are made.

The concept of imago Dei draws directly from Episcopal readings of the Genesis story, where humans are described as created in God's own image, and thus, particularly valuable and good. A letter from the House of Bishops in 2006 explains,

> The fundamental truth undergirding this vision [a peaceable kingdom of justice and shalom] is that all are made in the image of God. It is in our diversity that we discover the fullness of that image. If we judge one class or race or gender better than another, we violate that desire and intent of God. And when our social and cultural systems exacerbate or codify such judgments, we do violence to that which God has made. Racism is a radical affront to the good gift of God, both in the creation described in Genesis, and in the reality of the Incarnation (The Episcopal Church, 2006).

The bishops argue that human diversity is a reflection of God, and thus should be honored, valued, celebrated, and protected. They further emphasize that hierarchy or superiority amongst humans is antithetical to the imago Dei. Racism is understood as a violation of the imago Dei because it suggests that some humans are not image-bearers and/or that others are superior image bearers.

Imago Dei as Mutual Humanity

The Commission draws on imago Dei theology to articulate their vision for their faith community, and ultimately the larger world. Three of the five resolutions sent to annual

convention employ the same statement: "Whereas, everyone is diminished when the dignity of any human being, created in the image of God, is compromised…" This statement not only claims humans are equally created as imaged of God but takes it a step further by claiming that a violation of the image of God in anyone is a violation in all of us. That is, the theology suggests that our humanity (our imago Dei) depends upon the humanity of each other. It further suggests that those who enact racism, as well as those who experience racism, are harmed by the process.

This claim has something very important to offer antiracism work because it prompts us to not only consider how targets of racism are injured, but to also consider how the perpetrators of racism are also harmed, despite their material gains. This idea suggests that the oppressor's humanity is compromised in their act of oppression—that it literally damages one's humanity and createdness. This approach to understanding racism is a deeply spiritual approach to antiracism, as it connects antiracism to the redemption of our own humanity, as well as the humanity of others.

The Lie of Racism: Whiteness

A key way that the Commission and the Episcopal Church (TEC) approach the sin of racism is by framing it as a lie. Imago Dei claims that all humans are inherently valuable and interconnected; racism is thus a lie that purports a hierarchy of human value and fosters disconnect. As the House of Bishops stated in the 1994 letter:

> Racism perpetuates a basic untruth which claims the superiority of one group of people over others because of the color of their skin, their cultural history, their tribal affiliation, or their ethnic identity. This lie distorts the biblical understanding of God's action in creation, wherein all human beings are made "in the image of God." It blasphemes the ministry of Christ who died for all people, "so that everyone who believes in him may not perish by have eternal life." (John 3:16 NRSV) This lie divides people from one another and gives false permission for oppression and exploitation (The Episcopal Church, 1994)

Understanding racism as a lie is one of the crucial pieces that the imago Dei theology offers to the work of the Beloved Community. In this paradigm, racism's suggestion that some people are better than others (contradicting the imago Dei) falsely justifies advantages to be given to those people who are seen as superior and to disadvantage others, which functions to divide a community that should be unified. In other words, racism is an act of lying about self or others. According to this theology, when one believes this lie, enacts it, perpetuates it, and practices it, they sin and separate themselves from God.

Critical Race Theory: History of Whiteness

The notion of racism as a lie is not new, nor is it only a religious idea (see Oliver's (2021) review of how James Baldwin, for instance, developed this theory of the "myth of whiteness" or read Baldwin's piece "On Being 'White' and Other Lies"). Critical Race Theory scholars emphasize that the category "white" is neither ethnic nor related to any particular heritage, but rather based on a political position of oppression and power (Lipsitz, 2006; Harris, 1993; Applebaum, 2010; Frankenberg, 2005; Roediger, 1991; Leonardo, 2009). "Modern white racial consciousness" (powell, 2012, p. xx) was strategically developed during colonization to justify chattel slavery and native genocide/land theft during the early stages of the American project (Kendi, 2016). As the American state developed, ostensibly based on ideas of inalienable human rights and fair political representation, the simultaneous enslavement, genocide, and land theft raised profound cognitive dissonance in the larger political consciousness. Thus, a new ontological system of human hierarchy was constructed to resolve the dissonance, which we now called race. This categorization system "explained" why some bodies could be enslaved, killed, or dispossessed (Mills, 1997; Harris, 1993). A comprehensive process of labeling "heathens" and

"savages" as nonhuman beings, and thus, justifying their extinction and exploitation, led to the idea of, identification with, and codification of "white" at the top of the hierarchy (Harris, 1993).

Moreover, racial/ethnic literature emphasizes that notions of whiteness were developed in opposition to blackness and nativeness. That is, "white" came to be understood by it was not—it was not enslaved, not property-less, not pagan (Harris, 1993). "The white social category was inscribed in the separate Hobbesian self and defined by its ability to exclude and distance itself from the other, especially the black other" (powell, 2012, p. xx). Modern notions of selfhood, identify, freedom, and liberty all emerged from the socio-political-religious-scientific forces of this era. This damning history helps us to track the problem of ontological whiteness—an identity that was developed with a political purpose for exploitation, that has been codified, preserved, protected, and internalized over centuries.

While many CRT scholars describe how this process took place through law and legal precedent, and others emphasize the materiality of the process and its consequences, I want to focus on the spiritual and ontological repercussions. Racism shapes how individuals understand their sense of self, their role in the world, their very existence—and all these conceptualizations further shape how individuals understand others, their relationships with others, and, for religious folks, their relationship with God. These are deeply spiritual issues. By focusing on the ontological and spiritual dynamics of racism, I bring attention to the deep aspects of the selfhood and meaning-making that are developed in the context of racism. W.E.B. Du Bois (1920), for instance, called whiteness a religion in his essay *The Souls of White Folks* (p. 924) and argued that white internalized superiority is a key piece of what drives colonization. Zeus Leonardo (2009) has similarly written about white ontology and the choices white people face about how to make sense of their connection to whiteness.

I draw especially on work by powell (2012), who articulates the problem of the white modern self (alienated, fearful, exclusionary, and isolated) and calls for the creation of new ways to understand ourselves and our connection to each other. He specifically names the need for spirituality in this work—"moving beyond a view of the self as separate and unconnected is a profoundly spiritual project" (powell, 2012, p. 161) and calls for "the deepest reaches of our being" (powell, 2012, p. xix) to be engaged. Like the Commission, he argues that we must create new selves—new spirits—freed from racism and whiteness in order to dismantle the racism. This process, he notes should not be an "ontolgocial death" but rather a humanizing transformation of "new relationships and new ways of being" (powell, 2021, p. xviii) which I describe as an ontological "rebirth." I suggest that faith communities—such as the Commission—can offer the space and process for the ontological work that can conceive of a mutually connected self, which in turn can facilitate a rebuilding of our social and political systems.

Whiteness and Dehumanization

As the Commission works to articulate how each of us have inherent dignity (imago Dei) and that to deny or violate another's intrinsic value (to dehumanize), they make claims for "a mutual, shared humanity" (powell, 2012, p. xx). By arguing that racism is harmful to both the victim and the perpetrator, they bring a broader focus on racism as a system of oppression with spiritual repercussions. That is to say, ontological whiteness not only requires dehumanization of the racial Other, but it functions to dehumanize the self. By making themself superior and exclusionary, the Comission argues that the white self loses their humanity and their connection with the Divine Creator. Deborah reflected on this idea, explaining,

> Um, and, um, you know, white supremacy, the white construction of racism to subjugate
> one group of persons with different characteristics from themselves. Um, it, there's

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tremendous agency in that, to willingly negate their own humanity in order to subjugate somebody else is … there's, there's just a real level of the word depravity comes to mind because of the agency with which it was done …You can only do that if you're so estranged from yourself as a creature, as a beloved creation. You can only do that if you don't understand yourself as part of, of something larger than yourself or your community.

Deborah is grappling with the repercussions of ontological whiteness and drawing on this idea of racism as a sin that dehumanizes. She suggests, just like powell (2012) that white supremacy is a construction based in an "estranged self" who cannot understand that their humanity is bound up in the humanity of another. Moreover, this participant suggests that racism creates estrangement from God—not only does it dehumanize the self and distort relationships between the self and others, but it also damages one's connection to the Divine. The Commission emphasizes this idea in their resolutions, as discussed in the previous section, where they state: "Whereas, everyone is diminished when the dignity of any human being, created in the image of God, is compromised." By framing racism as dehumanizing to the perpetrator as well as the target, the Commission describes a holistic approach to antiracism that engages an ontology grounded in relationship (with others and God) and is participating in creative action for human flourishing.

Recovering and redeeming the estranged self, the Commission suggests, is deeply spiritual and theological. They argue thus that our beliefs about God, ourselves, and each other that must be healed in order to address the damage of racism.

Racism as Disease and Woundedness: Antiracism as Spiritual Wellness

"Be easy with one another. Everybody is bleeding from a secret wound and trying not to let the stain show."[8] This verse was shared during a focus group and was taken up by participants to talk about the comprehensive damage caused by racism. During our discussion, the group emphasized this idea that all of us are hurting and need loving care to recover. Finding commonality in this woundedness, and in the reality that racism harms all of us, is a foundational piece of how the Commission addresses racism with their diocese. In fact, communicating the idea that racism harms everyone is an explicit goal in the Commission's mission statement: "Educate members about the effects of racism on people of color and white people and to convey the understanding that racism hurts everyone." The importance of framing racism as something that harms all of us—not just people of color—is a key piece of the Commission's approach to antiracism. Much of how they do this work is through discourse of woundedness. Likening racism to a disease that needs to be diagnosed and treated, the Commission sees itself in a healing role—helping the diocese to name and address the internal damage caused by racism. As Natalie explains,

> Well, I think of healing more on like the disease model, where a person is made, whether they're white or black, meaning white people become racist because they're wounded in a way that was handed down to them generationally, or maybe even it's something from their own life experience. Whether it's overt or covert, something has caused this disease, and so, something has to happen to bring sight again, because their sight has been closed, and that's a healing.

Many members of the Commission work in the medical field and employing the disease model as a way to understand racism—and in turn, racial healing—was compelling to many of them.

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[8] I was later unable to find the reference and translation for this verse, but the reading of it was recorded in the transcript of the focus group. I include it here not to make a claim about Christian scripture, but because it had so much resonance for the participants of the focus group.

Many on the Commission emphasized that much of the larger diocese is not even aware of the problem of racism and thus, the Commission sees an important piece of its work as bringing awareness to racism as a sin and a spiritual illness. For instance, Martin Edwards, a Black male explained,

> First of all, as you say, you can't heal unless you got a disease. First of all, I've got to make a diagnosis before I can treat it. So we've got to make the diagnosis first…Write the prescription, but I got to have, I got to know what's wrong with you first.

The disease paradigm for racism is important to the Commission because it shifts the narrative to woundedness and healing, providing an opportunity for their community to release defensiveness about racism and instead make a choice for spiritual health.

The Episcopal Church similarly draws on this concept of woundedness in addressing racism. For instance, in their 1994 letter from the House of Bishops explained,

> Our first commitment as members of the House of Bishops is to recognize that we are part of a body that is seriously infected with racism, acknowledging to ourselves, individually and collectively, that our spiritual health is endangered by an insidious and destructive virus (The Episcoal Church, 1994)

The Bishops reiterate in a letter in 2006 the same idea and emphasize that racism is a "pervasive sin that continues to plague our common life in the church and in our culture" (The Episcopal Church, 2006). In the wound/disease paradigm, racism is understood as harmful to racists, as well as the targets of racism. Thus, they treat antiracism not only as an ethical mandate or a penance for wrong doing (although those concepts are still incorporated by the Commission), but most importantly it is also a choice for wellness. As such, the Commission sees antiracism as a pathway to re-humanize everyone on their faith community—a method to cut out the racism that violates humanity's intrinsic worth and mutuality.

Racial Healing

> Raymond: I heard somebody tell a story, and it is applies to this particular situation. There was a guy who was fearful that his family was going to be a hurt by the people who lived somewhere else. So he bought a bunch of bars for his window. He reinforced his roof and he felt safe. Until the house caught on fire and he couldn't find the key to open up the bars to let everybody out. All right. So he and his family got killed because he couldn't find the key. And I had to think about that for a minute.
>
> Sara: So in your story, the person who's creating a prison for themselves essentially-
>
> Raymond: Yes.
>
> Sara: - is a white person.
>
> Raymond: Yes.
>
> Sara: And their racism is creating a cage in which they die.
>
> Raymond: Right.

As the Commission frames racism as a sin and spiritual illness, they provide opportunities for their faith community to participate in antiracism and spiritual wholeness—to develop new selves and new ontologies (powell, 2012). Their overarching goal is to see their community transformed—freed from the sin and toxicity of racism and living into God's vision of Beloved Community. For the Commission, the healing discourse is an effort to claim the possibility for redemption and newness, emphasizing a spirit of unity and spiritual wellness. However, the question remains: How is racial healing achieved? What is the process, and what does it look like?

My research with the Commission emphasizes three pieces of racial healing: confronting the reality of racism, taking accountability for it, and making changes in one's life. The Commission is not looking to minimize the realities of racism. For them, healing and transformation can only come after the hard and painful work of honestly confronting racism—

the opening of the "wound" and diagnosing it. That is to say, part of healing the "lie" of racism

includes truth telling.

To facilitate this process, the Commission uses theology and practices of confession. One

clergy member of the Commission, Lee Richards (white male) explained,

If there would ever be such a thing as healing and or reconciliation, it would require a

confession, some kind of confession of wrong done on the part of white people. It would have to

be some kind of serious recognition of sin. I like healing because I guess I keep coming back that

orthodox theological view as sin as a disease. You can get sick, but you can get better.

Lee emphasizes that healing cannot happen without facing racism and taking accountability for

it. He suggests that people, particularly white people, must name and understand the sinfulness

and wrongdoing of racism in order to move toward healing. Victor Black, a Black male, added,

> You know I was thinking, the way you respond is, you have to recognize whatever you've
> done that makes it a sin. So people have to acknowledge, you know, go back and look at
> the history and find, "this is what we've been doing, and we ought to stop." Was it Bishop
> Tutu's *Book of Forgiveness* says you've got to "name the hurt"? Put it on a paper, talk
> about it. And then you work on it … I think we're doing exactly what we're supposed to
> do, we talk about it, research it, find out how we've been guilty of this, and what we're
> going to do about it.

The Commission sees their role as creating space and opportunity for the sin of racism to be

named and confessed. Allegra added,

> We're all in this mess together and as we help each other, we help ourselves because
> that's what we as God's children, God's chosen have been commanded to do. And [the
> Commission's] piece is dealing with stripping away, trying to, I can't say strip away the
> blinders because the blinders are there because they're self-imposed, but bringing
> awareness. Because we can only bring awareness to the people, they have to want to take
> the blinders off.

Honest accountability—"removing the blinders"—as these participants emphasize, is understood

as fundamental to healing. Without honest confrontation with racism, the Commission argues,

racial healing cannot be achieved. As such, the Commission is deeply committed to two key

ideas: first, that racism is a terrible sin that needs to be named and confessed; and second, that racism is not inevitable, but something that can be uprooted and changed in ourselves and our society. Allegra explained,

> I think some fire needs to be lit so that there is an awakening that there is sin among us, and this sin can be ... We can be cleansed of the sin. We can be healed, and we can move forward to a greater tomorrow.

For the Commission, racism—and sin more broadly—are not the end of the story, but rather one chapter. By grounding antiracism so deeply in their faith, the Commission not only develops an ethical mandate to confront racism, but also a roadmap for that confrontation and hope that racism can be conquered.

Conclusion

The Beloved Community Commission—in tandem with TEC—is building a movement to sanctify antiracism. They draw upon three primary religious resources (theology of imago Dei, Episcopal Baptismal Vows, and Christian scripture) to denounce racism as a sin and a violation of God's intent for humanity. Racism, the Commission argues, is a spiritual problem—a sin, a lie, an illness—causing damage to our souls and communities. As such, antiracism is seen not only as a mandate of their faith, but also as a pathway for spiritual wholeness. Without this spiritual intervention, the Commission argues, racial healing and justice cannot truly be created. Antiracism is thus understood as sacred work, facilitating internal transformation to yield communal and social change.

The Beloved Community Commission as an Example of the Sanctification of Social Justice

From a community psychology perspective, the Commission's treatment of antiracism as a spiritual endeavor is an example of the sanctification of social justice (Houston & Todd, 2013;

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Todd et al., 2014). Social scientists who study sanctification processes explore how and why people attach religious values to particular activities, noting that sanctification provides both motivation and meaning to an activity, but that is also shapes behavior and attitudes (Todd et al., 2014). By attributing sacred, divine, or spiritual character to the work of social justice, individuals and communities develop and articulate *religious* understandings of social justice, which in turn shapes their reasons for participating, the way they participate, and the context in which they participate.

Existing literature has focused on how social justice in general is sanctified (such as through claims of religious responsibility to address injustice) and how this sanctification correlates with other variables (such as liberal vs. conservative politics or participation in social justice activities) (Todd & Rufa, 2013). This literature are limited by two key issues: first, it largely treats social justice and religion as separate categories, suggesting that social justice is outside of religion and becomes sanctified by some religious communities. While there are some Christian traditions who approach social justice in this way, other traditions have incorporated social justice into their theology, faith expression, and sacraments. The Episcopal Church is one example of such an integrated religious social justice tradition.

Secondly, this literature is largely quantitative and could be strengthened by an in-depth exploration of the details of the sanctification process: Why is sanctification important to religious communities? How does sanctification vary by denomination? What specific religious resources enable sanctification?

This dissertation of the Beloved Community Commission extends the literature by exploring these questions. Rather than focusing broadly on all Christians, my study investigates a specific denomination and faith tradition (Episcopalianism) and a coalition of individuals who

are acting for change in and through this faith tradition, which has a history of social justice engagement. As such, this study provides concrete details about how religious resources are leveraged in which ways order to sanctify antiracism and new information about the Episcopal movement for racial justice. In particular, I describe how the Beloved Community Commission has intentionally drawn on components of their faith tradition—such as their Baptismal Vows, theology of the imago Dei and sin, and scriptural references—to make theological claims about antiracism as part of the Episcopal social justice tradition and theology. Although Christians widely use these theological resources, the Commission intentionally utilizes them in ways that resonate especially deeply for Episcopalians, which in turn allows possibilities for communal change and activity to emerge.

The Beloved Community Commission as a Multi-Target Social Movement

The Commission's efforts are simultaneously political and spiritual—and indeed, part of their intervention is blurring the line between these two ideas. By arguing that racism is fundamentally a spiritual and religious problem, they link political goals for racial equity with spiritual practice and belief. This is a contribution to both social movement literature and public activism, as it claims that spiritual/ontological interventions are fundamental to social change work. The targets, thus, for the Commission are multiple and multi-layered: most broadly, the Commission tries to impact the political conditions and realities of Americans by impacting the theology and practices of Episcopalians; most narrowly, the Commission pursues change within their own diocese.

Although 14.7% of the U.S. population is mainline Protestant,[9] only about 1.2% of the

population are Episcopalian (Pew Research Center, 2014). As such, some might argue that

Episcopalians are too small a group to make an impact on American politics. However, the

numbers are misleading. While Episcopalians are small in number, they possess a great deal of

political influence. The Episcopal Church is one of the primary and founding features in

American history and society—a site of wealth and power that is fundamentally embedded in the

American establishment (Lipka, 2018; Prichard, 2014).[10] Anglican churches were built in the

earliest settler colonies on the continent, and the clergymen and laymen of these churches were

contributors to the legal and economic systems that emerged in the developing nation—George

Washington and James Madison, for instance, were Episcopalian (Pew Research Center, 2009;

Prichard, 2014). The Episcopal Church accrued enormous amounts of land, wealth, and political

power over the early centuries of colonialism. Episcopalians were centrally involved in trade and

commerce centers, including slavery in both the north and the south; occupied numerous

positions of power, including in the legislature, justice system, and executive office; and founded

elite educational institutions (Ayers, 1981; Prichard, 2014). Notably, 11 American presidents

have been Episcopalian, more than any other denomination (Lipka, 2018); and 4.9% of the

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[9] "Mainline Protestants" are named after the railways in Philadelphia's wealthy suburbs in the early twentieth century: The churches clustered around the railway as prominent features of the landscape, as well as central actors in social, economic, and civic life (Coffman, 2013). These churches, and the Episcopal Church more broadly, were (and many remain) elite and powerful places, attended by wealthy, land-owning, highly educated white men who often held seats of political power.

[10] It is important to note a number of important and influential Black Episcopal churches and Episcopalians (including Thurgood Marshal, W.E.B Du Bois, and Pauli Murray) are a part of the history of this Church, as is outlined in Chapter 1. Broadly speaking, however, the early centuries of TEC excluded and exploited people of color to the benefit of the white membership ensuring that the elite and aristocratic culture of Episcopalians has largely been preserved for whites.

current U.S. Congress is Episcopalian (Pew Research Center, 2021a). Making change in this denomination has the potential for widespread repercussions in boardrooms, shareholder retreats, courtrooms, and congressional sessions.

Sacred Antiracism as a Framing Process

The sacred antiracism approach can also be understood as a collective action frame. Social movement scholars Benford and Snow (2000) suggest that frames are interpretive schemas that provide meaning and significance to the world and mobilize action. Framing processes are a central component of social movements, as important as resource mobilization and political opportunities (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 612; McAdam, MccArthy, & Zald, 1996). Moreover, scholars note that framing processes are agentic and creative endeavors that can produce new meanings and ideas (Benford & Snow, 2000).

The framing of antiracism as part of Christian formation and a sacred endeavor shapes the Commission's movement, providing important inroads with their larger diocese. This also functions as a counter to existing narratives, as noted by participants, that racism is not a religious issue or is irrelevant to Sunday service, or that racism is not a problem for the diocese. Instead, the Commission frames racism as a spiritual issue in order to bring discussion of racism into TEC. By recasting antiracism as an expression of the faith and as part of The Episcopal Baptismal Vows, the Commission obtains legitimate authority to drive the issue and maintain the conversation. Social movement scholars call this work "frame bridging," which is process of connecting frames that are ideologically aligned but not formally understood together (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 624). The Commission's work is largely focused on this bridging process—

linking antiracism to existing Episcopal tradition and demonstrating why and how it should be understand as part of Episcopal faith.

The Commission uses strategic framing of racism—as a sin, a lie, and a wound/illness/disease—alongside their sanctification framing. This three-fold approach allows for a multilayered understanding of racism to emerge, one that involves repentance, truth-telling, and healing. First, by calling racism a sin, the Commission can simultaneously condemn racism as wrong and demand action in response. For instance, the Commission notes that enslaving African Americans was a sin that their founding bishop committed. In this sense, racism is understood an issue of culpability—an action that requires repentance and potentially redress. By framing racism as sinful, antiracism becomes righteous; racist actions are condemned and antiracist activity is mandated.

Second, a further aspect of this sinfulness, according to the Commission and TEC, is that racism is a lie. The solution described for this lie—truth telling—involves honesty alongside repentance. For instance, the Commission calls for activities like truth telling about historical wrongdoing and inherent human value (as described more in the next chapter). The lie of racism, however, is also about misbelief and ontology, and in this sense it is harder to undo. For instance, the Commission and CRT scholars notes that the lie of racism facilitates a false sense of superiority, which functions to justify racial subjugation and disparate life chances. In this framing, antiracism as truth telling is both specific and broad, engaging both concrete facts and the breadth of individual identity.

Finally, the Commission also frames racism as an illness or wound—something that is harmful and perhaps a bit outside of personal control. In this sense, racism is a larger evil, part of

the context in which humans find themselves, and something bigger than personal action or individual repentance. This approach emphasizes antiracism as a process of spiritual healing.

The Commission uses these frames for racism interchangeably as needed. Each approach provides a different inroad with the diocese and draws on a different aspect of the faith. For instance, as they state that repentance and truth telling is a requirement of the faith, they always also emphasize that they are looking for internal transformation and healing, not just an acknowledgement of historical facts. The combined framing of antiracism as sacred and racism as sin/lie/illness provides the impetus for diocesan members to engage with the Commission and participate in their activities (as described in the following chapter). By reframing of antiracism as an issue of spiritual formation, the Commission brings new urgency to the issue and hopes to minimize defensiveness. These framing processes thus complete two important activities: they are first an intervention in theology itself, by connecting Christian formation and antiracism; and second, they provide a pathway to engage the diocese and take action. By interpreting scripture and employing theology to sanctify antiracism and oppose racism, the Commission employs their faith as a tactic while also influencing their diocese as the target. As such, the Commission's call to "be healed" is simultaneously an acknowledgement of a problem, a loving invitation, an aspirational goal, and theology of social change.

The Beloved Community Commission's vision of sacred antiracism is a contribution to both academic literature and public activism, as it calls on the need to incorporate a spiritual and ontological intervention in change work. They demonstrate a strategic use of religious resources and frame antiracism in a nuanced and compelling manner for their target community. Questions remain, however, about how this vision and theology of change is operationalized into action.

How does the Commission communicate sacred antiracism to their diocese? What practices do they use to foster a space for racial healing?

Chapter 4 Operationalizing Sacred Antiracism: Creating Spaces for Racial Healing

> We're giving people an opportunity. If you sit and you talk to us or you come to an event, all right, you, you're not going to leave the same way you came in. All right. You will hear something that rings true to you. Now, and it takes a while for your brain to process everything and make it part of your behavioral pattern. But there are a lot of times I believe that white people are just lazy, alright, because you got everything, so yeah. Alright. And, but the more you hear [about the problem of racism] and then you participate [in our activities]… Like you can't escape it. Yeah. And we've got to keep doing it. And because it is so closely tied to um, uh, racism is a sin. This is not Jesus's way. You are not acting like Christ. Where is your Christian formation? – Raymond Hughes, Commission member

Introduction

The Beloved Community Commission is the first and only committee about race in the diocese, and its members are trying to persuade their community that antiracism is sacred work. As I outlined in the previous chapter, the Commission's primary goal is to transform their faith community, and they do this by making a theological claim that antiracism is a fundamental piece of Christian formation. However, they do not stop at that theological claim—rather, they operationalize their vision for sacred antiracism by actively engaging their community in events, services, prayer, educational activities, pilgrimages, gatherings, discussion groups, and more. The Commission uses these communal activities to give antiracism spiritual import and to hold it sacred. My research revealed that three key priorities guide the Commission's interventions: faith, place, and history. Almost every Commission event engages these three commitments. In this chapter, I concretize these ideas by describing two key Commission activities: hosting the Absalom Jones Service and facilitating a pilgrimage to the Peace and Justice Memorial.

Key Themes: Faith, Place, and History

The Commission weaves faith, place, and history into their activities in both explicit and implicit ways. At times, one theme is emphasized more than the others, but in general, all three of these ideas are embedded into every intervention that the Commission develops.

Faith

All of the commission's work is grounded in their belief that antiracism is a mandate and expression of their faith. Thus, every event connects antiracism to their faith and to Christian formation broadly. Often this looks like referencing theological tenets (such as imago Dei), highlighting the Episcopal Baptismal vows that call for justice in the world, leading or writing specific prayers and litanies, and facilitating liturgical services. These practices all make explicit and implicit references to Christian scripture. For instance, when George Floyd was murdered by police officer Derek Chauvin in 2020, the Commission wrote a litany in honor of George Floyd and organized a weekly time to pray the litany for the month of June. The Episcopal Church has similarly developed a variety of liturgical resources—such as weekly prayers for advent or race-focused litanies of confession—that emphasize the role of faith in antiracism.

These practices are the expression of Episcopal faith and serve to bond the community together. By utilizing these religious resources, the Commission seeks to demonstrate how the Episcopal liturgy and theology are already prepared to address the problem of racism—another example of how the Commission is focused on frame bridging processes (Benford & Snow, 2000). In other words—the Commission sees itself as helping the diocese to realize that antiracism is already part of their faith. In so doing, the Commission expresses a commitment to preserving unity and relationships within their faith community. Their focus is to offer invitation

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to the community, rather than an accusation or condemnation. Martin Edwards, a Black man on the Commission explains,

> We don't want to be confrontational. We want … to do it in partnership together. So that … we can, we get, and we can create a space and an environment where this can be discussed and be discussed civilly and with no blame. No, ah, that kind of discomfort. You know. And then we can come up with solutions, how we can, yeah, it can really, it makes this thing work

The Commission is not trying to draw lines and enforce boundaries, but rather to facilitate a process of spiritual transformation and to do so in the context of a community. For the Commission, true change comes through relationships. Annie Wagner, a white woman on the Commission explains,

> I think we also have to have experiences of true community because I think when we feel comfortable and safe in community, that allows us to risk and that allows us to get outside of our comfort zone and to find out that even when we think we don't have or don't have enough in a broad sense of like that, um, that we're still okay, that we still can be sustained on what we didn't know we didn't need…I think the church is one opportunity for that community… for people to join in community and be guided to take steps… So, um, "how is it that we spend our money? What is it, you know, like something that's kind of resonating with me?" It's like, "what do we do with our space and is that an equitable use of our space? What are we, how are we participating in the larger community?" So I think it's a lot easier to take those steps outside of our comfort zone when we're in the community and that the church is one place for that.

The Commission focuses on invitation and drawing people into antiracism *because* as well as *through* the collective community of their faith. In every Commission activity and event, I found this theme present: connecting antiracism to faith, preserving relationships within their faith community, and offering an invitation for spiritual transformation.

Place

The Commission locates their interventions within the physical and relational bounds of their diocese. While few participants have explicitly reflected on why place is so important, over

my time with the group I have come to see that place is foundational to their sense of calling and vision and implied in every activity. The diocese, for the Commission, is both a physical place and a physical community. As such, the geographic contours of the diocese are layered onto its relational terrain, boundaries, and challenges. As the Commission seeks to dismantle racism in their diocese, they often do so by reflecting upon the specific and local dynamics of place within the diocese. Moreover, some Commission activities intervene in place and relationship simultaneously.

For instance, many Commission members have discussed the implication of having the portrait of the first bishop displayed in the fellowship hall of St. Lawrence's, a historical church in the diocese. This church was built by enslaved people, and the first bishop himself enslaved 19 individuals. This is one example of how race and religion are connected in the diocese, and the Commission sees itself as charged with addressing these kinds of issues—race-related events and dynamics occurring within the physical and relational bounds of the diocese. For instance, the Commission has also researched historical race-based violence that has occurred within the boundaries of the diocese and sought to understand the role of the nearby churches in these events. The Episcopal Church has similarly expressed a focus on some of these place-based dynamics, such as hosting a conference for clergy who have confederate symbols in their church buildings. The Commission works to identify these artifacts and stories and develop a faith-based response. In this sense, the Commission's engagement with place is similar to how they engage their own diocese—identifying the harm done by racism through acknowledgement and offering a pathway to healing and wholeness through repentance.

Because place is understood as both a geographic place and a geographic community, the Commission is especially interested in building relationships with smaller, rural churches that are

outside of the city. Many Commission members have helped me understand the implicit racial boundaries in the diocese and have noted that many of the smaller churches in the rural areas have no people of color in their membership and are in fact often dangerous places for people of color. These churches are often described as more resistant to the work of antiracism, largely because of historical patterns that members of the Commission are aware of—for instance, a church in a town with historically prevalent KKK activity. Other churches are known for a contemporary white supremacist culture that is hostile to people of color. The Commission hopes to directly engage these parishes and build relationships with the clergy and membership. As the Commission has grown in prominence and developed a larger presence in the diocese, parishes across the diocese—some that have historically been resistant to desegregation or people of color have reached out to have the Commission facilitate a workshop or lead a discussion group.

The Commission's focus on place is an effort to make the issues of racism personal, specific, and create pathways for accountability. In this way, they seek to redeem place as part of their social change agenda. The transformation of individuals in the diocese is linked to the truth telling and redemption of the geographic place. Sacred antiracism, as a deep spiritual intervention, involves both and impacts both. For instance, St. Lawrence's has several members who are very active in both in their congregation and the Commission. Their efforts and pressure on the parish community have led to a variety of antiracism engagements, including a service to honor and name the enslaved people who built the church. While this action is small, the Commission emphasizes that it is an important beginning and moreover, that this action to recognize and tell the truth is a crucial first step to larger efforts for accountability and redress. Long-term members of the diocese express amazement that St. Lawrence's has made such a step and see it as evidence of change and movement. By focusing on their local diocese, the

Commission digs deep into the cultural and communal issues that shape it, in an effort to foster spiritual transformation and healing.

History

Uncovering history, often described broadly as "truth telling" by The Episcopal Church (TEC) and the Commission, is the third thread of their work and activities. This truth-telling work is focused on uncovering both active and passive complicity in racism. Soon after founding the group, Natalie and Raymond embarked on a project to research the racial history of the diocese. This investigation led to a variety of realizations about the diocese that were largely unknown or avoided, including histories of enslavement and lynchings. Raymond explained,

> We started, we, we started looking into the history of the diocese… And I started to research that and a whole lot of stuff came out. Okay. And this was before we actually realized that the first two bishops were slave holders.

Additionally, the Commission has learned about their diocese's more passive participation in racism through silence and inaction. Natalie explained,

> And I think about it when, like when we did this historical work and we looked at different cases where people were either lynched or even in the 70s where there were big protests after Ronald Lee Joyce was killed by police and there were big protests. Who are the people speaking out? Where is the Church? And it's... There's nothing there. I mean, there was, after one of the lynchings, there was a bishop that wrote an article in the paper…

These dynamics of active and passive complicity are perceived as important parts of the past that shape contemporary diocesan culture and identity. Natalie argued,

> Part of that culture [white Episcopalian culture] is the stories we tell about who we are and what our history is, and so that's kind of what I'm talking about, about not telling the truth…and because our history is that the Episcopal Church with few exceptions didn't really... It was more on the side of the power structure.

For the Commission, getting clear and honest about how TEC has both participated in and allowed racism to exist is required for racial healing. Raymond explained, "nobody want[s] to basically take, um, responsibility for the past. And that's one of the reasons why as a closet historian, I am so involved in the past. Because you can't forget it." Victor added this challenge to the larger diocese:

> Go back and look at your church history and deal with it, you know, come up and start talking about it. So these churches are named after confederate soldiers…You have to be aware that we had a bishop that had slaves…

The Commission's focus on truth-telling is an efforts to take accountability for the past in order to rebuild for the future.

The Commission has often struggled, however, to employ the same clarity of historical critique on the present. While they are unapologetic in their critique of past complicity of the diocese, they are often less direct and clear about current racial-political dynamics. For instance, while they are concerned about issues of mass incarceration, gentrification, and police brutality, they rarely confront specific pieces of legislation or public figures. Allegra's letter leveled a more direct condemnation than anything the Commission has articulated —and that letter became a resolution that ultimately avoided naming police brutality at all. As the Commission has faced pushback, it has become more feasible (and less controversial) to discuss history rather than the present, so to preserve unity and relationships they focus on truth-telling about history, rather than the present. This is a larger critique that I unpack in the conclusion.

The Commission's work of truth telling is often partnered with Episcopal traditions of confession, as I introduced in the previous chapter. As such, the Commission articulates a simultaneous commitment to honestly unpacking history while still profoundly believing that change and healing are still possible. This belief in the possibility of change grounds the Commission's interventions. They express a deep and hope-filled commitment to their faith

community—to understand its history, take accountability, and help it heal. In the following sections, I will describe two Commission activities that weave together faith, place, and history to create spaces for healing.

Feast Day for Absalom Jones

For the past few years, the Commission has organized a celebration for the Feast Day of Absalom Jones, the first Black man ordained in TEC. This is one of their first formal events and has come to be one of their core activities. I include a few reflections of the service to help gives a sense of what a the service is like—both to show why the Commission is important in the diocese, as well as the dynamics they are up against.

It was a cold and rainy February night when I arrived at the Cathedral, and as I ran up the stairs I wondered how many people in the diocese would show up for a second church service that evening. Episcopalians tend to be content with one service a week, and this service is currently a special add on—it does not replace the typical Sunday morning service, so anyone coming out needs a lot of motivation. Commission members have reflected on this and wish the bishop made it a part of Sunday services, so that everyone across the diocese participated in the commemoration, even those with little motivation.

As I entered the church, I saw Allegra Jones first, standing in the back and stuffing inserts about the Beloved Community Commission into the service bulletins. We chatted for a minute, and then I checked in with a few other folks about the service—I was one of the readers in this year's celebration of Absalom Jones, and I needed to make sure I knew what to do. After a brief practice, I placed myself at the side door to pass out the service bulletins, where I greeted many new and familiar faces. I notice that there were more Black people entering this building than I

had ever seen before. I mentioned it to Allegra, and she reminded me that the guest preacher for the service was an AME bishop and that these Black folks are likely his congregants, not Episcopalians. We chatted about that for a moment, reflecting on how few people of color are in the diocese. As the organ began, I put the flyers down and returned to my seat, just ahead of the diocesan clergy members who were filing up to the altar. Aside from the AME bishop, every single one of them was white, a stark reminder about culture and demographics of this diocese.

Each year in February, TEC (and this diocese) honor Absalom Jones, the first Black man ordained in TEC, with a feast day. The story is told that he, along with Richard Allen and a few other Black Christians, were praying at the altar of St George's Episcopal Church in Philadelphia one Sunday when they were forcibly removed from the altar and told they could not be in the white area of the church. After the group of Black worshippers were removed from the church, they decided to create their own Black worshipping space and founded "The First African Church" in Philadelphia. Eventually, Richard Allen went on to found the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) denomination, while Absalom Jones stayed with TEC and was ordained in 1802 (The Episcopal Church, NDc).

The Beloved Community Commission has made the Feast Day of Absalom Jones one of their key events each year. This service is focused on educating the diocese about Black Episcopal history, honoring the legacy of Black Christians, bringing attention to the past and current issue of American racism, and fostering multiracial community. This particular year (2019) was especially ecumenical, because the Cathedral had asked an AME bishop to preach. His sermon was political right from the start, when he told a parable about two state legislators, one who supported Medicare and one who didn't. It is rare for a Black person to be at the pulpit in this Cathedral, and even more rare for there to be preaching about issues of race and politics.

By inviting this pastor to preach, the Commission carved out space for Black issues in the

diocesan calendar, and moreover located that space within the seat of diocesan power (the

Cathedral). This, I realized, was an important maneuver on their part to claim some power and

drive their agenda in the diocese.

As the service closed, the (white) choir led us in *Lift Every Voice and Sing*.[11] I was seated

in the midst of a group of the visiting AME pastors, who sang a loud and rousing rendition of the

song. I am often moved to tears during this song, but as I looked around, I realized that most

white people in the building—most notably the clergy up on the altar—didn't know the words. It

was a stark example of how white this diocese is and the kind of obstacles the Commission faces

in trying to make antiracism a spiritual practice of the community. Black history, Black issues,

and Black values are largely a peripheral concern for the diocese. The Commission's work to get

race on the table, and keep it there, is a daily fight. The Absalom Jones Service reveals all these

dynamics, and is simultaneously a triumph for the Commission's goal, a tactic for making

change, and a reality check on the cultural apathy and disengagement they encounter from the

larger diocese.

Operationalizing Sacred Antiracism Through the Absalom Jones Service

The Absalom Jones Service is one of the Commission's primary annual events which

weaves together this faith-place-history dynamic. The organizers of the liturgy hope to create a

space for sacred antiracism by illuminating the relevance of racial issues and connecting them to

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[11] *Lift Every Voice and Sing* is commonly referred to as the Black national anthem and has a long
legacy in the Black freedom movement. Learn more on the NAACP's page "Lift Every Voice
and Sing."

Episcopalianism. This event educate attendees about local and national Black history and experience, facilitates opportunities to foster multiracial relationships, and engages diocesan seats of power in the process. In so doing, the Commission hopes that their community will have space to reflect, repent of their racism, and take part in sacred antiracism.

Education about Black History and Experience

One of the key goals of the Absalom Jones Service is to educate the larger white diocese about the impact and legacy of Black Episcopalians. The service intentionally centers the experiences of Black folks, honors instead of ignoring them, and discusses the systems of racism that have shaped TEC and society more broadly. For instance, Kevin Woody, a Black male Commission member explained,

> Um, many folks do not know about, um, uh, our African American saints in the Church and what they did and how they were involved… Also their stories about race and racism and how they overcame it and how they saw the Episcopal Church as a part of their faith.

Black Episcopalians have played a profound role in TEC, but are often overlooked or erased. This service is an entryway into these conversations about Black Episcopalianism, but also about the larger topic of the Black experience in TEC and America. As Allegra reflected,

> We [Black Episcopalians] know your European history, but how many of you all [white Episcopalians] know our African American history, the experiences that we've had here in the United States? And I think it's very important for, um, everything to become more on a personal basis, more so than an academic [basis]. We… people have got to understand that it is real and that we do suffer and that, uh, justice, social justice and racial justice is a problem for not only our Church, but also for our, our country, our city, our state. And I think [the Absalom Jones Service] is the time that we can really have an effective way of ministry, both religiously, as well as spiritually and personally.

This service is seen by the Commission to do the important work of honoring Black Episcopal leaders who would otherwise be overlooked by the larger white power structure. To celebrate Absalom Jones is to celebrate all Black Episcopalians, and to focus attention on their important

role to TEC and America—an intervention that is seen as a crucial and even radical in the diocese.

Racially Integrated Common Worship

Additionally, the Absalom Jones Service is one of the most racially integrated events in the diocese, because it is not parish-based, but rather diocesan-wide. As such, it draws people from multiple churches, and many of the Black parishioners attend. The Commission is especially invested in creating spaces for interracial communion within the diocese. As Allegra explained,

> But I also want to add that it still … it's the saying that on Sunday mornings, Sunday, is the … it's the most segregated time of all that we still do not worship together. We worship the same God, we use the same liturgy… the same lectionary, the same readings, the same gospel readings, but do we know each other? And the only time that we seem to really get together to know each other, to learn each other, and to be able to share our history on a personal basis, our collective history on a personal basis is during common worship, particularly the fellowship afterwards. We have in the past set up points of discussion and share, have had shared discussions with our fellow Episcopalians who are strangers to us. And I think it's very important that they see us and that we see them.

The shared space of common worship is seen as a way to foster unity, build bridges, and facilitate the ideology and embodiment of shared humanity the Commission is seeking to develop.

Within the context of the Absalom Jones service, this common worship is seen as particularly valuable because it is fundamentally connecting issues of race with the Episcopal liturgy. The liturgy is the framework for Episcopal worship—it is the "words and actions of worship" (Gunn & Shobe, 2018, p. 9) through which Episcopal theology is expressed. The liturgy connects Episcopalians "not only through time but also through space to all the other members of the Anglican Communion, a worldwide body bound by a shared history and shared

worship" (Gunn & Shobe, 2018, p. 9). Within liturgy, the entire group of people share, embody, and enact the same prayers, scriptures, confession, belief statements, songs, bodily movements, smell, and taste. Often described as "common worship" it is practice with great potential to bond people together in their shared movements through the liturgy. The Reverend Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop of TEC, has reflected on his own father's conversion to Episcopalianism, after he saw that white and Black members all drank from the same communion cup. Moved by this expression of commonality and equality during the time of legal segregation, he joined TEC (Brown, 2020).[12]

The Commission draws on the power of liturgy to operationalize sacred antiracism. This space of common worship provides opportunities to make the issues of race personal—by seeing one another, being in fellowship, sharing the communion cup, and removing distance. Simply being multiracial together in the same church, at the same altar, is important to the Commission. Liturgy is seen as a process that bonds participants to each other and to God. As such, the Commission argues that antiracism work belongs in this space and is especially impactful when done in this space. Kevin explained, "Worship and liturgy is very important to us. It brings together our diocese…when we have common worship, it's possible to build other learning." By orienting the liturgy around Absalom Jones, important spiritual and antiracist work is done

[12] It is important to note, of course, that while this is official position of TEC, and was experienced in Curry's case, this kind of equality has not and does not always occur. For instance, Absalom Jones was not allowed to pray in the "white area" of St George's. More recently, one Black Commission member has told me about experiences of wanting to attend a white Episcopal Church and being told not come, or of vising a white Church and receiving such coldness from the members and clergy that he never went back. The shared cup of Episcopal theology, thus is a powerful way to build unity, but it is also possible to co-opt it with discrimination and violence.

simultaneously, and the larger white diocese is invited to participate in this shared worship experience as way to deepen their connection to the Divine.

Engaging Diocesan Seats of Power and Listening to God

Finally, Commission members emphasize that the Absalom Jones Service is also an intervention in the diocesan power structure, because it requires the diocesan leadership (such as the bishop, clergy at the Cathedral, etc) to engage issues of race when they typically would not. The Commission uses this feast day to bring race into the local conversation and to speak up to the existing (white) power structure. Kevin explained, "It's an occasion for prophetic preaching, um, which we don't … which we do not get a lot of, um, in this diocese." Natalie added,

> Um, so the reason that I think the common worship is very important and and it is a priority is because it's where we invite God into this conversation and the bishop and the clergy will listen to God in this context.

It is important to understand why bringing racial issues into the liturgy is so important to the Commission: liturgy, as I've described, is a sacred time of connection with others and with God. The Absalom Jones Service is a way of emphasizing that God is concerned about the problem of racism and it explicitly brings the issues of race into this sacred encounter with God. It is seen as a time where truth is spoken and Christians are challenged to action, all within the context of common worship. By giving Black speakers pulpit space in the diocese, the Commission provides material and symbolic focus on how the sin of racism impacts the faith community, and pushes the leadership to reckon with this issue.

The Feast Day for Absalom Jones, thus, is an example of how the Commission operationalizes their vision and theology for sacred antiracism. They seek to foster a space for the diocese—including leadership and powerholders—to learn about Black history, build

relationships, and identify the connection between their faith and antiracism work. Organizing liturgical services, which integrates Episcopalianism and antiracism, is one of the primary ways they operationalize their vision. As such, liturgy is both a site of intervention and an intervention itself—they both use the liturgy to address these issues, but also simultaneously transform the liturgy.

Pilgrimage to the Peace and Justice Memorial

The pilgrimage to the Peace and Justice Memorial and the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) Museum in Montgomery is another example of how the Commission operationalizes sacred antiracism through attention to faith, place, and history. This event, unlike the Absalom Jones Service, is not annual, but has been organized by the Commission twice in recent years, and discussions are ongoing about planning future pilgrimages. As the organizer of the event, the Commission determined a date to visit the memorial and museum, hired charter buses, and provided lunch and dinner. All members of the diocese were invited to join for a subsidized fee and a handful of spots were reserved for students from the local Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to also join if they wanted. I attended the first pilgrimage in 2018, with about 50 other participants who were intergenerational and multiracial; most, if not all, of the young people of color were HBCU students. We met early in the morning at an Episcopal parish near the freeway, prayed, and were on our way. Once we arrived in Montgomery and filed out of the buses I noticed a number of new faces, which suggested participants had come from a variety of churches across the diocese. We moved through the ticket entrance and into the memorial, upon which the crowd quieted and spread out slowly across the memorial.

The memorial started with a long path that exposed us to the (very hot) sun, leading up a grassy hill. A tall wall alongside the path held large descriptions of the history of African enslavement, convict leasing, and lynchings. There was a striking statue partway up the hill of five enslaved persons with a long chain around their necks, including a woman holding a baby and reaching her other hand out, screaming for help. I found it very visceral and had a hard time not backing away from the pain of it; I made myself stand and be present to it, noting that I was having a physical response to it—my heartrate increased when I saw it, my breath caught, and I began to cry softly.

A few minutes later I continued walking slowly up to the rest of the memorial. It was very hot, and I reflected on the importance of experiencing this heat—how it reminded me of the conditions that enslaved people labored in, and how the design of this memorial intentionally included a physical experience, not just visual.

At the top, the structure was covered and we accessed shade. Hundreds of tall bronze square pillars were suspended from the ceiling, one for each county in America. Engraved into each pillar was the county name and state, and below that, the names and dates of known lynching victims. There were about five to six pillars across, with space for a person to walk between, reaching on for yards and yards. The path through the pillars began to descend and turn, and as we walked it, the pillars slowly rose above eye level until we were looking up at them. It was very striking to look up at each pillar, stretching on in front and behind me—again, a powerful physical experience.

In the lower level of the memorial, one-sentence descriptions of lynching incidents were laid out along both sides of the wall. Simple details about a person and why they were attacked: organizing Black votes, kissing a white woman's hand, refusing to sell something, defending

their child from a mob… The list went on and on, and it was utterly devastating. At the end of this floor, a long wall with flowing water concluded the memorial. The water made a calming and soothing sound, and across the wall were the words: "Thousands of African Americans are unknown victims of racial terror lynchings, whose death cannot be documented, many whose names will never be known. They are honored here." This part of the memorial was partially underground, was cool and dark, and felt almost like a burial—not in a scary way, but in a respectful, peaceful, honoring way. As if a resting place had been made, a place to come for solace in grief. It was profoundly moving. I was again struck by how much the built environment was subtly communicating about humanity, violence, survival, and hope.

After a few hours at the memorial, our group moved to lunch in a different part of town, and then visited the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) Legacy Museum. The museum was very powerful, tracing the legacy of American racism from slavery to convict leasing to Jim Crow to mass incarceration. It was a very effective presentation of the shape and impact of American racism over the centuries. We closed the visit by meeting with some EJI staff, during which we presented the soil we had collected (more on this below) and learned more about the national work EJI is doing around mass incarceration. On the way back to Nashville, we stopped for dinner at an Episcopal church, during which a few announcements were made about connections to racial justice work back in Nashville. One Commission member shared about the work to establish an EJI marker in Nashville at the site where Ephraim Grizzard was lynched. I shared about local organizing for a police Community Oversight Board, as well as the upcoming Becoming a Catalyst cohort I was facilitating for the Commission. The buses got back to Nashville late that night and the pilgrimage ended with somber and weary goodbyes, as each of us headed back to our homes.

Operationalizing Sacred Antiracism Through the Pilgrimage

This pilgrimage was the largest event of 2018 for the Commission—it required the most money and organizing and had the highest participation rate, aside from the Absalom Jones service. Like the Absalom Jones Service, the pilgrimage to Montgomery is understood as a unique opportunity to invite the diocese into spiritual wholeness. Weaving together faith, history, and place, this event reframed visiting the memorial as a spiritual endeavor (a pilgrimage) and provided in-depth education with a geographic focus (the South). This event is also an excellent example of how the Commission leans on other local/national organizations doing work about racism as part of their educational effort. The pilgrimage is seen as a communal event than engages both spiritual and educational needs—another opportunity to help participants to understand the nature and scope of the problem of racism and spur them into antiracist action.

Spiritual Framing: Pilgrimage, Not Visit

The Commission was very intentional about calling this event a pilgrimage. Language of pilgrimage evokes a sense of spirituality, religious responsibility, and mystical possibility. By framing this event as a pilgrimage, the Commission shifted the trip from a secular visit to a sacred experience. As such, the event carried the expectation of religious encounter with God and an opportunity for spiritual formation. This is another important example of how the Commission uses framing tactics to sanctify their activities and create spiritual urgency. The trip became a religious experience, holding the opportunity for internal change, and accountability. Raymond explained,

> You know, what the pilgrimage... It is my hope and fervent desire that the pilgrimage becomes a yearly thing. Like this is what we do in the Episcopal diocese. We go check ourselves at least once a year. You can't be on that bus and have that experience and come back the same way you left.

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The Commission pursues interventions that offer people the opportunity to learn and change, and to do that transforming within community. As such, the Commission intentionally provided a way to experience the memorial communally—alongside other Episcopalians and in the context of their own faith community. A participant of the pilgrimage mentioned that they had been thinking off-and-on about driving down to the memorial, but when the opportunity to attend with the Commission was presented, it motivated them to actually make the trip. The Commission's role as organizer of the trip was an important form of leadership and initiative in the diocese, and they were able to connect with individuals who would have otherwise been doing some of this learning alone—or not at all. As such, the pilgrimage plays an important role in the Commission's social change efforts: it is a site in which transformation might occur, but it is also an expression of shifting culture in the diocese. The Commission's existence and collective action created the opportunity for this event to occur and in turn for the larger movement of sacred antiracism to emerge. Moreover, the pilgrimage functioned to build a network of like-minded people, bond them with a common experience, provide shared language about racism, and provide a concrete moment to get involved. These are all important aspects of resource mobilization and framing processes in the emergence of social movement (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996).

Education About Enslavement and Southern Racism

As with other Commission events, the pilgrimage was focused on place-based racism within a historical context. Organizing a trip to the Peace and Justice Memorial and the Legacy Museum simultaneously accomplished multiple goals: it brought attention to a specific site of racism and antiracism (Montgomery, AL and lynchings across America); it connected with an

organization doing national work (The Equal Justice Initiative); and it educated participants about American racism. The Legacy Museum attendees received a robust and comprehensive history most Americans lack.

The Commission feels that learning this history is crucial for the diocese, and further feels that many in the diocese are not aware or do not understand the magnitude of this history. Raymond explained, "the commission's role is to tell the truth about, about where we been and where we are and where we're going." Natalie reflected, "And so I guess what I think the commission needs to, you know, is trying to, to accomplish is to sort of burst the bubble a little bit so that, so that people in the Church like, can all see." These comments come in the context of a shared understanding among the Commission about the diocese's general ignorance or apathy about the issue of racism. Multiple participants emphasized that much of the diocese ignores, avoids, or denies racism. For instance, both Jane Hoffman (white female) and Marielle Stewart (white female) described times when fellow church members have asked to stop talking about race. Jane explained,

> A lot of people [in the diocese say] "oh, that race thing, it's, it's, it's going down the rabbit hole… Oh yeah, we've dealt with that… we're getting along, everybody's being nice to each other," you know, there's not a willingness to look hard at it.

Similarly, Marielle encountered on an individual who told her, "okay, you've done racism, we've done enough racism, we need to move onto something else." She emphasized that these denials of racism are a core problem in the diocese and argues that one of the Commission's main tasks "is to make people aware that racism even exists still." Kevin added,

> But right now I see the most important thing is education and awareness. You know, of just going out there and being with folks and just helping people, making more aware of, of this whole issue of race and race, race relations in our, in, in our country, in our diocese. Yeah. I think that's, that's crucial right now.

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In this sense, education is seen as a particularly important intervention because of how avoidant the diocese has been so far. The Commission hopes that by bringing attention to the topic of racism and telling the truth about local history, they will be able to spur their community into engagement.

Education is a common strategy for many groups doing social justice work, and this holds true especially for the Commission, who seeks to foster consciousness about racism in the diocese. Community psychology has explored how religious settings might operate as a source of this consciousness. Religious settings mediate between individuals and the larger world, and can provide a critique of social dynamics as well moral guidance to disrupt unjust patterns—all aspects of sanctifying social justice (Todd, 2011; Todd & Allen, 2011; Todd et al., 2014; Todd & Rufa, 2013; Smith, 1996). From this perspective, the Commission plays an important role in influencing members of their diocese to engage with issues of race, correcting whitewashed historical knowledge (in the case of the pilgrimage, particularly correcting lack of knowledge about racial terrorism in the U.S.), and fostering a sense of responsibility to disrupt injustice. Education is seen as both a method of transforming diocesan members, but also as a form of truth-telling—ultimately a moral imperative required for any kind of racial healing.[13]

Although the Commission is deeply committed to education, they have struggled to gather the resources and expertise to personally teach racial history to folks in the diocese. The

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[13] The education intervention to racism has some important limitations, however. Broadly speaking, this approach assumes first that racism occurs because people don't know better, and second that if people had more knowledge, their behaviors, actions, and investments would change. Critical Race theorists push back on these assumptions, noting that that ignorance on the part of white people about the racial hierarchy is largely willful and intentional (Mills, 1997; Mueller, 2017; Weigman, 1999). Lipsitz (2006) for instance, has argued that white people are "possessively invested in whiteness."

Commission often organizes community around an external learning component—such as book groups, film discussion groups, attending local speakers and events, and other museums. By visiting the Legacy Museum, they were able to open the space for learning without having to do the pedagogical development themselves.

Connection to Local History of Lynching

In addition to visiting the Peace and Justice Memorial and the Legacy Museum, the Commission also contributed to the EJI soil collection and lynching history project. In the Legacy Museum, a wall is dedicated to holding jars of soil that have been collected from sites of lynchings across the country. It's a very memorable and evocative commemoration, and on this trip in 2018, the Commission brought three jars to contribute to the wall. The process for this began in the early days of the Commission when Natalie and Raymond focused on historical research and uncovered evidence of three lynchings within the geographical boundaries of the diocese. Natalie reflected, "We had been reading, I'd been reading Brian Stevenson [the founder of EJI] and Just Mercy. And so we just started doing the research too. For what, you know, what were the cases that were relevant to [our] county?" As they learned more about the history of racial terrorism in the city, the Commission began to offer resources and activities within the diocese about these issues.

For instance, in 2017 the Commission organized a marker dedicated to the three lynching victims they had learned about, which was placed on St. Absalom's church property. This was part of a larger collaboration with a local Christian college and led to larger city-wide organizing that established formal public markers at two sites. This event happened before my time, but participants have shared that this labor to "tell the truth about history" has been a key goal of the

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Commission and a dominant feature of their early efforts. This early work about history and truth telling set the stage for the pilgrimage in 2018 and shaped the path to developing activities for others in the diocese to reckon with their history.

In 2018, in preparation for the Pilgrimage trip, Commission members reached out to EJI to express their hope to collect soil for the memorial wall. EJI provided the jars and additional information and the Commission went in groups to collect soil from the three sites they had learned about. These containers of soil were blessed by the priest of St. Absalom's before the pilgrimage and then were give to EJI staff during out visit. This activity felt very important to the Commission as a way to bring recognition and respect to Black community members who had been erased from public memory. The Commission's efforts to remember local history that is often denied or overlooked is part of their vision for racial healing. This project has prompted some Commission members to join a local organizing group to help erect a public historical marker at one of the sites, in an effort to contribute to larger efforts of public memory and truth telling.

The Pilgrimage to the Peace and Justice Memorial is a key example of how the Commission operationalizes their vision and theology for sacred antiracism. By organizing these activities, the Commission seeks to grapple with historical and local racial terror as a spiritual process. They provide space for their community to do this reckoning together, in the hopes that each participant will learn, reflect, and be transformed. These activities are seen as ways to connect their community with larger, national organization doing targeted racial justice work, as well as an opportunity for racial healing.

Conclusion

Events like the Absalom Jones Service and Pilgrimage to Montgomery are key ways that the Commission operationalizes their vision for sacred antiracism. These spaces are meant to create opportunities for racial healing—to engage issues of racism via faith resources in the context of communal relationships. Spaces for racial healing are the primary intervention that the Commission has developed in the diocese through which they hope that participants will learn about racism, reflect on how their faith calls them to address the problem, connect with their peers, and be transformed into antiracist actors. Sacred antiracism is enacted into being through these communal events that focus on place and history.

Communal Events in Social Movements

From a social movement perspective, these events operate as tactics of the social movement—methods by which the Commission brings their agenda into diocesan life, occupies collective space, and recruits participants. Communal events like the Feast Day for Absalom Jones and the pilgrimage provide the setting for the work of individual transformation, but also function to make changes within the diocesan culture. Because the Commission is seeking to impact both religious and political targets, these events bind religion and racial justice together for participants and demonstrate how the Episcopal faith tradition calls for the work of antiracism.

Moreover, these events further illuminate the Commission's targets and theory of change: by weaving together faith, history, and place, the Commission concretize the problem of racism into one that is local, specific, and connected to TEC. Focusing on the diocese's place-based history makes racism personal and specific, and spurs a sense of responsibility. Place is an

important part of social movements, helping to establish boundaries, membership, and commitment. Bretherton (2015) describes the role of place-based politics in organizing and argues that "Through a common commitment to shared places (a place-based interest) and local people (a convivial interest), a shared story of belonging and a shared social and political life can emerge" (p. 95). He further explains that these commitments to the local and specific can be connected to larger national and global patterns to enable individuals to understand macro dynamics that shape their experience. The Commission's efforts to concretize how racism has historically manifested in their community sets the stage for larger consciousness about racial injustice and the role of TEC in facilitating antiracism.

Finally, social psychology literature that focuses on social change has emphasized that pursuing change within one's own community (or "in-group") has great potential. Louis, Chapman, Chonu, and Achia (2017) have argued that social change actors have the greatest influence on members who are *within* their own social groups and networks, as the openness and trust required for opinion change has already been established. They suggest that positive change requires communication across individuals and groups, and thus doing this work amongst members of the same in-group allows for more effective change. The Commission emphasizes these same ideas and intentionally leverages the similarities and connections between Episcopal community members in their efforts. By bringing antiracism into the diocese via Episcopal tradition and theology, they draw on existing trusted practices to deeply engage their community.

Education for Racial Justice

The Commission's focus on racial education as an intervention in the diocese is particularly salient in the current climate of public education about racism. The departure of

Trump from presidential office has been marked by a wave of state and federal legislation to limit racial education in public schools, particularly Critical Race Theory (Sprunt, 2021). This controversy illuminates a larger divide about the role of historical reckoning. A recent poll by Pew Research Center found that 26% of U.S. adults say that more attention to the history of slavery and racism is bad for the country; among white Americans, this number increases to 32% (Pew, 2021b). The Commission sees truth-telling about the past as a fundamental piece of racial healing and required in order to understand the current racial dynamics. Empirical research suggests that much of the American population minimizes the reality of racism and fail to acknowledge the scope of American racial injustice. For instance, Pew has found that White American are most likely to say that slavery has limited or no impact on the societal position of Black people today (22% say "not much" and 19% say "not at all") (Horowitz, Brown, & Cox, 2019). A recent Washington Post poll found that 41% of Americans believe that "some other reason" than slavery was the main cause of the Civil War, a number that increases to 47% specifically among adults 65 years and older (Guskin, Clement, & Heim, 2019).

These patterns also map onto religious affiliation in concerning ways, demonstrating that white American Christians in particular lack a clear understanding of structural racism. The Public Religion Research Institute published data in 2018 that revealed that "Majorities of white Christians, including 53% of white evangelical Protestants, 52% of white Catholics, and 51% of white mainline Protestants, agree that socioeconomic disparities between black and white Americans are due to lack of effort by black Americans" (Vandermaas-Peeler et. al., 2018). Similar results are maintained with slightly different questions. For instance, when asked about recent killings of African American men by police, white Christians were substantially more likely than Black Christians to describe these killings as isolated incidents: 59% of white

mainline Protestants, 63% of white Catholics, and 71% of white evangelicals felt that these killings were anomalies; only 15% of black Protestants held this view (Vandermaas-Peeler et. al., 2018).

These statistics speak to the role and import of religiously-based educational efforts about American racism and history, and more broadly the importance of TEC in the racial justice movement. In a social context that is increasingly divisive and actively suppressing critical race education, the Commission seeks to lovingly engage their community in learning and transformation. Their presence in the diocese creates space for this learning and engagement to occur, in the hopes a spiritual imperative of antiracism can take hold.

Chapter 5 Institutionalizing Sacred Antiracism: Writing Resolutions for Beloved Community

> The 78th General Convention of the Episcopal Church issued resolutions urging The Episcopal Church to focus our efforts on dismantling racism and to report on these efforts. "Call for the Diocese to Dismantle Racism" hopes to answer our church's call to dismantle racism by encouraging the Diocese to take seriously the sins of racism by offering programs in local churches. These programs may just get the conversation started or they may lead to plans that bring about racial healing. Wherever you begin, know that this process of addressing and dismantling racism, while challenging, is a practice that will lead us all toward greater wholeness, toward deeper holiness. – Beloved Community Commission Resolution 2018

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore how the Commission envisions change work through the process of writing resolutions for the diocese. Resolutions are proposed actions or decisions that are taken to a voting body of Episcopalians for review and approval—they are essentially legislation for the Episcopal Church (TEC). Resolutions have both symbolic and material implications for TEC: they create required activities for Episcopal institutions (such as to desegregate), they make statements for the record (such as condemnation of racism), and they make rules about church polity (such as the minimum age to be a delegate at convention). As such, they literally shape the life and polity of TEC and reflect to the public TEC's formal position on issues. However, like most legislation, its power is often dependent on its enforcement, and while resolutions may make clear demands of parishes, it is often possible to quietly ignore them. As a piece of social change, resolutions are important for both material and symbolic reasons, and the Commission is concerned about both. Their efforts are focused on passing resolutions that will lead to new action, but they also work to hold their diocese accountable to resolutions that have already been passed.

Resolutions happen at both a national and a diocesan level: at General Convention (which is national and happens every three years), resolutions are voted on by the House of Bishops (every bishop in TEC) or the House of Deputies (elected clergy and lay delegates from the dioceses); at Annual Convention (which is at the diocesan level and happens every year) clergy and lay delegates from each parish vote on the resolutions. The resolution process is very specific: A resolution is submitted prior to convention to the resolution committee through the diocesan office, who reviews the resolutions for canonical requirements (length, authorship, format, etc). This committee presents the resolution and organizes, if needed, discussion between groups who are supportive and opposed. Together, these groups re-write and re-write the resolution until consensus is reach. For example, Allegra Jones' letter to condemn police brutality in 2015 went through this resolution process.

The First Commission Resolution

In the 2015 Annual Convention, when Raymond presented the statement about police brutality, it became obvious that the larger diocese was strongly opposed. To address this conflict, the resolution was given to a small committee to be revised as needed in order to gain consensus. Raymond was a part of this committee and remembers,

> We had about four different versions of this, um, resolution and finally it came down to racism, uh, we are condemning the sin of racism, blah, blah, blah, whatever the final thing came out. All right. It was, it was 50% nicer than what we had originally started out with, but it was the only way that we were going to get, um, buy in.

The approved draft removed virtually all references to police brutality and did not have a single reference to race in the entire document. Instead, it referenced "tragic events in Ferguson," condemned the sin of racism broadly, issued a call to dialogue and prayer for

the injured, the deceased, their families, those whose businesses were destroyed in the ensuing

protests, local law enforcement teams, first responders, elected officials, and those who live in

communities polarized by the national debate over local guidelines governing the use of police

force. When I asked Allegra about her thoughts on the "whitewashing" of this document, she

reflected,

> It became very lukewarm, but accepted 100% I think. And that was important. At that time, it seemed to me, I had gotten a point, I got my point across that I wanted my church to make a statement. They knew that from what they read that I was disappointed in … in them not having made a statement and that I was convicting them to make a statement. So when they, when it was edited, all of that was deleted and it was made very, um, uh, more acceptable, palatable, which is what they needed in their respective roles.

Allegra's analysis of the event was shared by many other participants, who expressed some

disappointment over what the resolution turned into, but ultimately celebrated the fact that the

resolution got passed at all in this particular diocese. Raymond reflected to me,

> It got whitewashed. Yes. All right. But after having said that, that is the nature of compromise. If, if everybody's happy, then you've done something wrong. And if everybody's mad, then you've done something right because compromise is, is finding that middle ground.

Broadly speaking, Commission members celebrate the compromise that came out of the 2015

convention and emphasize that great progress was made through this resolution. This event is

largely seen as an opportunity to affirm communal unity while continuing to take small steps

forward. Commission members also note that the resolution called for specific actions steps,

including prayer, theological reflection, and dialogue. Victor Black explained, "So the diocese

said for the year of 2015 we should be doing stuff. You know talking about racial issues and see

what you can do, talking to the police department." These aspects of the resolution are what most

participants emphasized and were encouraged by, even as they noted that many parishes did not

undertake these actions.

Almost every participant—especially long-term members of the diocese—have stated again and again that the story of this resolution (and the emergence of the Commission more broadly) just couldn't have happened any other way. They argued, in fact, that the passing of the resolution at all, and the very existence of the Commission, were radical steps forward and reflected significant progress. As such, these small moments of compromise were significant to the Commission and understood as part of the process. Raymond described this as "nibbling around the edges." He explained that "You have to be realistic…. Nibbling at the edges is a necessary direction if you're going to have a direction." The process of writing resolutions is the primary way the Commission seeks to make institutional change—one "nibble" at a time.

"Nibbling the Edges" as Social Change

For a social movement perspective, "nibbling around the edges" can be understood as a incremental theory of social change that is focused on small achievements, rather than a dramatic and rapid change (de la Sablonnière, 2017). This approach emphasizes slow changes in the social and normative structure of society. The Commission's goals, as I've demonstrated are multiple and complex (change people in the diocese, shift diocesan culture, influence Episcopal theology, shape Christian formation priorities) and a dramatic change in Episcopal polity, for instance, would not actually accomplish the change they are seeking, because it would not necessarily address all of these goals. Because the Commission is focused on staying unified with the community they are seeking to influence, their process is more gentle than aggressive, more incremental than dramatic, and more invitational than confrontational.

Social movement scholars who work in the field of peace and nonviolence studies emphasize that incremental strategies can be very effective at certain goals. Particularly for

social movements who are deeply concerned about method, not just only outcomes, a "nibbling the edges" approach may allow for transformation in the larger system of domination that undergirds social inequality. For instance, Ben David and Rubel-Lifschitz (2018) note that as collective actors seek to make a change in their lived realities, they may implicitly embody the same dominating culture that has harmed them. The authors call this "power over" as opposed to "power with" (which is based on consent and shared goals, rather than domination). They explain:

> By using "power with" practices, social groups redress not only the unequal distribution of goods, but also the cultural aspects that legitimize the superiority of one group over others by creating mechanisms and structures that are based on participation and inclusion (Ben David & Rubel-Lifschitz, 2018, p. 11).

Ben David and Rubel-Lifschitz's (2018) work with social movements in Israel yielded three suggestions to "practice the change you want to see in the world" (p. 10): first, hold a complex view of the social actors and the needs of both parties. The authors found that this practice helped social movements to recruit participants—including gaining support from the opposing party—and make pragmatic choices about their tactics, framing, and goals. Second, collectively develop and maintain a commitment to a moral compass, which will help guide decision making during times of intensity, extreme opposition, or violence. Third, utilize small and symbolic steps to help the marginalized group "gradually build their power and sense of self and group efficacy." The authors found that the social movements who employed these practices were able to develop resiliency and persistence, ultimately contributing to their long-term goals.

The Beloved Community's approach demonstrates all three of these practices. First, they emphasize the complexity of the diocesan landscape and membership, expressing a desire to understand opponents to their agenda and respect them, as well as a strong belief in their ability to change. As such, the Commission does not allow for easy enemies to be created or simple

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targets, but rather sees their work as an involved process of mutual contestation and change. Second, the Commission's tactics are premised on their moral commitment to remain in community. Their efforts to speak the truth, bring awareness, reckon with history, and create resolutions all occur within their "power with" approach that does not seek to dominate others in the diocese, but rather invite others into transformation. The compromise in the 2015 resolution, for instance, demonstrated their willingness to work with their community. Third, the Commission is invested in small and symbolic steps to collectively imagine what change they want and how to pursue it. These small steps have yielded an increased sense of power and self-efficacy as a group, and over time the Commission has begun making larger steps (bigger events, more direct statements). These practices help to illuminate why and how the Commission's multiple goals lean on a "nibbling the edges" approach that is grounded in community.

The Politics of Resolutions

Between 2015 and 2020, five resolutions regarding issues of race/racism were passed in the diocese, all led by the members of the Commission.[14] Because resolutions function both as formal statements, as well as a requirement for action, they can be very powerful vehicles for making change. The trouble first is, of course, getting them passed.

The polity of TEC is very similar to the United States of America, and similar tensions emerge, both in terms of mechanics, as well as political leaning. While the TEC is broadly

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[14] The Commission was officially formed in 2017, so these first three resolutions (2015 and 2016A and B) were proposed by the informal group of folks who would eventually become the Commission's founding members. Thus, while these resolutions were not officially presented by the Commission (because it did not yet exist) I group them together because they are part of the genealogy of the Commission and can be reasonably understood as products of the Commission.

understood as a liberal denomination, there are distinct ideological divides. For instance, 49% of

Episcopalians are affiliated with the Democratic party and 39% are affiliated with the

Republican party; 31% affiliate as Conservative, 29% as Liberal, and 37% as Moderate (Pew,

2014). Like with U.S. legislation, local Episcopal parishes and dioceses can feel disconnect and

disagreement with national leadership and oppose resolutions that are passed at General

Convention, which is generally seen as the more liberal arm of TEC. Commission members

further suggests that ideological divisions within TEC map geographically, and that the Southern

regions are more conservative and resistant to efforts for racial redress.

As such, contestation about specific resolutions is a common part of Episcopal polity. The

committee that facilitates this process focuses on understanding the goals of both the supporters

and objectors of a given resolution in order to address the heart of the issue. Deborah reflected

that the committee's role is "to do the great Episcopal thing of sitting on the fence and holding

both sides and trying to really keep the integrity of both sides, even if they're diametrically

opposed." In the 2015 resolution proposed by the Commission at diocesan convention, that

process meant that a critique of racialized state violence was shifted into a critique of racism

broadly in order to be agreeable to both opponents and supporters. Moreover, the call to prayer in

the resolution broadened, so that the groups prayed for included police, business owners, and

elected officials. This is one example of how this negotiation process takes place, and in the case

of 2015, the resolution was expanded to include a larger, more vague focus and backtrack from

strong political critique.

A second tension is about how a resolution is translated from convention to a local

setting. Particularly for resolutions that are passed at General Convention, ideological and

theological divisions in TEC are made evident by how those resolutions are received back

home—but these dynamics can also emerge at a local level during diocesan convention. When a particular diocese or parish disagrees with a resolution that has been passed, conflict may develop about whether and how the resolution is implemented. In many cases, leadership may deprioritize or "forget" to implement the resolution. Ellen Patterson (white female) explained, "I don't know if priests are going back to their churches and saying, 'Hey, we passed this resolution and because we passed this resolution, I have the responsibility to, to do something in this parish related to racial healing.'"

Particularly around social issues like race, TEC has encountered these kinds of fractures between the national leadership and local leadership. Resolutions are a site in TEC where these conflicts, tensions, and positions are debated. Gardiner Shattuck (2000) has written extensively about these dynamics and offers a variety of examples, such as the debate on whether to hold the 1955 General Convention in a segregated city (Houston) and the refusal of University of the South (commonly called Sewanee) to desegregate (read more about these dynamics in Chapter 1). Episcopal segregationists argued that TEC was overstepping its bounds and didn't understand Southern life and culture. Sewanee and all Episcopal institutions eventually were desegregated (formally, at least) after pressure from Episcopal integration activists—a historical example of another successful grassroots movements within TEC. The Beloved Community Commission is a contemporary example of this longer tradition of multiracial organizing to enact change within and through TEC. All these efforts, however, speak to the reality of substantive tensions between national and local leadership, a key characteristic of TEC's engagement with race historically and today.

Over the past few decades, TEC has taken a more formal position on racial equality. For instance, the 2000 General Convention, passed a resolution that mandated antiracism training for

Episcopal Leadership (Resolution 2000-B049) (The Episcopal Church, 2000). The resolution

requires:

> the lay and ordained leadership of the Episcopal Church, including all ordained persons,
> professional staff, and those elected or appointed to positions of leadership on
> committees, commissions, agencies, and boards be required to take anti-racism training
> and receive certification of such training.

Despite being passed 21 years ago, many dioceses have simply failed to implement this

resolution—including the Commission's diocese. This disconnect between national and local

leadership is a key dynamic of TEC, and in the past five decades, has been especially impactful

for the experience of Black Episcopalians. Kevin explained,

> But it's been said, Sara, that the general convention is the liberal arm of the Episcopal
> church, because that is where we get our power, through the political system of the
> Episcopal Church. But when you go back to diocese like ours, the power is in these rich,
> white, Anglo... These rich Anglo congregations who are insulated.

Many Commission members expressed their frustration and dismay with their diocese for failing

to engage resolutions about race—whether coming from General or Diocesan Convention.

Multiple participants commented on this problem, including Kevin, who noted that "A lot of

times the decisions we make at Diocesan Convention don't get translated, back in the parishes.

And that's just, that's true for a lot of resolutions." Two other participants put it more bluntly

during a focus group, explaining:

> Natalie: The other thing is that, I think, is a racist thing in the diocese is that we have
> these resolutions-
>
> Deborah: That nobody's doing anything about.
>
> Natalie: That nobody's doing and nobody's enforcing.
>
> Deborah: And I think that's an exercise of white supremacy acting itself out of the pulpit.

The Commission sees the dismissal and avoidance of race-related resolutions as a failure on the

part of both their diocesan leadership and parish clergy. One of the ways the Commission seeks

to intervene in this culture is to bring attention and pressure to these resolutions and create a diocesan community that is more responsive to resolutions about racial issues. To support these efforts, the Commission seeks to highlight TEC resolutions—both as a resource, but also a reminder to existing leadership—and bring them into diocesan life. As the Commission seeks to implement the mandates and resources that already exist in TEC, they are also simultaneously looking for ways to make those resolutions particular and place-based to their own diocese.

Beloved Community Commission Resolutions

The Commission submitted five resolutions between 2015 and 2021, each of which are intended to intervene in existing diocesan culture and structure. Some of their resolutions are more prophetic statements, others are calls to action; all include theological claims that push the diocese to confront and engage issues of race. The resolutions embody the spiritual goals of the Commission—to help the diocese understand that racism is a spiritual problem, for everyone, and that the Episcopal faith compels the community to engage and also provides avenues by which to do so. In the following section I will briefly review the objective of the resolution. D-identified, full-text versions of the resolutions can be found in Appendix A.

2015 Resolution: A Diocesan Call to Prayer, Dialogue, and Community Bridge-Building

The 2015 resolution—originally written as a letter against police brutality by Allegra Jones, but was submitted by a group of other concerned diocesan members. As I have described previously, the resolution was met with a great deal of resistance, but was eventually approved after numerous revisions. This resolution called on the diocese to participate in prayer for all involved, to use Episcopal resources to confront the sin of racism, to create spaces for dialogue between church, communities, and law enforcement, and report back in 2016. The group of folks

who submitted the resolution, along with a few others, began to meet during this year for study and discussion, which planted the seed for the Commission's emergence.

Commission members note that the "report back" component of the resolution never happened, and are unsure of which parishes, if any, engaged in the mandated dialogue and education. This is another example of how resolutions can be forgotten or dismissed—without a local champion or designated leader, the resolution can pass by without engagement or accountability. Some parishes in the diocese who had a local champion for the resolution did engage in dialogue processes and discussion, but much of this reporting back either never happened or was not made legible to the Commission. Although the resolution stated that the clerk of each parish send these reports to the Standing Committee of the diocese, larger accountability structures for this process are largely absent. For instance, the diocese could make these reports perquisites for budget requests or participation at convention, but it has done neither. Without formal or informal accountability mechanisms, resolutions easily disappear from memory and action. The Commission is attempting to change this culture and create the accountability and motivation to participate—but they also struggle as a small group to have the needed resources to follow up with every parish. It is their hope the diocesan staff and leadership will begin to play more of an accountability role in these areas.

2016 Resolution A: Resolution on the Commemoration of the Martyrs of Charleston on June 17

The next resolution was a response to the racial hate attack on Mother Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston in 2015. It called for an ad hoc committee to investigate ways to commemorate the event throughout the diocese and to also explore national recognition for the martyrs of this shooting through Episcopal liturgical resources. Participants note again that this ad hoc committee was not created and the commemoration efforts did come to fruition.

However, the following year (2017) the Commission organized a memorial for lynching victims (described in the previous chapter) which was placed in the garden at St Absalom's.

2016 Resolution B: Reaffirmation of Resolution 'A Diocesan Call to Prayer, Dialogue and Community Bridge Building'

The second resolution in 2016 was a follow-up to the 2015 resolution. In this resolution, reference is made to the 2015 resolution, but more importantly to TEC resolutions passed in the 2015 General Convention about antiracism. By referencing the General Convention resolutions, the Commission was able to put more weight and pressure behind their local diocesan resolutions. This included calling on the diocesan bishop to create an Anti-Racism Task Force for the diocese. This task force was created and the following year became the Beloved Community Commission (a formal diocesan standing committee, rather than an ad hoc).

2018 Resolution: Call for the Diocese to Dismantle Racism

In 2018, the Commission submitted another resolution regarding the sin of racism, but this resolution was more direct than previous resolutions. It referenced previous resolutions (diocesan and national) and reissued a call for the diocese to address the sin of racism. By this point, the Commission had been functioning formally for a year, and informally for over two, and was beginning to have a presence in the diocese. The resolution reflected the mission of the Commission, articulated a call on all members of the diocese to engage in prayer, study, and dialogue about the sin of racism, and asked parishes to report their activities back to the Commission. The resolution language included a section that explained that the Commission's work as an effort:

> to answer our church's call to dismantle racism by encouraging the Diocese to take seriously the sins of racism by offering programs in local churches…this process of addressing and dismantling racism, while challenging, is a practice that will lead us all toward greater wholeness, toward deeper holiness.

This is also the first year that the Commission received funding from the diocesan budget to implement activities. Participants again note that very few parishes reported any efforts back to the Commission. This again leaves open questions about whether any activities occurred and, if so, why they were not reported. Like with the 2015 resolution, this observation is marked by lack of clarity around the accountability mechanisms—are these reports required and what are the consequences for not participating? These accountability mechanisms largely remain undeveloped, which contributes to the lack of accurate data and is a concern for the Commission.

2019 Resolution: The Episcopal Diocese on Affirming Identity as Members of the Beloved Community

In 2019 the Commission submitted a resolution as part of an effort to involve more diocesan members in the work of the Commission and create a larger diocesan identity as a collective Beloved Community. The resolution invited members of the diocese to pray and participate in the ministry of the Commission, and more broadly to "affirm, recognize, and celebrate our membership in the Beloved Community of the Diocese and beyond." Commission members hoped that this resolution would help communicate that the work of the Commission and the pursuit of Beloved Community involved everyone in the diocese—not just Commission members or only Black parishes. Kevin explained,

> The resolution was to give the idea that it's not compartmentalized, that we are all part of beloved community and when, and when we see racial injustice occur and inequality and violence, that we all, that we should all be concerned about it.

Deborah added,

> I think we felt people thought that we were being exclusive. "Are you part of the beloved community?" "Uh, well I don't go to the meetings, but I go to the events…" Does that make sense? So we wanted to clearly say that everyone is part of the beloved community…I think an effort at empowerment as well. We didn't want people to feel like they had to come knock on the door and ask permission to participate . That's kind of what it started feeling like too many people.

The 2019 resolution continued the effort of calling the diocese into antiracism work, but for the first time this occurred within the context of a functioning and somewhat known diocesan group. At Commission that year, Raymond Hughes spoke again, but this time he gave a brief presentation in front of all convention participants about the pilgrimage to Montgomery. Rather than vehement resistance, the audience at this convention listened closely to his reflection about collecting the soil from a lynching site and delivering it the Legacy Museum. Participants who were at that convention described it as a "sacred silence" and remarked on how different the response was from the resolution in 2015.

While this shift in convention culture does not mean that the problem of racism has been solved in the diocese, it does suggest that some kind of change is happening in the community. This shift is likely credited in part to larger social activism occurring between 2015-2020 that impacted mainstream discourse about race (Dunivin, Yan, Ince, Rojas, 2022), but is also likely to be partially influenced by the Commission's work. The activities the Commission provides, along with their leadership on resolutions, is becoming a common part of the diocesan identity and experience. These small in-roads, which may seem like minor changes to some outsiders, feel like significant accomplishments to the Commission. The steady work of writing resolutions, making prophetic statements, calling on the parishes to engage, and building a presence are all ways they are attempting to "nibble" at the problem of racism and foster a culture of support for antiracism.

Understanding the Theology in Commission Resolutions

An important aspect of what the Commission is doing with the resolutions is articulating their theology of antiracism. All the resolutions draw on three theological tenets: Episcopal

Baptismal vows, imago Dei theology, and Episcopal eschatology (beliefs about the "end times").

These tenets speak into each other and support the larger Commission goal of framing antiracism

as a spiritual endeavor that is both a Christian mandate and a path to spiritual wholeness.

Baptismal Vows

First, the resolutions argue that: "the Christian vocation demands the proclamation of

'God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit' manifest itself in the striving for justice and peace among all

people." This claim is a reference to Episcopal Baptismal vows and speaks to the Christian

mandate to resist racism. Baptism in TEC is a sacrament—an embodied expression of spiritual

activity and divine grace—that happens when an individual joins TEC and is re-affirmed each

year during Easter (Gunn & Shobe, 1989). As such, the rite signifies that the individual is united

with Christ, is claimed as part of TEC family, is forgiven of their sins, and has begun a new life

(Gunn & Shobe, 1989; The Episcopal Church, NDa). The Baptismal covenant articulates the set

of beliefs and practices based on the Apostle's Creed and closes with five questions about how

the faith is lived out:

> Celebrant: Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?
>
> People: I will, with God's help.
>
> Celebrant: Will you persevere in resisting evil and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
>
> People: I will, with God's help.
>
> Celebrant: Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?
>
> People: I will, with God's help.
>
> Celebrant: Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
>
> People: I will, with God's help.

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

The last question of the rite—"will you strive for justice and peace"—is frequently used by the Commission and TEC to underscore the Christian mandate for antiracism. By referencing the Baptismal Vows, the Commission (1) links the pursuit of justice and peace to antiracism, (2) emphasizes that TEC has already committed to this work and understands it to be a component of Christian vocation, and (3) reminds Episcopalians that they have personally made this vow to their God and their religious community.

Imago Dei

Second, the resolutions state that "everyone is diminished when the dignity of any human being, created in the image of God, is compromised," a reference to the imago Dei theology of inherent human value, and the belief that both victim and perpetrator are dehumanized by racism. Here, the Commission communicates their belief that racism hurts everyone, one of their main goals, and invites the diocese to participate in antiracism as part of their own spiritual healing and formation.

Eschatology

Third, the resolutions claim that "it is incumbent upon the church to speak, challenge, lead the call to repentance, and assist with the kind of bridge building that will participate in the unfolding Kingdom of God." This claim is a reference to Episcopal eschatological vision (The Episcopal Church, NDb), which holds that Christians are tasked with enacting God's vision through works of justice and mercy. This claim is expanded in the 2018 resolution which argues that the Christian has a calling to,

> live now as we will live "in the life of the world to come: is informed by a vision of people gathered "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9);

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By using Christian scripture, the Commission emphasizes that diversity is a value of God and a reflection of God's will. By referencing this theology, the Commission claims that God's ideal for humanity is a diverse and harmonious family, and reminds the diocese of this theology.

These claims all echo the larger, spiritual efforts of the Commission, which argue that antiracism work is not only a mandate of the Christian faith but is also a pathway toward spiritual wellness and true community. Each resolution succinctly communicates these beliefs and creates a path for diocesan members to move toward antiracism *because* of their faith. The spiritual argument for antiracism is seen as a crucial way to involve members of the community and facilitate larger change. By making this work sacred and embedded in their faith, the Commission hopes to reach a much larger population and to have more sustainable engagement.

Religious Resources

Each of the resolutions also articulated a call to action that involved using Episcopal religious resources. This is another example of how the Commission creates sacred—and particularly Episcopalian—pathways for antiracism. By drawing upon their own community artifacts, traditions, and prayers, they demonstrate that their faith is already prepared to engage the issue of racism. For instance, the 2015 resolution called for prayer in the wake Ferguson, but also,

> that resources of the Book of Common Prayer, 1979 (e.g. the Baptismal Covenant, the Litany of Penitence, the Great Litany, the Supplication) and the Passion narratives, be read, taught, prayed, and preached for the equipping of the saints to confront the sin of racism, the culture of violence that it fosters, and the indifference to injustice that undermines the pursuit of holiness.

Other resolutions include additional religious resource suggestions, such as the weekday Eucharistic propers, special liturgies, Bible studies, book studies, and film viewings. All of these

resources are opportunities for lay members and clergy to personally, in groups, or via regular Sunday services begin incorporating antiracism work in their spiritual lives and communal faith practice. The Episcopal Church has further created several liturgical resources—such as prayers of the people, prayers of confession and repentance, Advent and Lenten practices, and Bible studies oriented around issues of race and antiracism.

These resources speak into the liturgical seasons and rhythms of Episcopalians and provide easy entrance for TEC members to begin sitting in the theology and spiritual practices of antiracism. Ellen described this as letting antiracism "seep into what people are hearing." The Commission leverages their Episcopal resources (scripture, tradition, theological vision, polity, etc) to foster institutional change in their diocese through resolutions and makes new breakthroughs toward their goal of transforming community.

The emphasis on prayer and relationalism in the resolutions is a particular tactic of the Commission to provide an entry point into the conversation with a community perceived as resistant and defensive. However, an important critique is that these resolutions largely stop at the point of prayer and dialogue, failing to call for concrete interventions, training, or even specific repentance on the part of the community. While this is understandable given the larger context of a resistant diocese, it reflects a possible limitation to the sacred antiracism approach. Religious groups often face critique for operating only in the spiritual realm and failing to engage the social and political spheres through concreate action (see Wadsworth, 2014, for an example of how evangelical reconciliation avoided politics by emphasizing spiritual etiquette). Prayer and other religious activities are a useful part of resolutions and allow the Commission to make inroads with their community; however, they may also function as a way to avoid concrete

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action that would invite further contestation. I expand upon this critique in the conclusion, where I discuss the need to politicize sacred antiracism and nuance narratives of unity and harmony.

Implementation and Evaluation

Finally, most resolutions included a call for parishes to report on their activities regarding the resolution at the end of the year. For instance, the 2015 resolution stated that

> the clerks of each parish, mission, and chaplaincy shall report to the Standing Committee of the Diocese on such dialogues 60 days prior to the 184th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Tennessee. The Standing Committee shall publish a summary of these reports in anticipation of the same convention.

The 2018 resolution called for these reports to come directly to the Commission itself: "each worshipping community report their activity to the Beloved Community: Commission on Racial Reconciliation no later than November 1, 2018."

No formal process of soliciting, collecting, or analyzing these reports was established, and participants lament the lack any reporting back. Kevin reflected, "That resolution passed. Nothing ever came of it... There was no follow-up." This lack of follow up and reporting back is particularly frustrating for the Commission, who wish that diocesan leadership would require parishes to implement diocesan resolutions. Kevin explained,

> It would be perfectly appropriate for … after diocesan Convention for the bishop to say, 'We passed this resolution and I expect to see this done'…I don't know if the bishop has ever done it with any resolution, but, um, but you know, he, he, he supports the Commission and it would be nice if he communicated directly and say, on behalf of the Commission, yeah, 'I urge you to do this. I would really like to see it as your mission.' And that has never been.[15]

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[15] All interviews were conducted in 2019, so it is important to note that new activity from the Bishop and diocesan leadership may have emerged since this quote. However, at the time of the interviews, multiple participants expressed disappointment about the limited support and guidance provided by diocesan leadership and the Bishop in particular.

Participants explain that the larger culture of the diocese is explicitly or implicitly resistant to confronting racism. Resolutions are one way the Commission seeks to influence this culture, , but they feel they cannot achieve their goal without clear support from diocesan leadership. Commission members emphasize that while they feel the bishop is generally supportive of their efforts (and did play an important role in their formalization and budget), he tends to hands-off and "not a proactive communicator" with most resolutions, but especially political ones. This lack of leadership alongside the membership's general avoidance of race makes it difficult for the Commission to get traction with some of their goals.

Conclusion: Resolutions for Institutional Change

The work of writing resolutions is an effort to combine Episcopal polity and Episcopal theology into addressing the problem of racism. When the Commission uses this avenue to make change in the diocese, it is both an invitation and a process of accountability—it concretizes through public statement a theological claim and mandate, while simultaneously providing a way to gain increased engagement. These resolutions provide another avenue by which antiracism can become sanctified (Houston & Todd, 2013; Todd et al., 2014) and help illuminate why the sanctification process can be so powerful. Resolutions are more than just secular legislation or political pressure, and they are also more than just theological claims. Instead, they are unique combination of polity and faith, and speak a very particular language within the faith community. By focusing on resolutions, the Commission weaves together the resources of their tradition to engage the problem of racism at an institutional level.

Resolutions also demonstrate the Commission's theory of social change, which is focused on making incremental changes in the theology, culture, and structure of the diocese and TEC.

By engaging directly with the political structure of TEC (resolutions at convention), the Commission stakes a claim on their role in TEC and their agenda for racial justice. Although the Commission has tended to do this gently and tried to limit conflict, they are nonetheless participating the political realm of TEC and driving the issue of race at convention and in the diocese. This tactic reflects the multilayered nature of their approach to sacred antiracism: as they invite their community into spiritual wholeness and healing through antiracism, they also demand and require that their community participate in antiracism. Alongside their visioning work to frame antiracism as a sacred endeavor, and their communal work to operationalize antiracism through faith, education, and history, the Commission's work on resolutions is an effort to make institutional change and realize concrete change in the diocese.

Conclusion: Possibilities and Limitations of Sacred Antiracism

Environmental justice, mass incarceration, the death penalty, immigration issues, health inequities… all of those justice issues…aren't gonna ever get fixed completely until people have had their hearts transformed so they won't tolerate injustice anymore. But you can't wait for everybody's heart to get fixed. You have to keep working on fixing hearts while you work on fixing the outer systems. But you don't want to jeopardize one for the sake of the other… And it's not like you go do healing and you're all done, and now you can go do justice. That's not how it works. You're opening yourself up to healing and transformation and then you get involved in the work, and then you grow some more, and then you get deeper into justice work and then you get well some more, and then you get deeper and deeper until finally you die. - Dr Catherine Meeks, Director of the Absalom Jones Episcopal Center for Racial Healing, *Brave Space Podcast*, Pilot Episode

Research Aims of the Dissertation

This project has investigated the emerging phenomenon antiracism efforts in the Episcopal Church (TEC)—specifically the Beloved Community Commission in a Southern Episcopal diocese—and more broadly, considered the role of religion in social change efforts. To understand these issues, my research aims were to learn why the Commission had emerged, how they utilize community engagement practices and religious resources in their efforts, and what possibilities and limitations come out of their efforts. I asked three research questions:

1. Why has this Commission emerged and how does it imagine and pursue "Beloved Community?"

2. How does the Commission use *community engagement practices* to build the "Beloved Community," and what do these practices assume, enable, and foreclose about racial justice?

3. How does the Commission use *theologies and faithful practices* to build the "Beloved Community," and what do these practices assume, enable, and foreclose about racial justice?

I joined the Commission for three years in order to participate in their events and meetings, have formal and informal conversations, facilitate small group conversations, and collect important texts and artifacts. By using ethnographic methods, I have been able to unpack the Commission's vision for sacred antiracism and observe how their ideas are operationalized through community activities and institutionalized through diocesan resolutions.

Importance of Findings for the Literature

In this dissertation, I connect social movement studies, community psychology of religion, and critical race theory to explore how religious communities, particularly American Christian communities, leverage their religious resources in order to foster racial justice. In particular, I argue that Christian spirituality offers an intervention in the ontological dynamics of whiteness, which is a necessary component of dismantling the system of racism. I have used the case of the Beloved Community Commission in order to unpack these ideas and demonstrate how one Christian community connects antiracism to spiritual formation, creates spaces for an ontological "rebirth" that rejects whiteness and racial superiority, and calls for a new world of mutual humanity.

Social Movement Literature

My findings draw upon and expand Yukich's (2013) work around multitarget social movements. Like the Sanctuary Movement that she studied, the Beloved Community

Commission is looking for more than a political change. Yukich's (2013) work emphasized that

the New Sanctuary Movement desired political change, but that they also simultaneously desired

religious change. She explains,

> Instead, many early New Sanctuary activists saw widespread religious and spiritual change as an important goal as well, not only because converting the hearts and minds of religious communities could eventually lead to a change in politics, but also because they cared about the shape of religious institutions, identities, and cultures *in and of themselves* (50, italics in the text).

These findings help us to complexify religious actors and reveal the possibility that social

movements might have multiple targets. Yukich (2013) demonstrated that religious change can

be an indirect method of making political change, but also that specifically religious goals can

exist alongside political goals. Yukich (2013) explains,

> In addition to seeking to transform local religious communities, making them more attuned to global concerns, on the national religious stage many New Sanctuary activists hoped to offer a religious voice that challenged the dominance of the religious right's vision of religiosity in the U.S. public square (p. 61).

The New Sanctuary movement simultaneously sought to change American immigration policy,

and the American religious landscape dominated by the religious right. Only by understanding

both of these goals does the movement's strategy and tactics make sense. This important finding

opened up new analyses of religious social movements as complex and multifaceted, challenging

scholars to look more carefully at the religious aspects of these movements.

My findings build on this research and suggest that there is much overlap in the vision

and strategies of these two movements: like the New Sanctuary movement, the Beloved

Community Commission pursues a change in American religion. While the New Sanctuary

movement did this by organizing an interfaith presence in public setting, the Commission's has

focused on making bold theological claims within their specific faith setting—they have

developed a theological argument that antiracism is a necessary piece of Episcopal spiritual

formation. Additionally, the Commission has focused this intervention on a specific and concrete community—their own diocese—while the New Sanctuary movement was interfaith and national. This is an important nuance to Yukich's (2013) findings, because it demonstrates that her findings can be applied in other contexts.

Secondly, like the New Sanctuary movement, the Commission uses their religious resources to connect their faith to a political issue—racism. However, rather than bringing their faith into the public square, like the New Sanctuary movement did, they bring the political issue of racism into TEC. This is an distinction from the New Sanctuary movement and a key finding of my research: the Commission is very concerned about the political and social issue of racism, and they explicitly choose to address this problem within TEC and through their faith. As I've explained in previous chapters, approaching to racism primarily as a spiritual problem is a unique method that is often left out of social change conversations.

My findings suggest that the Commission is concerned about politics, but that they approach those concerns almost exclusively through religious efforts. They first seek to impact their specific religious community (their diocese)—to transform the individuals in the diocese and the larger culture created by the sin of racism. Like with the New Sanctuary movement, they commit themselves to their religious community and to making social change through transforming "hearts and minds" (Yukich, 2013, p. 39-67). Secondly, they seek to influence Episcopal theology itself—to make antiracism a fundamental part of spiritual formation. That is to say, they believe that this theological intervention will transform Episcopalians broadly, who will in turn become political change agents. Commission members often point to Episcopalians who were involved in the national and local Civil Rights Movement —such as Z. Alexander Looby, Thurgood Marshall, and Pauli Murry—as examples of this.

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By approaching racism as a spiritual issue and through the pathways of their faith, the Commission reveals a theory of change focused on spiritual transformation. Their approach takes seriously the role that religion and religious ideas have played in the justification of racism. Their efforts to shift culture and ideology is a method to foster new (antiracist) political positions and dismantle old (racist) positions, undergirded by a theology for antiracism. This is a unique approach to making social change and an important contribution to the study of social movements.

Community Psychology Literatures

My findings also support and expand Todd's and colleagues (Houston & Todd, 2013; Todd & Rufa, 2013; Todd et al., 2014; Todd et al., 2015) work on the sanctification of social justice. This line of inquiry has explored how community social change work draws on sacred framing. My findings add to this literature by exploring in greater detail specifically why and how this "sanctifying" process happens. I have argued first that the Episcopal tradition has numerous resouces that engage social justice as an aspect of their faith, and that the Commission's work has been "bridging" (Benford & Snow, 2000) these resources to the issues of racism. The Commission enacted the sanctification of antiracism both philosophically but also materially: At a theological level, the Commission has put a great deal of work into explaining *why* antiracism is sacred. They utilize a variety of scripture references, theological doctrines, and church resources to argue that racism is a sin and a spiritual illness. Specifically, they claim that racism violates the imago Dei and functions to dehumanize both victim and perpetrator. Simultaneously, they articulate a theological vision of antiracism as a Christian mandate and a key piece of spiritual formation. In so doing, the Commission gets very concrete

about how and why antiracism is a sacred endeavor. Antiracism for them is not a vague social activity—but rather a necessary expression of their faith.

Additionally, the Commission enacts the sanctification of social justice in communal and material ways, not just theoretically. By creating events, leading services and prayers, and opening up communal space, the Commission brings sacred antiracism into physical being. Sacred antiracism looks like corporate worship, a weekly prayer litany for George Floyd, a pilgrimage to the Peace and Justice Memorial in Montgomery, and an Ibram X. Kendi book group. The sacred character of antiracism is explained in the Commission's vision and goals, but it is enacted and lived out in their activities and actions. By leveraging the resources of their faith upon the issue of racism, the Commission demonstrates how antiracism is part of the Episcopal faith.

My research reveals how the work of sanctification can be a crucial component of social movements and functions as a tactic for social change. Social movement scholars have long examined how religious resources provide motivation, legitimation, and meaning in social movements, often sustaining social activism in difficult contexts (Smith, 1996, p. 9-13). The Commission's efforts to center the issue of racism in their theology is an example of this theory, and my research reveals the ways it is facilitating change in their diocese.

More broadly, my research expands literature about the sanctification of social justice by getting more specific about it: my dissertation investigated a specific denomination and faith community, as well as focused on race in particular, rather than social justice broadly. As such, we have learned concrete ways that Episcopal tradition is turned to the problem of racism (for instance, through their unique baptismal vows). This opens up new questions about how other religious communities with different theological resources and faith practices might sanctify

antiracism. Additionally, it reveals questions about how Episcopalians might or already have

sanctified other social justice work—such as gay rights or gender equity, for instance. By getting

specific and concrete about how sanctification takes place with this community, we start to

understand how sanctification works and what possibilities it provides in the work of social

change.

Critical Race Theory

Finally, my findings also engage work by powell (2012) about white ontology and the

importance of new selfhood. powell (2012) argues, alongside the field of Critical Race Theory,

that whiteness is a constructed identity fundamentally based in exclusion, isolation, and

oppression. powell (2012) argues that spirituality is necessary to confront racism and move

toward justice. This spirituality, he proposes, will enable us unpack how racism shapes

individual identity and ontology, which in turn structures communities and social systems (and

vice versa), and to do so in a way the reestablishes our shared humanity and fosters deep

community. He argues thus that antiracism must be more than a material intervention—it must

take seriously the power of ontology in disrupting the racial hierarchy. He states,

> To strike at the core of whiteness, we must address the ontological question…. We must
> better understand how this self is constructed and what maintains its attachment to
> whiteness" (powell, 2012, p. 158).

As powell (2012) calls for an ontological intervention in racism, however, he also cautions us to

be thoughtful about this process. He emphasizes that "Because whiteness is bound up with the

sense of self and gives meaning to the self, its destruction equals the destruction of the self"

(powell, 2012, p. 157). As such, he reminds us that we cannot expect people to commit

"ontological death" (powell, 2012, p. xviii), but rather we must facilitate a process of something new. powell (2012) explains,

> The goal then must not only be decentering whiteness but also transforming whiteness and otherness. This requires a project that gives birth to a new meaning and space for whiteness that is not based on exclusion, internal and external separation, and disaffiliation or power over others (p. 100).

The transformation of whiteness, powell (2012) suggests, calls for deep identity and community work—a spiritual process of change and rebirth.

My findings suggest that the Commission shares powell's (2012) vision and concerns. Like powell (2012), they approach racism as a spiritual issue that has created false identities and has led to racist social systems.[16] They further see this as a harm for both whites and people of color. They perceive their work as addressing this level of selfhood, in a desire to help people (and especially whites) see the wrong and harm of racism and to desire something better. Their interventions are focused on illuminating these ontological wounds and creating spaces for racial healing, so that a new self can emerge. As powell (2012) reminds us that, "in transforming whiteness and privilege, whites would get the chance to be humane beings" (p. 101). Doing this in a committed faith community is a crucial piece of the Commission's method, as it provides the larger relationship in which one can envision a new self-based on interdependence. Rather than facilitating "destruction" (powell, 2012, p. 157), the Commission in the context of their faith community invites their fellow white Episcopalians to release their "attachment to whiteness" (powell, 2012, p. 158) and regain their humanity.

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[16] powell (2013) is intentional in his book to write about whiteness as a construction and regime; the Commission has less exposure to theories of whiteness and this tenet of Critical Race Theory, and they speak more generally about racism. There are important distinctions to be considered in their language and assumptions, but my intent is to speak into the deeper idea and spirit of this ontological and spiritual vision, which has great overlap, and so for that sake of this section I use whiteness and racism interchangeably.

However, powell (2012) cautions us that the ontological intervention is not simple, individual, apolitical, or ahistorical work. He emphasizes that,

> To renounce privilege would be to give up whiteness itself, and this cannot be accomplished at the individual level… any particular focus on privilege as something that can be separated from whiteness is likely to leave the structure of whiteness in place, with the reinscribing of a new arrangement of privilege" (powell, 2012, p. 98).

Powell (2012) emphasizes that whiteness—and its privileges—are not attained only through individual intent and action but are also largely a product of historical conditions and social structures. As such, it is not possible for one to simply 'opt out' of the privileges associated with whiteness. Rather, powell (2012) emphasizes the work must include intervention in the larger social, historical, and political conditions that structure these privileges. Whiteness and racism have ontological implications, he explains, but this does not mean they are solely individual and internal processes: "one cannot address justice by looking at individuals. What I am suggesting is that if spirituality is to engage suffering and its causes, it must also be concerned with how those institution and structures function in society" (powell, 2012, p. 199). In other words, addressing the ontological repercussions of whiteness necessarily confronts the larger societal and material conditions that continually reconstruct and preserve the system of whiteness and the racial hierarchy.

This aspect of powell's (2012) theory provides the key critique of the Beloved Community Commission's efforts: while the Commission has articulated a powerful spiritual intervention that condemns racism, engages ontology, and creates space for interconnectedness, they have struggled to fully translate this intervention to current, concrete social-political structures. Much of their work around the sin of racism and racial healing remains in the individualized and ontological spheres, and focused on the past. This is an important limitation in their efforts, as it functions to obscure the larger system that harbors racism and supports white

ontology. By failing to engage the concrete ways in which contemporary racism takes shape

(such as city council votes, school board decisions, or housing and development patterns), they

stop short of linking the spiritual aspects of racism with the larger social system. As such, it

remains a largely individualized and apolitical intervention.

Politicizing Sacred Antiracism

powell (2012) argues that disrupting white ontology must be fundamentally partnered

with a social critique that calls for new social patterns. He states,

> Transforming the terms, assumptions, and arrangements that arbitrarily and unfairly
> diminish the life chances of disfavored groups requires that we name, engage, and
> challenge those aspects of our society and the claims associated with them." (p. 99)

My findings suggest that an important next step for the Beloved Community Commission is to

explore how to politicize sacred antiracism and respond to powell's (2012) challenge to

incorporate active engagement with social-political institutions into their spiritual approaches.

The Episcopal Church, as I described in the Introduction and Chapter 1, is a site of political

potential—both nationally and locally. As an institution with a great deal of wealth, education,

and civic power, spurring TEC into antiracist action could have a substantive impact in

American social-political dynamics. The Episocopal Church has the theology and religious

resources to undergird this vision, as I have demonstrated—the crucial next step is clearly

demonstrating how this spiritual vision is embodied through concrete political activity. While

this analysis is not the aim of my dissertation, I will offer a few thoughts below on how it might

be attained and ways that future research might explore this next piece of the project.

Connecting Individual Healing to Communal and Institutional Healing

The first challenge to the Commission's conceptualization of sacred antiracism is how individualized it is. Spirituality is a mystical and deep process that is difficult to define or measure. As such the Commission has largely focused on creating opportunity for spiritual transformation, rather than constructing clear action items that emerge from this spiritual transformation. As such, participants of their activities are given prompts to reflecting on themselves and their choices, but are given little support in making a link between their personal experiences and the larger social system. For instance, while the Commission organized an impactful and moving pilgrimage to the Peace and Justice Memorial in Montgomery, they did little connecting work about the topic of racialized violence in contemporary America to the lives of individuals on the trip. They might have taken time during or after the trip to discuss how racial violence had happened over the current year and ways it was rationalized through various social narratives, and how these processes are concrete ways that the dehumanization of racism occurs and impacts us all. They might have linked this to sin and spiritual illness and issued a call, as Christians, to make a change in the legal policies and social narratives that allow this violence to be imagined and enacted. While the pilgrimage created space for these type of reflections to occur spontaneously, the Commission did not take leadership in facilitating these connections for participants of the trip, and as such left much of the work to "name, engage, and challenge those aspects of our society" (powell, 2012, p. 99) up to the individuals themselves.

I suggest that the Commission might start incorporating social-political critique into sacred antiracism by utilizing the frame of "institutional sin." The Episcopal Church and other Christian organizations have articulated and drawn on this idea in various ways to facilitate a process of repentance that expands the understanding of racism to be structural and systemic. This frame can be used to acknowledge sin of a group (such as a diocese repenting together for

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profiting from enslavement) or to critique a particular process or policy (such as biased voting system). By applying the framework of sin beyond the individual, the Commission might find a new pathway into social-political critique and activism beyond the individual. More broadly, this conversation will help the Commission to identify how the ontological level of racism is maintained beyond individual activity and to begin addressing these institutional practices.

Nuancing Narratives of Unity and Harmony

If the Commission were to incorporate social-political critiques in their work, however, they will necessarily confront new challenges regarding social harmony. Sacred antiracism work must include naming and condemning the concrete manifestations of racism, which are of course contested. For instance, if the Commission were to begin issuing critiques about gentrification, they would implicate large developers who profit from gentrification—individuals who may attend churches in the diocese (and give pledge money) or be relatives of church members (who give pledge money). This dynamic is present at both the national and local levels and demonstrates again the political potential of TEC: on the one hand, if TEC moved toward a concerted effort to redress racial injustice, the power and wealth of their membership has great potential to disrupt patterns of racial oppression. On the other hand, TEC has a great deal to lose (materially) if they alienate the wealthy and powerful members who help pay for clergy salaries and parish operating budgets. This aspect of antiracism work has been one of the most challenging for the Commission to navigate, as they seek to maintain unity and harmony in the community.

The Commission's focus on unity is a key piece of their contribution—they are profoundly committed to maintaining community and relationships in the diocese and avoid

polarization. This collective identity is fundamental to their faith, worship expression, and theory of change. Additionally, the Commission is a formal committee of the diocese and funded in part by the diocese, and as such as they feel both a need and responsibility to function in a way that fosters unity across the community. Moreover, the larger context of the diocese, as Commission members often remind me, is deeply embedded in racism and largely resistant to the topic of antiracism. These factors all shape the Commission's work of antiracism and prompt them, as I have described, to emphasize invitation, spiritual transformation, and relationship building as methods of social change.

In the midst of this challenging context, I suggest that the Commission expand their approach to unity to consider ways that fostering racial healing might involve difficult conversations that ultimately lead to greater spiritual health and communal connection. The Commission is clear that racism wounds everyone, including the beneficiaries of the system. Drawing upon this commitment might allow them to become more concrete and direct in condemning racism and connecting public realities of racism to spiritual issues in order to spur real healing within their community. For instance, the Commission might focus on connecting historical patterns to contemporary legislation and issues, prompting a confrontation with the ways racism is reinforced today, within the diocese itself. As this work begins to upset members of the diocese, the Commission will have opportunities to embody their values of unity in their responses and in their commitments to antiracist spiritual formation. In these moments, the Commission might draw on the deep well of TEC theology and faithful practices, the legacy of truth-telling Black Episcopalians, and their practices of "power with" (Ben David & Rubel-Lifschitz, 2018) that have already been cultivated in their movement. These practices may allow them to stay in community while also addressing racism in their deep project for racial healing.

Building People Power

To support the Commission in their work to politicize sacred antiracism, I also suggest that they draw on community organizing practices to build a network of activated membership. Over my three years with the Commission, I met and worked with a breadth of individuals who were interested in participating in the work but are often unsure of how to contribute. I suggest that the Commission work strategically on incorporating these individuals into their efforts for social change, building leadership potential, and articulating concrete goals. From a community organizing perspective, this would enable them to reach more people across the diocese, but also allow them to exert more pressure to make changes. Particularly in circumstances where others in the diocese are resistant, having a committed base of supporters may help guide times of conflict and controversy.

Building a base of people power will require the Commission to be organized and strategic about their long-term goals. On a whole, the Commission has struggled with this, primarily because they are a fully volunteer committee, and most members work additional full-time jobs. As such, it is difficult to have the time and energy to build a large strategic vision and organize a membership. To do this work, I suggest that the Commission will need to hire staff who have experience with community organizing. As they develop a long-term vision with concrete goals, they will be more prepared to tap into their network and engage diocesan members as fellow change agents, not just participants of an activity. This will in turn enable shared vision work and leadership that the Commission needs to sustain their ambitions.

Importance of Findings: Contribution of the Spiritual Approach to Antiracism

My dissertation describes an innovative approach to the problem of racism that is grounded deeply in religious work. Scholars and activists frequently underemphasize the importance of the spiritual dynamics of antiracism. My dissertation seeks to highlight why and how the spiritual approach is so important: because our ontological claims and conceptions of our selves shape how we image each other, which in turn shapes how we treat each other. Religious communities are uniquely prepared to engage this sphere of human experience and to offer guidance on spiritual endeavors. The Beloved Community Commission's articulation of sacred antiracism directly addresses the ontological aspects of racism to identify the ontological harm of racism. They draw on their faith mandates to condemn racism and provide an ontological alternative based in mutual humanity. This pathway to racial healing is grounded in community, motivated by their faith, articulated through their theology.

My research articulates some critiques of sacred antiracism in this specific case and more broadly. I emphasize that in order for sacred antiracism to really address the racial hierarchy, it must engage material and political action as sacraments – i.e. outward manifestations of individual spirituality. In so doing, the concrete ways that racism is enacted and justified must be clearly exposed and challenged, both to reveal how the system protects ontological racism, but also to show how ontology is fundamentally connected to the material and structural dynamics of racism. I suggest that faith communities are equipped to do this work of social critique and public activism, and that their faith resources provide support and guidance.

As the Commission argues that antiracism is a sacred endeavor, they set the stage for TEC to be a site of radical possibility and imagination. The Commission's vision of racial healing and spiritual wholeness is an effort to imagine and create a new community and world. In essence, to create the Beloved Community based in the image of (their) God (imago Dei).

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This project includes both spiritual and political work, engages ontological and material spheres, and involves public, academic, and religious participants.

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The following textual artifacts were reviewed for this dissertation (Published Letters and Reports, General Resolutions, Diocesan Resolutions). Documents that were two pages or less are included in their full form. Documents that are longer that two pages are given a web address for reference. Resolutions from the Commission's diocese have been de-identified.

1963 The Church Speaks on Race

Web Address:
https://web.archive.org/web/20220321194200/https://episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/files/original/f6e1238bf2caab44143d425aa8793742.pdf

1994 House of Bishops Pastoral Letter on Sin of Racism

Web Address:
https://web.archive.org/web/20210626150236/https://www.episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/files/original/235c6064a450feefde9cec74e825ba0c.pdf

2006 The Sin of Racism: A Call to Covenant, A Pastoral Letter from the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church

Web Address:
https://web.archive.org/web/20220116001950/https://www.episcopalarchives.org/sites/default/files/anti-racism/anti-racism-training/March2006_PastoralLetter.pdf

2015 The Church's Contemporary Response to Racism

Web Address:
https://web.archive.org/web/20220201154345/https://www.episcopalarchives.org/sites/default/files/anti-racism/anti-racism-training/ResRep_Anti-RacismTraining_AEC03202015.pdf

2018 Telling the Truth, Proclaiming the Dream: Stories of Leadership, Racial Injustice, and Healing from Deputies, Bishops, and Leaders of Color in the Episcopal Church

Web Address:
https://web.archive.org/web/20220201005513/https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/bbc_report_on_poc_leadership_fall-2018.pdf

2021 Becoming Beloved Community Where You Are: A Resource for Episcopal Individuals, Congregations & Communities Seeking Racial Healing, Reconciliation, and Justice

Web Address:
https://web.archive.org/web/20220201005534/https://www.episcopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/04/RR-BBCWYA-Full.pdf

Becoming Beloved Community: The Episcopal Church's Long-Term Commitment to Racial Healing, Reconciliation, and Justice

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.[1] 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.

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[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.

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.

Resolution 2000-BO49 Require Antiracism Training

Resolution Number:	2000-B049
Title:	Require Anti-Racism Training
Legislative Action Taken:	Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:	

Resolved, **That beginning on September 1, 2000 the lay and ordained leadership of the Episcopal Church, including all ordained persons, professional staff, and those elected or appointed to positions of leadership on committees, commissions, agencies, and boards be required to take anti-racism training and receive certification of such training;** and be it further

Resolved, **That the Executive Council select and authorize appropriate programs that will be used at the national level; that each province select and authorize appropriate programs that will be used at the provincial level; and that each diocese select and authorize appropriate programs that will be used at the diocesan and parochial levels, each province and diocese to determine those lay and clergy leaders who are to take the training;** and be it further

Resolved, **That the Standing Commission on National Concerns continues to develop a list of such appropriate resources;** and be it further

Resolved, **That each national committee, commission, agency, and board, and each province and diocese maintain a register of those who are trainers and those who have been trained, and forward this information to the Executive Council by January 1, 2003, and every two years thereafter, and the Council report on this information to the 74th and 75th General Conventions.**

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Denver, 2000* (New York: General Convention, 2001), p. 603.

Resolution 2015-C019 Work for Racial Justice and Resolution

Resolution Number:	2015-C019
Title:	Work for Racial Justice and Reconciliation
Legislative Action Taken:	Concurred as Substituted
Final Text:	

Resolved, **That the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church confesses that, despite repeated efforts at anti-racism training as well as racial justice and racial reconciliation initiatives including the passage of more than 30 General Convention resolutions dating back to 1952, the abomination and sin of racism continue to plague our society and our Church at great cost to human life and human dignity; we formally acknowledge our historic and contemporary participation in this evil and repent of it;** and be it further

Resolved, **That in the wake of the brutal, overtly racist murders of nine of our Christian brothers and sisters of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church on June 17, 2015; numerous inexcusable deaths of unarmed black men and youth at the hands of law enforcement personnel; and the moral atrocity of mass incarceration in which a hugely disproportionate number of persons of color have been unfairly caught in the net of an unjust criminal justice system, the 78th General Convention affirms as a top priority of The Episcopal Church in the upcoming triennium the challenging and difficult work of racial reconciliation through prayer, teaching, engagement, and action;** and be it further

Resolved, **That the Church understands and affirms that the call to pray and act for racial reconciliation is integral to our witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to our living into the demands of our Baptismal Covenant;** and be it further

Resolved, **That the Presiding Bishop, President of the House of Deputies, Vice President of the House of Bishops, and Vice President of the House of Deputies be charged to lead, direct, and be present to assure and account for the Church's work of racial justice and reconciliation;** and be it further

Resolved, **That the General Convention request that the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance consider a budget allocation of $1.2 million for the Triennium for the implementation of this resolution.**

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), pp. 310-311.

Resolution 2015-A182 Address Systemic Racial Injustice

Resolution Number:	2015-A182
Title:	Address Systemic Racial Injustice
Legislative Action Taken:	Concurred as Amended
Final Text:	

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention of the Episcopal Church recognize that many Episcopalians find it challenging to understand or know how to respond to 21st century systemic racial injustices that still occur in multiple contexts including but not limited to education; employment; housing; health care; banking; voting rights; immigration; policing, courts, and prisons, etc.; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention affirms that the Gospel, our Baptismal Covenant, and our Marks of Mission call individuals, churches, dioceses, provinces, and the wider Church to find more effective and productive ways to respond to racial injustice as we love our neighbors as ourselves, respect the dignity of every human being, and transform unjust structures of society; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention declare that "not knowing" and "not having the eyes to see and ears to hear" are serious obstacles to transforming unjust structures and therefore direct the Church at every level for this triennium to commit to increase the use of study, education, research, anti-racism training, liturgies, and Christian formation instruction that specifically address systemic racial injustice; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention urge the Church at every level to increase the number of dialogues about systemic racial injustice it has with local, state and national bodies within the public and private spheres and that these dialogues be used to identify, examine, and offer correctives to policies and practices within and among these bodies that result in systemic racial disparities and injustices; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention urge dioceses and congregations to create vehicles for listening to diverse neighbors and developing reconciling relationships; such options might include (a) listening campaigns in local communities, (b) partnerships with churches and organizations comprised predominately of a different race or culture (especially those targeted by oppression), (c) neighborhood prayer walks, (d) storytelling and speak-out events designed to facilitate truth-telling, healing and action, (e) and others with which leaders throughout the Church are familiar; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention encourage Justice and Advocacy Ministries to partner with other church offices and organizations as appropriate to host, resource, and moderate an ongoing online forum for Episcopalians dedicated to the ministry of racial justice and reconciliation, with spaces dedicated to sharing about local and diocesan efforts and resources; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention encourage Justice and Advocacy Ministries to partner with Youth Ministries to commission a gospel-centered, Internet-integrated, action-oriented, anti-racism youth ministry curriculum for congregations throughout The Episcopal Church, including those not in the United States, to be provided in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole; and be it further

Resolved, That the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music produce and post online a set of prayers for racial reconciliation and justice, suitable for inclusion in the Prayers of the People; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention urge the Executive Council to conduct its own internal audit to assess to what extent, if at all, racial disparities and systemic racial injustices exist within the Church (including but not limited to clergy salaries and deployment); and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention request that the Executive Council report back to the 79th General Convention on the results of the internal audit; what concrete steps it and the wider Church took to address systemic racial injustice in the wider culture; and how effective those steps were.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), pp. 438-439.

Resolution 2018-D002 Request Funding for Racial Reconciliation Initiatives

Resolution Number:	2018-D002
Title:	Request Funding for Racial Reconciliation Initiatives
Legislative Action Taken:	Concurred as Amended
Final Text:	

Resolved, **That the General Convention request that the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance allocate $5.0 million for the triennium for the implementation of additional work of organizing our efforts to respond to racial injustice and grow a Beloved Community of healers, justice makers and reconcilers for the implementation of this resolution;** and be it further

Resolved, **That such monies shall be utilized exclusively to make grants to agencies and dioceses and other affiliated entities of The Episcopal Church for the establishment of such programmatic activities aimed at addressing the issue of Racial Reconciliation. Such activities may include, but not be limited to, speaker series, sacred conversations, Racial Reconciliation Workshops, and other activities that promote the purposes of this resolution;** and be it further

Resolved, **That this General Convention directs, consistent with established policies and procedures, that the Executive Council be charged with the establishment of all criteria, and procedures associated with the awarding of such grants, and that such criteria and procedures be established as soon as practical, after the conclusion of this 79th General Convention such Committee or Office that Executive Council shall designate with implementation of the grants shall have published the criteria and be ready to accept applications submitted for such grants, and that the entities receiving such grants shall report back to the Committee or Office that Executive Council shall have designated on the usage of its grant, and that the Executive Council shall report back to the General Convention in 2021 on the usage of the $5.0 million allocation.**

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018* (New York: General Convention, 2018), p. 465.

Resolution Submitted to the 183rd Annual Diocesan Convention

A resolution on "A Diocesan call to prayer, dialogue, and community bridge-building"
Originally Proposed by The Mission Council of
and revised by the General Resolutions Committee of Convention

Whereas, on the night before He suffered and died, our Lord Jesus Christ commanded His disciples to "love one another" (John 13:34), and

Whereas, in response to His commandment we are aggrieved by the recent tragic events in Ferguson, Staten Island, New York City, Cleveland, Denver, and other parts of the country; and

Whereas, the Christian vocation demands the proclamation of "God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" manifest itself in the striving for justice and peace among all people; and

Whereas, everyone is diminished when the dignity of any human being, created in the image of God, is compromised; and

Whereas, it is incumbent upon the church to speak, challenge, lead the call to repentance, and assist with the kind of bridge building that will participate in the unfolding Kingdom of God; now be it therefore

Resolved, the 183rd Annual Convention of the Diocese of   call on all of its members, lay and ordained, to pray for those whose lives have been personally and painfully affected by these events. Petitions should include prayers for the injured, the deceased, their families, those whose businesses were destroyed in the ensuing protests, local law enforcement teams, first responders, elected officials, and those who live in communities polarized by the national debate over local guidelines governing the use of police force; and be it further

Resolved, that resources of the *Book of Common Prayer, 1979* (e.g. the Baptismal Covenant, the Litany of Penitence, the Great Litany, the Supplication) and the Passion narratives, be read, taught, prayed, and preached for the equipping of the saints to confront the sin of racism, the culture of violence that it fosters, and the indifference to injustice that undermines the pursuit of holiness; and be it further

Resolved, that all Rectors, Vicars, Chaplains, and Wardens in the parishes, chapels, and missions of the Diocese, labor to create opportunities for dialogue among church members, the communities served by the local church, and local law enforcement officials, that the highest degree of safety, mutual respect, and understanding might be fostered; and be it further

Resolved, that the clerks of each parish, mission, and chaplaincy shall report to the Standing Committee of the Diocese on such dialogues 60 days prior to the 184th Annual Convention of the Diocese of   The Standing Committee shall publish a summary of these reports in anticipation of the same convention.

2016 Resolution B: Reaffirmation of Resolution 'A Diocesan Call to Prayer, Dialogue and Community Bridge Building'

Late Resolution Received less than 45 days before Annual Convention

As passed by the 184th Convention

Reaffirmation of Resolution 'A Diocesan Call to Prayer,

Dialogue and Community Bridge Building'

Whereas, the incidents of tragic deaths similar to those in Ferguson, Staten Island, New York City, Cleveland, Denver and other parts of the country continue throughout our nation; and

Whereas, the 183rd Diocesan Convention passed a resolution calling lay and clergy to pray for those whose lives have been personally and painfully affected by these events; that resources from the Book of Common Prayer be used to confront the sin of racism, the culture of violence that fosters it and the indifference to injustice that undermines the pursuit of holiness; and

Whereas, the resolution called for all Rectors, Vicars, Chaplains and Wardens in the parishes, chapels and missions of the diocese to create opportunities for dialogue among church members, the communities served by local churches and law enforcement officials to nurture the highest degree of safety, mutual respect and understanding; and

Whereas, the 78th General Convention of The Episcopal Church, in resolution C019, affirmed as a top priority in the upcoming triennium the challenging and difficult work of racial reconciliation through prayer, teaching, engagement, and action; now therefore be it

Resolved that this 184th Diocesan Convention of the Diocese of _____ joins with the larger body of The Episcopal Church and reaffirms its continued support of that resolution; and be it further

Resolved that the bishop is invited to create an Anti-Racism Taskforce to assist Episcopalians in upholding their Baptismal Covenant to "strive for justice and peace among all people" in the area of race.

Explanation

The incidents of deaths of people of color caused by the use of deadly force involving police officers continues to burden our communities causing anger, pain, controversy and conflicts. This resolution calls us as Christians to remain mindful and aware of these incidents and to do our part as a faith community to bring healing and justice.

Proposed by:

Resolution on the Commemoration of the Martyrs of Charleston on June 17

Proposed by:

Whereas, on the night before He suffered and died, our Lord Jesus Christ commanded His disciples to "love one another" (John 13:34), and

Whereas, in response to His commandment we are aggrieved by the tragic event of June 17, 2015 at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC where nine African-American congregants were killed by a lone white gunman during Bible Study; and

Whereas, days later in response to these killings, family members and friends demonstrated the teachings in Ephesians 4:32 ("Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.") by publicly forgiving the gunman who had taken their loved ones from them; and

Whereas, the Christian vocation manifests itself in the "striving for justice and peace among all people"; and

Whereas, everyone is diminished when the dignity of any human being, created in the image of God, is compromised; and

Whereas, it is incumbent upon the church to speak, challenge, lead the call to repentance, and assist with the kind of bridge building that will participate in the unfolding Kingdom of God; now be it therefore

Resolved, that the Bishop and Council appoint an ad hoc committee to investigate the opportunity to commemorate the Martyrs of Charleston on June17 each year throughout the Diocese of   , to encourage other dioceses to likewise commemorate this event on June 17, and to explore potential future national recognition of the Martyrs of Charleston on June 17th with inclusion in "A Great Cloud of Witnesses" as approved under Resolution A056: **"Authorize New Liturgical Resources: A Great Cloud of Witnesses; Weekday Eucharistic Propers"** as adopted by The 78th **General Convention of the Episcopal Church on July 1, 2015.**

2018 Resolution: Call for the Diocese to Dismantle Racism

Call for the Diocese of   to Dismantle Racism

(General Resolutions Committee: Adoptions with amendment)

Whereas, the 78th General Convention of the Episcopal Church meeting in 2015 passed resolution 2015-A182, which urges dioceses and parishes to create and find productive ways to address the sin of racism on many levels; and

Whereas, the Episcopal Diocese of   has engaged in activities and efforts towards dismantling the sin of racism through the creation of a diocesan commission called   which was formally known as the Anti-Racism Task Force,

Whereas, on the night before He suffered and died, our Lord Jesus Christ commanded His disciples to "love one another" (Jn13:34), and

Whereas, everyone is diminished when the dignity of any human being, created in the image of God, is compromised; and

Whereas, our call to live now as we will live "in the life of the world to come: is informed by a vision of people gathered "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9); now be it

Resolved, that the Episcopal Diocese of   seeks to meet the urgings of 2015-A182 to *empower clergy and laypersons to* confront the sin of racism when encountered in our churches, diocesan institutions and communities; and be it further

Resolved, that   strongly urges all persons in the diocese to commit themselves in prayer, study and dialogue about the sin of racism, that include, but are not limited to, book studies, film viewings, special liturgies and Bible studies; and be it further

Resolved, that each worshipping community report their activity to the   no later than November 1, 2018.

Explanation

"Dismantling racism is about working on your internal self to the degree that we are willing to let ourselves be set free to be more willing to take down the structures that are keeping people from being free."

Catherine Meeks, Founding Executive Director, Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing

The 78th General Convention of the Episcopal Church issued resolutions urging The Episcopal Church to focus our efforts on dismantling racism and to report on these efforts. "Call for the Diocese of   to Dismantle Racism" hopes to answer our church's call to dismantle racism by encouraging the Diocese of   to take seriously the sins of racism by offering programs in local churches. These programs may just get the conversation started or they may lead to plans that bring about racial healing. Wherever you begin, know that this process of addressing and dismantling racism, while challenging, is a practice that will lead us all toward greater wholeness, toward deeper holiness.

2019 Resolution: The Episcopal Diocese on Affirming Identity as Members of the Beloved Community

The Episcopal Diocese of ___ on Affirming Identity as Members of the Beloved Community

Whereas
___ of the Episcopal Diocese of ___ was established in 2017; and

Whereas the Diocesan Commission seeks to work toward full inclusivity, both racially and ethnically regarding the staff of the Diocese, elected lay and clergy leaders, clergy and bishops; taking steps in the healing of the wounds of our Church, its members and our communities; and to educate members about the effects of the sin of racism on the oppressor and the oppressed, conveying the understanding that racism hurts everyone; and

Whereas we share a common faith, life and mission as Baptized Christians and Episcopalians in the Diocese of ___ and

Whereas Galatians 3:28 informs us "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus"; therefore be it

Resolved, that this 187th Diocesan Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of ___ affirm, recognize, and celebrate our membership in the Beloved Community of the Diocese and beyond; and be it further

Resolved that we support through prayers and by active participation in the ongoing ministry of the Commission.

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Section 1: Background

Tell me the story of how the Commission emerged. What happened to spur its formation?

Tell me the story of how you joined the Commission. How did you come to be a part of this and what is your role?

What is your perspective of "the problem" that the Commission is trying to solve?

How is the Commission trying to address this "problem"?

What do you hope the Commission will achieve?

Do you have any frustrations or concerns about the Commission?

Section 2: Faith and Community

What does "Beloved Community" mean to you?

How is the Commission creating "Beloved Community?"

The Commission organizes a number of events: Absalom Jones service, Pilgrimage to Montgomery, race-education groups, Walk in Love, etc. How, if at all, do these events help to make Beloved Community? What is important about them?

Are there other things the Commission is doing that you are excited about or that you see as important?

How do you feel the diocese is engaging/responding to the Commission?

Section 3: Politics and Social Change

Why do you think racial disparities exist in this country today?

How do you think these racial disparities could be eradicated?

What role, if at all, do you think the Church plays in this process?

How, it at all, does the Commission engage politics/economics?

Appendix C: Focus Group Guide

INTRODUCTION (10-20 min)

In a sentence or two, could you tell us why you have chosen to be part of the Beloved Community Commission?

Are there any scriptures, spiritual practices, or theologies that are meaningful to you personally in the work of building Beloved Community?

THEOLOGY AND THEORY (30-60 min)

1. The Episcopal Church talks about racism as a sin. Is this how you think about racism? (FLIP CHART)

    a. Is everyone guilty of this sin, or just whites?

    b. Are institutions guilty of this sin?

    c. How does the Church ask people to respond to the sin of racism?

    d. How does the Church ask institutions to respond to the sin of racism?

2. Some people talk about racism as an issue of <u>prejudice and bigotry</u>, and they tend to address racism by trying to change people's hearts and minds (often through education and encounters with diverse others). Others approach racism as a <u>social-economic-political system</u> that privileges whites by exploiting people of color, and they tend to address racism by trying to change structures and power arrangements (often through community organizing and policy change). (FLIP CHART)

a. Which way of approaching racism do you lean toward? Why?

b. How do you think the Commission approaches racism? Why?

3. The Episcopal Church uses the terms "racial reconciliation," "racial healing," and "racial justice."

  a. What does "<u>racial reconciliation</u>" mean to you?

    i. What practices or actions do you associate with racial reconciliation?

    ii. What would racial reconciliation look like in our diocese?

  b. What does "<u>racial healing</u>" mean to you?

    i. What practices or actions do you associate with racial healing?

    ii. What would racial healing look like in our diocese?

  c. What does "<u>racial justice</u>" mean to you?

    i. What practices or actions do you associate with racial justice?

    ii. What would racial justice look like in our diocese?

4. The Commission's mission says, "Educate members about the effects of racism on people of color and white people and to convey the understanding that racism hurts everyone." (FLIP CHART)

Why is it important to talk about how racism hurts everyone? How is everyone hurt by racism?

  a. Why do you think white people should work for anti-racism? What's in it for them?

  b. Why do you think is education important? What do you hope it will achieve?

THE DIOCESE AND THE COMMISSION (15-30 min)

5. Why do you think there are so few people of color in the diocese (as both lay and clergy)?

6. Do you think there are any practices, policies, traditions, or structures in the diocese that are racist? Can you give me an example?

7. The diocese is a largely rural, white, small-church community. Does this context shape the way you think about the goals of the Commission?

CASE STUDIES (20-40 mins)

8. Suppose a white member of your congregation came to Bible study wearing a shirt with a confederate flag on it.

    a. How would you respond? How would you want your priest to respond?

    b. Should the church refuse to let members wearing a confederate flag into their building?

9. Suppose your learned that a member of your congregation was the CEO of CoreCivic, a company that manages for-profit prisons, generates over $1.79bill in revenue, and has experienced a variety of scandals related to the impact of its cost-saving measures on prisoners.

    a. How would you respond? How would you want your priest to respond?

b. Should the church allow individuals who directly benefit from mass incarceration to be members?

c. How would you respond if this person wanted to be a member of the Commission?

CLOSING (5 min)

Is there anything we didn't discuss that you want to talk about?

Is there anything you want to add to what we've talked about?

You can reach out to me with more thoughts/questions at any time.

Thank you!

Appendix D: Codebook

Table D1
Codebook

Code	Comment
BC_Aspiration	The BC codes describe a specific aspect about theology of Beloved Community-- such as in this case, that it is an aspiration.
Beloved Community	This code captures moments when I ask the Commission to reflect on what Beloved Community means to them.
Bishop	
Bishop_Approach- disengaged	This code describes moments were participants expressed frustration with the bishop for being hands off, not investing, distant, lack of communication, not leading, hard to reach, non-pastoral. This code seems to be frequently connected to my intervention code.These segments also can show us what the Commission wants from the bishop.
Bishop_Approach- supportive	This code describes moments when participants describe bishop as supportive, positive, especially in terms of funding, not oposing, allowing/initiating the commission, thankful for it, and/or sees its important. One participant said neither helpful nor harmful.
Bishop_Approach-politically astute	This describes moments when participants reflect on the bishop's motivations and credit him with navigating politically-tense moments (such as not supporting the commission too much). This also includes references to the larger southern-white context.
Bishop_Intervention	I'm trying to note here when/where the Commission is describing an action/goal/intervention they could/should take with out to the bishop (ask to talk about Commission at every church visit); or that they wish the bishop would do with them (invest in

Code	Comment
	their development). This might also include moments where participants note why/how they need the bishop: as an advocate, support, guidance, increase their visibility, get them in teh door, etc.
Bishop_Prophetic Leadership	In this code, I am trying to note the moments when participants talk about wanting the bishop to take more leadership around issues of justice.
Bishop_Protocol/Communication	In this code, I am noting moments when the Commission talks about the process of interacting or communicating with the bishop.
Bishop_Unaware	This code describes moments were participants allude to the bishop himself being unaware or un-committed to the work of racial change; and thus, a site of intervention himself. This is different than the intervention code, I think, where I track more ways they might use tactics to get him to support their cause— this is more about his own internal mind/heart. He is part of the target population, but is simultaneously needed to reach the target population.
Catalyst	
Coalition	
Commission_Concerns	"I'm not sure if everybody feels that they have a role or what they're supposed to be doing."
Commission_Development	
Commission_Events	In this code I am capturing when participants reflect on an existing Commission-event or when they discuss an event they hope for.
Commission_Goal_Communication	This code describes when participants reference communication as part of the commission's work. This is connected to all the other goals, because it helps facilitate them, but I wanted to note the times people

Code	Comment
	specifically mentioned it. "there are black folks in this diocese that don't know anything about us. And I would really like to collect their names and at least send them stuff." "I think I'm sure there's close to 150, 200 people who want to do something or are interested in learning more or, and while they may not want anybody to come to their parish, they at some, some level they want to be involved."
Commission_Goal_Internal development	This code describes participants who refence internal Commission development as part of the work— growing individually and together "We meet, we meet, meet monthly, but I would like to see us challenge ourselves more with becoming aware of racism in ourselves and our society around us more so than just conducting business meeting."
Commission_Goal_Mandatory Training	In this code, I am capturing when participants mention required or mandatory anti-racism training for leaders in the diocese. "Any priest that comes into this diocese has to do, um, safeguarding God's children, right? So why not have every priest that comes into this diocese say you have to do safeguarding God's children and you have to do some, um, training in terms of race relations, race building, you know, that sort of thing. "
Commission_Goal_Opportunities	In this code, I am capturing when participants talk about providing a space/opportunity for others to learn or engage. This is consent based. It often references dialogue, or internal change, or an acceptance. This seems connected to [raise awareness], but I am distringuishing between these to emphasize the invitation in it. "So having book sessions where they analyze things, look at it, movies, a documentary so they can continue to start talking about this. So I think the commission is supposedly making

Code	Comment
	those things available and doing the training for people."
Commission_Goal_Other	In this code, I am trying to caputre things that didn't easily fit into the other things I organized: Increase racial diversty in clergy and lay; Work as a check on the diocese; Search committees; Process for visits (parish meet first before inviting commission); Get race issues into daily worship
Commission_Goal_Parish Support	In this code, I am talking about when participants suggest that the Commission offer resources or support to local parishes specifically, or clergy, as they take their own actions.There is a sub theme here that really focuses on clergy, and I think this needs to be described in the memo well. "and to help people implement ways in which they can improve race relations, uh, especially locally in their own parishes and in their own, in their own congregational settings and in the community."
Commission_Goal_Raise Awareness	In this code, I am capturing when participants talk about getting race on the table. This is not consent based or an invitation, but rather agitation/pressure.This code is closely connected to opportunities, but I am distinguishing it. Participants seem to emphasize that many people in the diocese aren't aware that racism is a problem, or don't see what role they could/should play in anti-racism.One subquote in this that emerged is the "prophetic voice in the diocese" theme. "And so I guess what I think the commission needs to, you know, is trying to, to accomplish is to sort of burst the bubble a little bit so that, so that people in the church like can all see."
Commission_Goal_Relationships	In this code, I am trying to capture participants who talk about connection, relationships, or building a network as part of the work of the Commission. This is probably closely

Code	Comment
	connected to social change codes, and perhaps to the communication codes.
	Participants emphasize making connections with people in the diocese who would be supportive, as well as people who are unaware of the Commission.
	Another participant emphasizes building relationships across lines of difference.
	Another participant emphasizes exposing the diocese to POC leadership and increase ecumenicism.
	"I think that's very, very important by, uh, I think that, um, us continuing to lift, uh, to continuing to do, to, uh, to expose this diocese to, to other black leadership like when we do the Absalom Jones Service, um, to make, help them, just to see, help them to see how we are a catholic church in terms of the way in which we worship."
Commission_Goal_Visit	In this code, I am capturing when participants specically talk about visiting churches as part of the commission's work.There are some areas where this overlaps with the other codes, but I am trying to keep it separate, because people are talking about a very specific type of intervention. I need to dig here to get to the theory of change.
	"It is my hope that by 2020, we are going to be in a, uh, in a position to, uh, actually go out to these various churches. And initially I thought, well we can do, it'd be on one a one off situation, but it can't be. All right. It's going to have to be a regular thing and now we're going to have enough people to actually make this happen and have it become part of the church year."
Commission_History project	
Commission_Hopeful	This code marks moments when participants describe things they think are going well with the Commission or things that give them hope about their goals. Participants suggest that the

Code	Comment
	existence of the Commission in and of itself, along with a budget, is a very hopeful thing. This suggests that things are changing and that the diocese is on board in some ways. They also suggest that the commitment of the people on the Commission, and their leadership, if hopeful and indicates something positive. "I do feel hopeful because, um, commitment, there are white people who are on the commission who are committed to making the situation better. All right. Black people have an internal radar for, are you just doing this? Oh, are you serious about doing this? All right. And everybody on the commission in their own way, serious about doing."
Commission_Meeks Retreat	This code describes when participants talk about the 2016 retreat with Catherine Meeks, or it's impact.This code does not capture every time a participant mentions Meeks.
Commission_Politics	EJI; Lynching memorial; History project; 2015 resolution; Black murders; Raise awareness; Our faith in this current political moment
Commission_Sara Impact	
Commission_Statewide	This code describes when participants reference wanting to connect with the nearby dioceses.
Commission_Why Joined	This code capures responses from participants to the first structured question of the focus group. Some participants answered in a singel sentence, some in paragraph form. One thing I notice in the responses is the difference between W participants and POC participants: POC participants seemed to be saying that they were responding to a pressing national issues (Ferguson, etc), and then felt responsibility/desire/interest/conviction to continue participating. The tone here is that they started a thing and then continued it (perhaps with the exception of one). This

Code	Comment
	seemed distinct to me from the W participants, who had a tone of describing themselves outside of the local events (if they mentioned them at all). W participants described a conviction to respond to racism; dicussed the church's guilt or responsibility.
Current Events	This code captures a moment when participants mention an influential current event.Ferguson/Michael Brown; Trayvon Martin; Charleston; Bishop Curry; Trump
Diocese	This is the general code for everything that's connected to the local diocese— including resolutions, clergy of color, reflection on the cutlure/context, specific churches, etc.
Diocese_Bible belt	This code captures when participants mention "bible belt" as part of describing the diocese. Uusally participants reference the bible belt as a way to explain that there are many active churches, especially Black churches, and so there is sort of church competition. It is thus hard to get clergy/members of color into Episcopalian churches, because of the history and becuas they have so many other options.
Diocese_Civil Rights	This code notes when participants reference the robust civil rights history in the area.I include this as a note to self that local history is not only of Episcopal subordination/segregation, and that Episcopal things were happening right next to this Civil Rights stuff.
Diocese_Conservative bishop	This code caputres moments where participants talk about the conservative nature/reputation of the diocese or the South. Participants seem to be largely noting this as a reason it is hard to get clergy of color, and clergy in general, to come to the diocese.
Diocese_Convention	This code captures any moment the participant is talking broadly about annual convention or general convention. This might include

Code	Comment
	structure or process or describes the convention (2018?) when Commission presented about the EJI soil delivery. One participant talks about convention as a place for mission churches to give back, or of convention as a site of social change. Another talks about conventions as a set up for Absalom Jones.
Diocese_Geography	This code is about how the diocese is either (a) mostly rural or (b) southern. Participants here are largely talking about why it is hard to call a priest, especially as POC priest to the diocese. This code is pretty consistenly connected to the conservative code. A key theme here is that the rural/southern context of our diocese is an obstacle to getting POC clergy. One participant explains that POC clergy would feel isolated here. He suggests they prefer larger cities, more progressive cities/diocese. He says that even white clery, especially if young and single, don't want to come to small rural churches.
Diocese_Mission Parish	This describes any comments about mission parishes in the diocese. These comments are primirily from one participant who seems to be emphasizing that as a mission, St Absalom has a responsibility to the diocese. "No, no, I mean because we get money from the diocese, I don't think we should be getting any money if we're not participating in the life of [01:15:00] the diocese. So we should have, we should show up because it's our church. We have to participate. And we can't affect change if you're not there to say something. You can't expect anything."
Diocese_POC Clergy	This describes patterns or reflections about POC clergy.Themes: few POC clergy in diocese (and has decreased in recent years); hard to get POC clergy to diocese (and hard to get any clergy to diocese); POC clergy in the diocese feel called to Commission; POC clergy are not called to white parishes- POC parishes

Code	Comment
	have has white clergy in recent years; Bishop has tried to recruit POC clergy and they don't come
Diocese_POC Members/Churches	This describes patterns/reflections about the diocese or TEC racial demographics.Themes: wants POC in diocese to have more of a presence in the diocese and show up; black tax; the diocese has a problem because there aren't POC for WP to interact with; St Absalom is over represented in commission (but I'm not sure if this is stated as a problem); In some diocese churches, POC don't feel welcome; There aren't enough POC in the diocese to pressure the bishop
Diocese_Resolution_2015	This is the original resolution, 2015, that was a revision of the letter about police brutality.
Diocese_Resolution_2016	This is the 2016 resolution that started the task force? The commission?
Diocese_Resolution_2018	
Diocese_Resolution_2019	This the 2018(?) resolution that we are all beloved community.
Diocese_Resolution_Unenforced	This code describes how resolutions, even when passed in convention, are often not followed up on and priests/parishes can kind of pick and choose whether they respond.This could be an intervention site for the commission.
Diocese_Resolutions	This codes discusses resolutions broadly— what they do in the church, refelctions on how they functions, etc.
Diocese_Resources	This code describes financial limitations in the diocese or for mission churches in particular.
Diocese_Response to Commission	This codes describes how participants think the diocese responds to the Commission.
Diocese_Segregated	Thsi codes captures moments when particpants

Code	Comment
	broadly reflect on the racial demographic of the diocese.
Diocese_Under value POC	This code captures when participants suggest that part of why there are so few POC clergy is because the diocese and the local parishes don't think it is important.This connects to how the diocese is segregated, but I'm coding it separately.I'm not sure, in my coding scheme, how this connects to the fact that local parishes call their own priest— but this seems connected to the reflection that white congregations only call white priests, or that POC priests only get invited to POC confgregations.
Erasing race	
Faith	I'm including in faith pieces that seem less connected to race specifically, but are largely about faith.
Faith_Action	
Faith_Addiction	This code describes when participants compare racism to addiction
Faith_Baptismal covenant	This code notes reference to baptismal covenant or theology about baptismal covenant (such as in resolutions)
Faith_BC theology	
Faith_Christian calling	
Faith_Christian Formation	This code describes when participants connect antiracism and spiritual formation
Faith_Christian politics	
Faith_Clergy role	This code describes when participants discuss clergy's unique role in antiracism
Faith_Eschatology	

Code	Comment
Faith_Healing	Reference to healing
Faith_healing, reconcilation, justice	
Faith_Justice	Reference to justice
Faith_Liturgical resources	
Faith_Other	
Faith_Practice	
Faith_Reconciliation	Reference to reconciliation
Faith_Scripture	When participants mention scripture
Faith_Sin of Racism	This code describes moments where participants reference the sin of racism
Faith_Spiritual/theological	
Faith_Witness	
Influencers	This code describes when participants mentioned an author or book or film that has been influential on them.
SE Reflection	This code describes moment when I reflect back in the interview to check my understanding.
Social Change	
Social Change_Repetition/Liturgy	In this code, I am trying to note the places where participants gesture toward repetition or liturgy as a way of impacting people.
Story	
Systemic Racism	
TEC	This code references when TEC is mentioned explicitly or implicitly (like culture)
TEC_Frozen Chosen	This code describes participant reflection on

Code	Comment
	why POC are less interested in TEC
TEC_POC Clergy	
TEC_POC Pipeline	This code flags when participants mentioned the seminary pipeline as part of getting a POC priest
TEC_Resolution	This code flags every time a resolution is mentioned
TEC_Seminary Training	This code describes the need for antiracism training in seminary
Theory	
Theory_Cause of racial disparities	
Theory_Church and racial disparities	
Theory_Civil Rights v BLM	
Theory_Core Civic	
Theory_Harm of Racism	This code captures moments when participants describe how racism harms people, especially white people
Theory_Nibbling the edges	This code captures moments when participants describe their theory of change
Theory_Solution	
Theory_Story	This code captures moments when participants share a personal story
WP	This code captures moments when participants talk about wite people— convincing them, changing them, their resistance, etc.
Z. Other	

Sara: Yeah, totally. So how do you, what's your leaning [00:39:30] toward diagnosing and responding to racism, and how do you think the commission tends?

The way I try to function on the commission is thinking of the microcosm of the church and how racism grips it. And so I try to focus on the sin of racism in the system of the church, and how clergy [00:40:00] silence contributes to that, and how I work on the commission with various other people to provide programs, resources, make connections for clergy to be more active in leading their congregations. Now I think also because the Western church has been so individual salvation focused that they [00:40:30] approach racism, clergy approach racism as a personal individual problem. And I think that's maybe where the disconnect is happening.

I'm reading a book called... There's so many books that start with the color of. It's The Color of Compromise. And [00:41:00] he's talking about the, this kind of gets into the intersectionality of it, but that's kind of a paternalistic view on your pastor. I'm going to work with you on this problem, and that the church and the father and the God figure as a father is just like, it's all good. Kind of question that. [00:41:30] So we're kind of trained not to do that, but I actually think, I mean I've evolved on this. I think I've started on the systemic and then I've gone way over to the inner group, and I'm kind of like come back and forth because I think changing it in the church is where we have both an obligation and a possibility because we're doing it together, [00:42:00] and there are more people who are interested. But I actually think you have to do both. You have to do both. You can't really, one doesn't work without the other.

But if you're going to start someplace, you have to start with the hearts and the minds. The institutional changes only come when institutions join [00:42:30] together to create the change. All right. Individually, my purpose is to create cognitive dissonance with white people. You can't hold on to certain myths after I have spoken to you for about 15 minutes. All right. Because I don't fit it. All right. And I just want to make you [00:43:00] think. Now that's the long way, but I'm not into beating people over the head. The long way for me turns out to be the way I feel best about myself. But structural change requires a majority of folks within the structure to decide [00:43:30] that we're going to change this situation over here. That is the genesis of red states and blue states.

: I mean, I totally agree with everything everybody's said, and   in particular with, I mean, it really takes [00:44:00] both. As far as what the commission is doing, I sort of feel like we're more focused on changing hearts and minds as opposed to the socioeconomic, political system. And that is perfectly okay because it's a small group of people and a really huge problem, and we're just working on our own diocese, so I think that's appropriate.

How long has it taken us just to get here? [00:44:30] From 2014. A long time.

And where is here?

Right. We're a little backwards, like we've slipped back a little from where we were.

Here's a proof-

Although we have a resolution.

I think there's different people working towards different ends. And I guess why I said the-

Sara: You make broadly in the world or on the commission?

Social Change
Theory

Faith_Sin of Racism
Theory_Church and racial disp...

Faith_Clergy role

Influencers

Theory_Church and racial disp...

Social Change_Repetition/Litu...
WP

Sara: You make broadly in the world or on the commission?

In the church. And on the commission too, but I guess what engages me most in the commission is where [00:45:00] I can use the power that I had, and that is to influence my brother and sister clergy to take the reins in their own churches. For example, [-] had an organist that flat out, this is so confidential so, flat out refused to use Leevas such that I had to sing verses from the hymnal just so the congregation would be exposed to African American gospels, but it wasn't to be a black church. [00:45:30] I don't want to turn [-] into a black church. It would be inauthentic. It would be insulting.

That was a primary goal in the new hire of the organist that we sing different theological musical sources. Liberation theology. We're going to sing in Spanish. Dammit. We're going to sing out of Leevas. We're going to sing some lesbian hymns. Precisely because of the theological content, [00:46:00] and what does this hymn say? What does it feel like to be a motherless child?

Do you address all this in your sermon to help people who are maybe elderly or whatever.

No. But on addressing it tomorrow night when I talked to the choir who was very resistant to Leevas. So, and I need them to understand that we're not doing this because the rector likes these hymns, even though I do, and I sing them exclusively, but we're doing [00:46:30] this to put on somebody else's mantle, to wear somebody else's shoes, and the long goal effort of reconciling all people to God and each other through Christ. So that's I guess what I'm saying when I really think of my function on the commission as being a missionary to clergy, to making opportunities for them to take to their people.

Sara: [00:47:00]   I was about to change the question, but do you want to say anything about this before I do?

Just briefly on it. I'm just taking my first halting steps sort of toward repentance, and yeah, for me it's, it's probably like 90% interpersonal at this point. I heard Jim Wallace about a year ago speak at   when he said, he had stunning statistic. [00:47:30] It was something like 80% of white Americans have no person of color that they have any contact with. And I mean not only are they not friends, but they don't even have conversations with them. It's just stunning to think about

And so I kind have, I've kept that before me in the past year and thought, not in a transactional kind of way, like how can I make friends with this African American person in order to fix myself. How can I establish [00:48:00] some genuine friendships, genuine relationships with people of color. And so for me it's like, it's all interpersonal at this point. And in terms of the commission, I think we all need to commit ourselves to doing that actually. As commission members, just establishing authentic relationships with people of color, and in our hearts will change gradually over time. And I think [00:48:30] it'll inform it when we work for justice. It's institutional.

Yeah. The example, change structures. Okay. One of the big structural changes came in 1954 with Brown versus Board of Education. It was fought from that day, and it's still being fought. All right. But when you have little kids go to school with each other, [00:49:00] you find out that everybody is basically the same.

You said something that stuck with me one time, Sara, about the walk in love because we had made the observation the first couple of years that this was pretty much a white led thing. Yeah. And then we had a year where everybody who got up on to speak was black. And you said, when we asked for feedback, [00:49:30] you said, how is that the beloved community, either?

I mean, are we putting people up there to show that we're, because that can happen. Just like making a friendship to try to do the right thing. But how do we, like the integrated school when you're going to school. I mean it's like little children. [00:50:00] There's no manipulation to it. You're just in it together. You're just in it together. And how do we get, I mean that's kinda of the Holy Grail in a sense is, how do we enter as little children?

How do we get to the kingdom of heaven as children?

Yeah. Yeah. And not turn this into a thing where [00:50:30] it looks right, but it's not really, you know, it's not,

Sara: Yeah. Maybe that's a good segue here. So another thing in addition to talking about the sin of racism, the Episcopal church uses these three words, and this is really occurring, so that 2015 is the first time that I really start noticing those words, not that I've read everything.

Sara: Sorry, It's hard to read with this one, [00:51:00] but racial reconciliation, racial healing and racial justice. And I have been holding these words for about two years now. Trying to think about them. And I wonder... I think there's a lot happening in these words. I think theological work is happening here. I think theoretical work is happening here, and I just wanted us to kind of talk about these three words, and [00:51:30] I'm wondering are there some of you here for whom there's no distinction between these words, and are there some of you who think each of these terms is talking about something different? And I'd like to kind of hear how you all would define or describe these terms. Even if they're all the same. Help me understand why you think of them the same or differently.

Sara: And if this is [00:52:00] the first time you've even encountered these three words, I'm not expecting a dissertation thesis or something. What's your instinct when you hear this? And the church has been using using these words.

I think they're very different. My sense of all the words are racial reconciliation has to do with community and relationship building, and just what [00:52:30] were talking about, you know, forming real relationships. Racial healing, I would say kind of fits under that interpersonal definition more, and it has to do with feeling people who are injured by racism and somehow acknowledging that injury and that wounding, and then racial [00:53:00] justice I feel fits more in the other category as a sort of the... social action and policy change and that sort of thing.

Sara: Do people share that perspective, or thinking something different? And   I know you have thought about this a bit, so if you could wait until we're.

I'm going to.

[00:53:30] I have a friend who won't use reconciliation. He's kind of introduced conciliation as a thing.

Sara: Say more about that. What does that mean?

Well, I mean his point is it's never been right from the get go, so we're not gonna reconciliate, but I mean I struggle with that a little bit because I do think that, [00:54:00] again in a lot of the historical reading like the New York Times and the different, but this book, The Color of Compromise and other books, one good one called The Invisible Line. There was a time when... before, I guess 1619 is the [00:54:30] date that the first slave. Yeah. Before that there might've been prejudice, but there's mingling and the power wasn't really established.

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