

Commission on Dismantling Racism

The Right Reverend Deon K. Johnson, Eleventh Bishop of the Diocese of Missouri
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Vision: As people living out our Baptismal covenant, we see our diocese reconciled to God by challenging racism in ourselves and society.

Mission: To dismantle racism through relationship building, dialogue, education and action.

The Commission on Dismantling Racism is charged by the National Church and the Diocese of Missouri to promote racial justice in the Episcopal Church. The Commission expects to realize this objective by working toward the above stated vision and mission statements. To fulfill this charge, the Commission has focused its work on four major goal areas:

- Goal 1: Increase the presence of the Commission in Diocesan and Congregational activities.
- Goal 2: Train, educate, and update all members of the Commission on some aspect/component of racism.
- Goal 3: Educate and inform so as to empower others to dismantle racism in the Diocese.
- Goal 4: Increase the active membership of the Diocesan Commission on Dismantling Racism.

Change and rebuilding continued in 2023 for the Commission on Dismantling Racism in the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri. As we reported last year, the process began in 2022 with a transition to new leadership, including the installation of four new conveners for the ministry: the Rev. Aaron Rogers, the Rev. Shug Goodlow, Harrison Hagan Heil and Kurt Greenbaum. The process was ongoing as the ministry began to more fully shed the remnants of the pandemic lockdown and embarked on more “real world” manifestations of its ministry.

Highlights of the year included

- **Field trip to Springfield, Illinois.** On April 1, the commission hosted an excursion, open to members of the diocese, that took 38 individuals to Abraham Lincoln sites including the presidential museum, his tomb, his home and Springfield’s

African American museum. Alice Stanley planned the trip—for a second time. The DRC was just weeks from doing this trip in April 2020. The ministry also benefited from an anonymous donation that underwrote the cost of the bus. From DRC funds, we were able to provide scholarships to some families to bring their children.

- **Memphis trip coming.** In a related note, the DRC has already planned another field trip in 2024. This trip will take visitors to the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis on April 13. Save the date!
- **Parish visitations resumed.** The DRC resumed its pre-pandemic practice of conducting visitations to parishes. Members of the DRC worshiped with parishioners at St. Peter's on March 19; with members of Hope Church in Town and Country on Aug. 27; and plan to worship at St. Francis in Eureka on Nov. 19. Rev. Rogers preached at the first two and plans to preach at the third. These visits also include DRC presentations during the parish's post-worship adult forum.
- **Monthly meetings.** The commission began moving to a regular monthly meeting schedule that alternated between in-person and Zoom on the first Saturday of the month at 10 a.m. The in-person meetings are held at St Stephen's in Ferguson, Missouri. It is our belief that Zoom meetings make access to our business meetings available to individuals who might live outside the St. Louis area. All who wish to participate continue to be welcome. At each meeting, there is a teach-piece that asks members to consider a relevant topic in racial equity or dismantling racism.
- **Dismantling Racism Workshop.** The commission presented its Dismantling Racism workshop on June 9-20 at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Ladue. This was our first in-person workshop since before the pandemic and, based on post-workshop evaluations, was a smashing success. The DRC had 24 participants. One note of concern raised during this session was the shallow nature of our bench for workshop facilitators. We are beginning to address that as three new prospective facilitators are in preparation for the next workshop—two of whom came out of the June workshop. We are endeavoring to stage a second workshop this calendar year, but haven't locked anything down as of this writing.

- **Annual DRC celebration.** The commission hosted its annual “celebration” event on Dec. 3, 2022, at St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church in Creve Coeur, which included a celebration of dismantling racism work around the diocese. It plans to host its 2023 celebration on Dec. 2 at St. Stephen’s in Ferguson.
- **Absalom Jones celebration.** The commission presented its 2023 Absalom Jones celebration at Trinity Church, Central West End, on Feb. 18, including a liturgy by the bishop and a sermon by the Right Rev. Jennifer Baskerville-Burrows, bishop, Diocese of Indianapolis. The program was warmly received and well-attended, and included breakout mini-workshops spread throughout the church property. Planning is underway for the 2024 celebration, set for Feb. 10 at St. Timothy’s in Creve Coeur and featuring Bishop Kym Lucas of Colorado as the preacher for the service.
- **The Color Purple.** In connection with the production of “The Color Purple” by the Hawthorne Players at the Florissant Performing Arts Center, The DRC hosted a post-production meet-and-greet/conversation at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church in Ferguson on Aug. 6.
- **Anytown.** The DRC sponsored one teen who attended NCCJ’s Anytown Youth Leadership Institute July 23-29, on the SIUE campus. The institute is a “full immersion, residential program for high school youth interested in making their school and community environments more socially just.”
- **Sponsorship of the St. Louis Racial Equity Summit.** This year the Dismantling Racism Commission committed to being a community sponsor the St. Louis Racial Equity Summit (which aims to increase awareness about inequity, help people understand how equity exists, and work to transform the region towards racial equity) on behalf of the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri. The Dismantling Racism Commission will send 5 participants to the summit.

You can contact members of the facilitation team for the Commission on Dismantling Racism here:

- The Rev. Aaron Rogers, revrogers24@gmail.com, 314-420-4851
- The Rev. Shug Goodlow, shuggoodlow@aol.com, 314-898-3482
- Harrison Hagan Heil, heils@sbcglobal.net, 314-412-4279
- Kurt Greenbaum, kgreenbaum@gmail.com, 314-707-7891