



for our common life

We gather this evening for Session Three of *For our Common Life*. Tonight's special guest is Dr. Sandra Montes, Dean of Chapel at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Dr. Montes is active all across the Episcopal Church as a speaker and author, and we are delighted to have had the chance to speak with her about what it means to become God's beloved community.

"Beloved community" may mean many different things to different people -- you'll find several definitions on the next page -- but perhaps a quote from this evening that best sums up the personal connection hoped for in beloved community is "when there is relationship, there is no 'other'". Even more importantly, Dr. Montes reminds us that beloved community is specifically rooted in the life and ministry of Jesus -- that because Jesus yearned for justice, fed the hungry, and loved God, we who follow him must do those things as well.

What does all of this mean for *our* communities? The potential is endless, but it is not for the faint of heart! We may be asked to try new things, or welcome voices and styles of worship that have never graced our buildings before. Or, as Dr. Montes reminds us in the concluding moments of our conversation, we as Church may need to ask ourselves "what am I holding onto that I need to let go of?"

Our session explored numerous topics: belonging, diversity, relationships, community, social justice, and last but not least, why we need Jesus! We thank Dr. Montes for leaving us energized for ministry in the Church and in the world, and we give thanks also to the Rev. Canon Dale Grandfield for hosting our conversation.

SESSION THREE

FEBRUARY 10TH, 2022

TO BE OR NOT TO BE: GOD'S BELOVED COMMUNITY

WITH SPECIAL GUEST

DR.
SANDRA
MONTES

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION SESSION THREE

“NOTHING WILL CHANGE IN OUR LIVES AND IN OUR CHURCHES IF WE DO NOT START BEING WHAT JESUS ASKS US TO BE.”

beloved community

a place where all people may experience dignity and abundant life and see themselves and others as beloved children of God

a vision for the Church rooted in the Good News of Jesus and the fruits of the spirit

a recognition of our kinship as people who love God and love the image of God in our neighbors, in ourselves, and in creation

a positive, theologically and biblically based ideal of growing in love together

In the Episcopal Church, we are often very proud of our "welcome." However, offering welcome is only a first step. To go deeper, how does a kind greeting (welcome) turn into full inclusion (belonging) in a community or congregation?

What assumptions might we subconsciously make about our own church communities that would prevent us from seeing moments or traits that may not be welcoming to all people?

- For example, though many of us may have been welcomed the first time we came to our congregations, not all people may have had that same experience
- Or, though we consistently use these terms in the life of our congregations, newcomers may be very confused by things like "BCP" or "Narthex" or "S-125"

The Rev. Canon Leonard L. Hamlin, Sr. preached February 6th at Washington National Cathedral on big questions for the first disciples as well as for our society and conversation this evening: where are we going, and who are we becoming? How might we in the Diocese of Bethlehem consider these challenging questions both personally and in the common life of our communities?