

Be it resolved, we, the Episcopal Diocese of Montana, on October 10, 2020 at the 117th Annual Convention adopted with an amendment "A Covenant to Root Out Racism" written by the Rt. Rev. Deon Johnson, Bishop of the Diocese of Missouri.

A COVENANT TO ROOT OUT RACISM

"Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen." -1 John 4:20

The sin of racism disrupts the harmony and oneness that God intends for humanity. Racism is dangerous, divisive, and damaging. Racism purports that some are deserving of dignity over others and disregards the image and likeness of God found in every human being. We are created in the image of God; therefore, to engage in racism of any form is to refuse to acknowledge the image of God in the other and the stranger. The fact that we were created in the image of God should remind us that each person is a living expression of God that must be respected, preserved, and never dishonored.

throughout our history, courageous people of God have taken the risk of standing up and speaking out with the least and the lowest. God now challenges us to become courageous people who seek to create sacred communities of hope by dismantling the sin of racism. This work involves risking ourselves for the sake of God's love, moving beyond ourselves in order to seek and serve Christ and one another.

WE LAMENT...

As people of faith, we acknowledge our sins and our failure to respect the dignity of every human being. We have, individually and corporately, fallen short of the glory of God, and now call to mind and name the aspects of our lament.

- ♣ We lament the Church's role in the subjugation, enslavement, and genocide of societies of indigenous peoples, including Native Americans and Pacific Islanders.
- ♣ We lament the Church's role in profiting from the selling, trading, and genocide of people of African descent and the lasting effects of the peculiar trade present with us today.
- ♣ We lament the Church's complicity-by-silence in the commoditization, dehumanization, and belittling of peoples brought to this country to toil in brutal labor, including Latinx people, Asians, Pacific Islanders, and other immigrant and undocumented populations.
- ♣ We lament the Church's complicity in the historical exclusion, internment, and denial of civil rights of Asians and Pacific Islanders.
- ♣ We lament the Church's complicity in failing to honor the language, culture, and civil rights of Latinx people, both American citizens and those from other countries.
- ♣ We lament the places in which we have been spectators and participants in the public and private lynching of people of African descent.
- ♣ We lament the Church's lack of moral courage to stand with and on the side of the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed.

♣ We lament the systems of white supremacy, white exceptionalism, and white privilege present in the Church that have condoned people –particularly people of African descent, –being viewed as less, inferior, or unworthy rather than as beloved children of God, made in the image of the Divine.

♣ We lament the ways in which the stories of People of Color have been diminished or erased from the histories of our churches, institutions, and communities of faith.

♣ We lament the collusion of the Church with systems that directly and indirectly promote racism, oppression, segregation, and disenfranchisement.

♣ We lament the willful blindness of Christian leadership in promoting and advocating for systems of over-policing, the militarization of police, mass incarceration, school-to- prison pipelines, poverty, and violence.

♣ We lament the resounding silence and the crippling fear that often infects the Church in matters of racial reconciliation and social justice.

WE COVENANT...

As people of faith, we are called to “love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul and with all our mind and to love our neighbors as ourselves.” Recognizing the places in which the church and people of faith have fallen short of God’s love, particularly in the legacy of racism and white supremacy, we seek to amend our lives to more fully reflect God’s dream of Beloved Community.

♣ We covenant to re-examine the history of our communities of faith and institutions to, in tangible ways, acknowledge racist legacies and to recognize, remember, and retell the stories of Native American, enslaved persons and other People of Color, whose labor contributed to white privilege.

♣ We covenant to engage our communities of faith, staffs, colleagues and experts in critical discourse that propels us forward.

♣ We covenant to devise and implement standards, policies, and programs that make our commitment to diversity and inclusion a visible reality.

♣ We covenant to invest in local businesses that are owned and operated by People of Color and underrepresented populations.

♣ We covenant to listen to and to validate the stories, experiences, and feelings of People of Color as companions along the journey, valuing those experiences as being sacred.

♣ We covenant to adopt an intersectional approach in all aspect of our common life, remembering that all forms of oppression are connected.

♣ We covenant to financially support the important work of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Native American Colleges and Universities.

♣ We covenant to work towards the dismantling of the school to prison pipeline and other systems of institutional oppression.

- ♣ We covenant to stand up and speak out against everyday micro and macro acts of oppression or aggression.
- ♣ We covenant to struggle and speak out against denial of civil liberties and voter suppression.
- ♣ We covenant to educate ourselves, and share with others, the many places where our privilege blinds us from being compassionate to others.
- ♣ We covenant to call out bigotry and hate speech in all aspects of our common life.
- ♣ We covenant to gather with others, including faith leaders and decision makers, at all levels of the church, to ask the hard questions:
 - o Does the leadership of our institution reflect the diversity of those we serve?
 - o Are the many faces of the diverse body of Christ represented in decision- making processes?
 - o How are we inviting and forming leaders? o Who is missing around the table?
 - o Whose untold story do we need to hear?
- ♣ We covenant that in our corporate worship; and other activities of our communities to intentionally cultivate welcome, hospitality, and participation for people of all cultures, ethnicities and backgrounds, and to include their rich musical and liturgical offerings in worship.
- ♣ We covenant to invite all members of our faith communities to reflect about and seek a better understanding of racism and privilege.
- ♣ We covenant to preach about and pray together for an end to racism and white supremacy, not to bring down people of European descent, but to lift all others up.
- ♣ We covenant to join with local community organizations in working for racial justice.

EXPLANATION:

We are standing on the Road to the Buffalo: the crossroads used by indigenous peoples for thousands of years; Homelands to the Assiniboine, Blackfeet, Chippewa Cree, Crow, Gros Ventre, Kootenai, Little Shell Chippewa, Northern Cheyenne, Pend d'Oreille, Salish and Sioux, and other indigenous peoples. A covenant is a relationship of commitment between God and God's people. The sin of racism disrupts the harmony and oneness that God intends for humanity. We are created in the image of God; therefore, to engage in racism of any form is to refuse to acknowledge the image of God in the other and the stranger.

This is an opportunity for our Diocese to engage in meaningful action to end the sin of racism. This work involves risking ourselves for the sake of God's love, moving beyond ourselves in order to seek and serve Christ and one another.