



Dismantling Racism Ministry St. Mark's Episcopal Church

“Your silence is a knee on my neck”
(Natasha Cloud, *The Player's Tribune*, May 30, 2020)

June 5, 2020

Dear People of St. Mark's,

Now is the time to dismantle racism. We cannot wait and we cannot remain silent.

Events of the past several months starkly reveal the terrible toll of the structural racism that permeates every aspect of American society. We see this toll in the disparate health and economic impacts of the COVID pandemic on people of color and in the horrific deaths of Black Americans at the hands of police officers and vigilantes. In protests across the nation and in Grand Rapids we witness the pain and frustration caused by 400 years of oppression.

It is impossible to be Black in America and not experience the pain and fatigue of ongoing violence and racism. Our love and prayers are with those of our St. Mark's family who personally have been and are the targets of racism, and for whom, as some have recently shared, the accumulation of years of waiting for change along with recent events make this pain nearly unbearable. As the body of Christ, the pain of one member is the pain of the whole.

As followers of Jesus and proclaimers of his love for all, Christians are called to stand against injustice and hate. In our Episcopal Baptismal Covenant, we commit to strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being. Doing nothing and saying nothing is not an option since there is no neutral ground. There can be no healing in our society until racism is dismantled. As Presiding Bishop Michael Curry stated in his Pentecost sermon on May 31, we suffer from two pandemics, one viral and one spiritual of which racism is a manifestation. Living the gospel is the only cure for the spiritual pandemic. (View the sermon on video at <https://episcopalchurch.org/responding-to-racist-violence>)

In October, 2019 the people of St. Mark's took a pledge to individually and collectively work to dismantle racism through self-analysis of our biases in words and actions, enhanced awareness of the history and impact of racism in our country, and action in developing and supporting policies and initiatives that advance equity. As followers of Jesus, we need to publicly proclaim that indeed Black Lives Matter and seize this moment in history to renew our commitment in the struggle against devaluing Black lives. The St. Mark's Dismantling Racism Ministry stands ready to support each individual and group associated with St. Mark's in their spiritual journeys to dismantle the racism within themselves and the racism in the world. Please reach out to anyone of us for resources, support, or opportunities to act.

Here are some actions you can take:

- This Sunday, June 7, at 2:00 p.m. join a zoom discussion of Presiding Bishop Michael Curry’s Pentecost sermon of May 31. Register by contacting Anne Hiskes at alhiskes@gmail.com and she will send you the Zoom link.
A print version of the sermon may be found at (<https://episcopalchurch.org/posts/publicaffairs/presiding-bishop-michael-currys-pentecost-sermon-live-streamed-service>)
- Join a biweekly Zoom discussion group of individual chapters of Kendi’s book “How to be an Antiracist”. Contact Anne Hiskes at alhiskes@gmail.com to make a reservation. Discussion series #1 is offered on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of the month at 7:00-8:00 p.m. beginning June 11 with a discussion of Chapters 1 and 2 and ending on August 27. Discussion series #2 is offered every Sunday 11:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m. beginning on June 14 with a discussion of Chapters 1 and 2 through July 26 (no meeting on July 5). The content and format of the two discussion series will be the same.
- Join a discussion group in July to discuss the entire book in one session. Time and date TBD. Contact Karen Hunter at meyermay52@gmail.com to make arrangements.
- Stand up for Black communities by supporting Black-owned businesses in West Michigan. See <http://www.grabblocal.com/directory/> for a directory.
- Support organizations that work to dismantle racism.
 - St. Mark’s Episcopal Church Grand Rapids (<https://www.stmarksgr.org/>)
 - NAACP Grand Rapids (<https://naacpgr.com/>)
 - Urban League Grand Rapids (<https://www.grurbanleague.org/>)
 - GR Center for Community Transformation (<https://www.grcct.com/>)
 - Black Lives Matter (National) (<https://blacklivesmatter.com/>)
 - Color of Change (National) (<https://colorofchange.org/>)
 - Movement for Black Lives (National) (<https://m4bl.org/>)

With love,

The St. Mark’s Dismantling Racism Ministry

Becky Bocskey, Judith Claytor, Julie Connors, Kate Dykema, Anne Hiskes, Chair
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