

BECOMING THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

A Journey Toward Racial Justice and Inclusion



Colossians 3:1-4; 10-17 (New Living Translation)

Living the New Life

¹Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. ²Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. ³For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

¹⁰Put on your new nature and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. ¹¹In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.

¹²Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. ¹³Make allowance for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.

¹⁶Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. ¹⁷And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

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Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Beloved Community

For Dr. King, The Beloved Community was not a lofty utopian goal to be confused with the rapturous image of the Peaceable Kingdom, in which lions and lambs coexist in idyllic harmony. **Rather, The Beloved Community was for him a realistic, achievable goal that could be attained by a critical mass of people committed to and trained in the philosophy and methods of nonviolence.**

As early as 1956, Dr. King spoke of The Beloved Community as the end goal of nonviolent boycotts. As he said in a speech at a victory rally following the announcement of a favorable U.S. Supreme Court Decision desegregating the seats on Montgomery's busses, **"the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the Beloved Community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opponents into friends. It is this type of understanding goodwill that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age. It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men."**

What Does the UMC Say?



(From www.umc.org/endracsim)

United Methodists Stand Against Racism

- We recognize racism as a sin.
- We commit to challenging unjust systems of power and access.
- We will work for equal and equitable opportunities in employment and promotion, education and training; in voting, access to public accommodations, and housing; to credit, loans, venture capital, and insurance; to positions of leadership and power in all elements of our life together; and to full participation in the Church and society.

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Trenholm Road
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The Southeastern Jurisdiction of the UMC (in which our Conference resides)
Excerpts from a letter of the white Bishops of the SEJ

In light of the extraordinary circumstances of recent racial unrest, the white bishops of the SEJ have called on all United Methodists to respond, in part with these words, **“We, the White Bishops of the Southeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church, call upon all United Methodists to stand with and see our Black brothers and sisters.As White American Bishops, we stand up and stand with the Black Communities across our Episcopal Areas recognizing that we who have been in positions of power and privilege have been silent. In our silence we have and do sin. We implore all United Methodists across the Southeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church to exercise influence and power to be agents of repentance, reconciliation, reformation, and restoration in a system that has failed to bring hope to all God’s children of color.**

**L. Jonathan Holston, Resident Bishop of the South Carolina Conference
(Excerpts)**

*“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?” – Isaiah 43:19
(NIV)*

... the white bishops of the Southeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church wrote an open letter calling on all United Methodists to “stand with and see our black brothers and sisters.”

These episcopal leaders confessed to having remained silent and failing to join black bishops who have “consistently named and called out the systemic and sinful practice of discrimination that has been pervasive in the United States since the first slaves walked the shores of this land.”

I welcome and greatly appreciate this expression of remorse from my white brothers and sisters...

I ask all South Carolina United Methodists to take a moment to read this letter; to contemplate what it means to you, to your church, to your community; and to pray that God will help us all to see the new thing that is springing up in our midst.

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TRUMC's Initiative

Concurrently, the TRUMC Evangelism-Hospitality Core Team felt a fervent calling to lift these issues in a way congruent with their team mission to the congregation.

In subsequent conversations with a small working group (Ann Baggett, Hayes Mizell, Beth Corley and Travis Pearson), a broad plan emerged for an extended emphasis on racial justice and inclusion that would be started by a worship series, then followed by many offerings to the congregation over the next season to foster deeper awareness, understanding, relationships and response as change agents to work toward a new unity and solidarity. This approach requires the work of other core teams, and particularly the Church and Society Core Team.

Recommendation:

Recognizing that we are mid-stream in a year where team agendas have been established, we propose to establish an ad hoc Racial Justice Task Force composed of a representative of each of Church and Society, Evangelism-Hospitality, and Missions, and lay members with history and passion in this area. The Task Force would:

- begin its work in July and complete its plan by mid-September;
- serve as a bridge between the worship kick-off and the Church and Society Core Team so that the church can immediately move forward on programs following the initial worship event;
- examine the many materials offered in guidance from clergy, program staff and the UMC and suggest a plan of programs and studies with approximate timelines, to work toward the goals stated above;
- hand off this plan to Church and Society for on-going implementation, providing assistance in developing initiatives for more immediate offerings to the congregation.

The Senior Minister and the Director of Discipleship Ministries will invite and convene the Task Force.

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A Plan for the Fall Season:

- **September 13, 20 and 27: 3 consecutive Sunday morning worship services**
- **Curriculum for small groups and individuals desiring to reflect on and discuss the scriptures and sermons from the preceding Sunday**
- **A Resource Brochure that offers individuals and small groups the opportunity to devote, at their discretion, some time during October and November to self-reflection, learning, awareness and discussion of the complex fabric of systemic racism, woven over centuries**
- **Two book studies open to all members of the congregation**
- **Member reflections on their own experiences, shared weekly in our church-wide communications**