

# for our common life



INTERVIEWS AND CONVERSATIONS ON RACIAL JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

## INTRODUCING *for our* common life

In our prayers, we are reminded that God has “bound us together in a common life (Book of Common Prayer pg. 824).” And in scripture, St. Paul says that we who are many are one body -- and as one body, we have a holy and sacred calling and responsibility to one another not just in matters of faith but for the care and well being of each of us in this common life we share.

There is much in this idea of commonality worth celebrating: a sense of unity and hope, of bringing people together, of the nature of God’s love and grace that is offered to all. However, for as much as we do share, we also recognize that there is much in the experience of some members of the body that show us the Church’s failure to live into its calling of a shared vision of life in God’s kingdom. Specifically, **For our Common Life** will focus on issues of racial justice, exploring themes of how the Church has used scripture both to oppress and liberate, how our Episcopal and Anglican traditions have a history of racism, how we as the current body of the Church can usher in a movement of reconciliation and repair, and how we can embrace God’s diverse dream for the Church through the story of Pentecost and beyond.

## SESSION ONE

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### EXAMINING OUR EPISCOPAL & ANGLICAN TRADITION

WITH SPECIAL GUEST  
THE REV. CANON  
**STEPHANIE  
SPELLERS**

DECEMBER 2ND  
7PM | VIA ZOOM

This series was born of the work and study of the diocesan Racial Justice and Reconciliation Task Force and diocesan staff. We have worked together to create a series of guided interviews with authors and speakers from across the Church that will prompt group discussions and, hopefully, ministry in our congregations and action in our communities.

It is our hope that this series and work awakens in us the spirit of our common life together -- that when one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers. And much of our body has suffered for far too long: we acknowledge that the indifference of our society and the Church in regard to the sins of racism and White supremacy is something that requires our repentance

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and our action. In addition, we affirm that these considerations of great human and societal problems are not set apart from the work of the Church but rather an important part of its mission and an imperative of the Good News of Jesus Christ. We who are baptized into this particular common life have taken vows to strive for justice and peace at all times, not just when it is convenient or comfortable or affects us personally.

Each session in ***For our Common Life*** will be accompanied by a study guide and discussion questions to help us along the way -- and to start, we're offering a resource for important terms for the series as a whole (see *Seeking Common Understanding* on the next page). While most or all of these words may be familiar to participants, it was important to us that we included some brief comment as a common starting point. For many of us, these are terms that may elicit strong responses, and therefore, we wanted to make sure that we approach them from the same place. This resource is a combination of original work of the task force and staff as well as quotes from and/or inspired by the work of numerous authors who we believe write with sincerity, authority, and truth on these important topics.

We hope you can join us for the first session of ***For our Common Life*** on Thursday December 2nd at 7pm via Zoom. The topic for the evening will be a consideration of our Episcopal and Anglican tradition with special guest The Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers. Canon Spellers serves as Canon to the Presiding Bishop for Evangelism and Reconciliation and is an author and contributor to several books, most recently *The Church Cracked Open: Disruption, Decline, and New Hope for Beloved Community*.

We are excited for this holy and challenging work, and we give thanks that the God in whose image we all have been made will be present among us as we learn and dialogue together.

# SEEKING COMMON UNDERSTANDING

**For our Common Life** will feature wide-ranging interviews and discussions on a variety of topics related to racial justice and reconciliation. Unless otherwise attributed, this material is original to the task force and diocesan staff.

## RACISM

The marginalization and/or oppression of people of color based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges white people.

**The Anti-Defamation League**

A racial group's collective prejudice backed by the power of legal authority and institutional control.

**Robin Diangelo, *White Fragility*, 20**

Racism is a cultural, systemic, longstanding sin that is “embedded in our structures of meaning, morality, language, and memory (**Kwon & Thompson, *Reparations*, 42**).” Racism exists in both obvious and subtle ways, in both individual acts and societal structures and systems. In all aspects, racism's insistence on division and seeing and treating the other as less than oneself is a direct contradiction and refutation of the fact that every human being is made in God's image.

## ANTI-RACISM

The multi-faceted discipline of combating racism with the goal of eradicating it entirely. A concerted effort to acknowledge racism in ourselves, our society, our organizations, and our world. A plan of action to become educated in the history and present reality of racism. The dedicated, purposeful deconstruction of behavior, policy, and systemic and organizational participation in individual acts and/or corporate cultures of racism.

## WHITE SUPREMACY

A political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings.

**David Gillborn, *Rethinking White Supremacy: who counts in 'Whiteworld'***

## WHITE PRIVILEGE

The real but often subconscious and/or denied notion that White people are deserving of more than people of other races which is especially realized in the comparatively overwhelming advantage and benefit in areas of personal and collective education, economics and finance, work, housing, safety, politics, etc. -- and most egregiously, when those same opportunities, advantages, and benefits are explicitly forbidden to others either by law or lack of power.

## REPARATIONS

Reparations is best understood as the deliberate repair of White supremacy's cultural theft through restitution (returning what one wrongfully took) and restoration (restoring the wronged to wholeness).

**Kwon and Thompson, *Reparations*, 17**

## RECONCILIATION

The act of returning to right relationship with God and one another, ultimately and most importantly, achieved through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The work of reconciliation continues in the Church; for the sake of the ministry of racial justice, reconciliation can only occur if there is true recognition of the sins of racism and white supremacy, if repentance for those sins is genuine, if there is forgiveness following repentance, and if all of it leads to action and a change of heart.

## BELOVED COMMUNITY

The body within which we promote the fruits of the spirit and grow to recognize our kinship as people who love God and love the image of God that we find in our neighbors, in ourselves, and in creation. It provides a positive, theologically and biblically based ideal toward which we can grow in love, rather than framing our justice and reconciliation efforts as fundamentally "against" (as in antiracism, anti-oppression, etc.).

**From The Episcopal Church's vision statement on "*Becoming Beloved Community*"**

A new adventure of consecrated men and women seeking a new world ... who forget themselves in their passion to find the common life where the good of all is the quest of each

**Clarence Skinner**

## DISENFRANCHISEMENT

The intentional action of depriving individuals or groups of people a right or benefit, especially the right to vote.

## JUSTICE

God's insistence that things that have been turned wrong shall be made right; a prevalent theme of scripture and deeply connected to God's righteousness and being.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Church's participation in God's acts and intention of justice and reconciliation by working to undo the injustices in our society, between peoples and races, and in relationships.

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart [and especially the hearts of the people of this land], that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**A Prayer for Social Justice, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 823**