

The Way of Love and Racial Justice

Since George Floyd was murdered on Memorial Day 2020 a few miles from our church building, the St. John's community has been experiencing a spiritual awakening to the depth and breadth of systemic racism's continued operation in our nation and in our city. We have come to understand that systemic racism transcends the intent of individual white people, and that it has created and continues to perpetuate great inequities and violence against Black, Indigenous, immigrant, and other communities of color in Minneapolis. We're continuing to learn that significant segments of the Christian church (including the Episcopal Church) have justified and benefited from systemic racism throughout history up to the present day. We deeply mourn the vast harm that has been done. Therefore, we have come to the inescapable conviction that faithfully following Jesus in our time means to center the work of racial healing and justice in our church.

Because we believe that love is the central expression of God's being and will, we want to express this ministry in the positive sense of seeking racial healing and justice, and not in a primarily negative or "anti" sense. We know that this journey may at times be painful or challenging, but we believe that God's Spirit is leading us toward the Beloved Community for all people—the joyful expression of God's kingdom on earth. With God's help, we will make space for all the people of St. John's—people of color, white people, the young, the old, and those in different places in their understanding of racism and discipleship to Jesus—to journey with love together in this work. With God's help, we will begin this ministry of healing by making space for the differences that exist among us.

After an extensive period listening to the St. John's community, we believe the Holy Spirit is calling us to express this focus in four primary ways over the next two years. In each primary focus area, we will create small action steps expressly seen as experiments to adapt and learn from, and we will review and revise these action steps every six months.

We seek to follow Jesus' Way of Love by centering the work of racial healing and justice in our community.

Our Call: Pray

We are called to learn and use spiritual tools to ground this work in following the Way of Jesus and listening to the Spirit

Our Call: Learn

We are called to learn about and examine the racism in ourselves and our communities so that we may work to uproot it.

Our Call: Act

We are called to take specific action to dismantle the systems of racism.

Our Call: Connect

We are called to cultivate relationships across lines of difference.

Our steps in the next six months

- Begin every church meeting with Gospel Based Discipleship
- Study scriptures that serve as a counternarrative to systemic racism.
- Explore the connections between the seven practices of Jesus' Way of Love and dismantling racism.

Our steps in the next six months

- Establish at least one small dialogue group using the "Sacred Ground" curriculum to have transformational conversations about race.
- Research the forces that led to St. John's being a predominantly white community and what changes we would need to make to become a more multicultural and multiracial community.
- Build specific programming for children & youth of all ages to learn about following Jesus through racial healing and justice work.

Our steps in the next six months

- Commit to vote, conduct a "Get Out the Vote" campaign at St. John's, and support other communities in similar efforts
- Support ECMN's renewed racial healing and justice work
- Learn about and support efforts to dismantle systemic racism in public safety and policing, paying particular attention to the perspectives of Black, Indigenous, immigrant, and other communities of color
- Seek to discern and transform how racism has impacted the internal structures of St. John's (in liturgy, budget, building, hiring, programming, etc.).

Our steps in the next six months

- Seek individual and collective opportunities to cultivate a "Ministry of Presence" in Black, Indigenous, immigrant and other communities of color
- Strengthen current connections with Black, Indigenous, immigrant and other communities of color, seeking to learn from and celebrate what God is doing among them.
- Seek vendor/business relationships with contractors of color and find ways to invest financially in the Northside of Minneapolis.