

*Diversity is the strength and beauty of our shared humanity.* - Rev. Nontombi Naomi Tutu

I bid you grace and peace as we gather for our annual Diocesan Convention. In my appointed role as Missioner for Racial Reconciliation and Social Justice (RR&SJ), I would remind us all that we have been called to intentionally seek equality and justice in our churches and surrounding communities. Bishop Deon authored an anti-racism covenant shortly after his arrival in our diocese which we were invited to sign. Many signed that covenant and never thought about it again. Others signed it and went about the work of actively seeking justice, reconciliation and healing.

I do not, and could not, do this work alone. I maintain a close working relationship with the Dismantling Racism Commission (DRC) by serving as a member of its three person leadership team. I serve proudly with The Rev. Aaron Rogers, Priest-in-Charge at St. Stephen's and The Vine in Ferguson, and Mrs. Harrison Hagan-Heil of St. Michael and St. George congregation in Clayton. Together we encourage and invite individual parishioners, congregations and other communities of faith to partner with us in the hard and sometimes uncomfortable work of identifying, acknowledging and dismantling systems of oppression within the Diocese of Missouri and our communities. To that end we provide training and partner with other diocesan members and groups in the sponsorship of educational trips and special programming.

I am also very happy to report that we are nearing completion of the processes and paperwork needed to cement our chapter membership in the Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE). This has taken much longer than we could have ever imagined but all good things come to those who persevere. This year's Chapter dues will soon be paid through partnership with the DRC. Look for some exciting news about our UBE Chapter in the very near future. If you are interested in becoming a member of UBE, please contact me at RevShug@aol.com.

As Episcopalians we take seriously our calling to "*strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.*" This means we must acknowledge there is an intersectionality between racism, social justice and nearly every aspect of every day life. That we might be enlightened, I have invited several people to serve as members of a RR&SJ Council of Advice. They are:

- The Rev Deacon Loretta Go, Missioner for Recovery Ministries and Bishop's Chaplain.
- Dr. Michael Middleton, Deputy Chancellor Emeritus and Professor Emeritus of Law, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO.
- The Rev. Aaron Rogers, Priest-in-Charge, St. Stephen's and The Vine, Ferguson, MO.
- The Rev. Dr. Gayle Fisher-Stewart, Episcopal priest, retired police captain, author and scholar.
- The Rev. Nontombi Naomi Tutu, Episcopal priest, preacher, speaker, advocate, and educator.
- Dr. Annelle Whitt, Director of Multicultural Achievement, Columbia, MO Public Schools

A speaker series will be developed and members of the Council of Advice will either individually or jointly present a topic related to the work of RR&SJ and our diocesan mission. These presentations are under development and the first of the presentations will hopefully be announced by the end of this year and presented in the first quarter of 2025. It is anticipated that these talks will initially be presented as webinars. In-person presentations will be offered as budgets and individuals' schedules allow.

Finally, as your Missioner for RR&SJ, I am available on the last Sunday of most months to preach and teach in our churches and the community at large should that be desired.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Shug Goodlow

Missioner for Racial Reconciliation and Social Justice