

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2020  
RACIAL JUSTICE TEAM

America has dealt with the division of races since explorers hit our shores. Over time upheavals occur followed by some reconciliation but for people of color, the embers remain hot, destined to ignite at anytime. There has always been an underlying layer of racism that remains.

Social Media affords us a clearer view of our indiscretions. Some examples are the highly televised, racially motivated, senseless public killings of our young African Americans. The year 2020 was steeped in the uncertainty of what the future would reveal. But several organizations, as well as, the Episcopal Church, have taken a stand, determined to get to the root cause of racism. The Episcopal Church is on a mission to create harmony amongst all people.

In February, Bishop Andrew Doyle presented a Missionary Vision for a Racial Justice initiative. An effort to help with the pain caused by racial injustices for individuals and communities in our diocese, who were directly injured by slavery. A \$13 million commitment would go towards racial reconciliation projects and scholarships for the future education of people of color.

The "Stepping Onto Sacred Ground", Becoming Beloved Community series was announced. So in June of this year, Deacon Victoria Mason gathered a few people from St. John's to discuss ways to approach and tackle racial issues at our church. Many avenues were discussed, but to name a few, going out and getting to know our neighbors around us and learning about and attending various African American and other cultural events. As a result of these discussions, the Racial Justice Team was born.

The Racial Justice Team began meeting 3-4 times a month. The main discussion was focused on how to open up discussions to begin the Stepping Onto Sacred Ground sessions. The team utilized the material provided by the Diocese, unpacked it, studied the techniques and mapped out the logistics to implement the program.

The Racial Justice Team continues to attend ZOOM seminars sponsored by the Episcopal Health Foundation. These seminars allow us to have discussions with Clergy Leaders, famous authors, freedom fighters of our nation, and just a multitude of educated and caring individuals who graciously share their knowledge with us.

St. John's Vestry voted for our church to join The Union of Black Episcopalians-Myra McDaniel's Chapter. Membership signifies that our congregation believes in the advancement of African Americans and justice for all people.

The Racial Justice Team and Sacred Ground Facilitators are now two separate committees. The Racial Justice Team is the umbrella that continues the exploration and journey through the avenues to racial reconciliation. Sacred Ground is a tool to guide us through our past to our present to "Becoming Beloved Community".

**SANDRA E. WARD**