

*The following is a statement from The Rt. Rev. Greg Rickel, Bishop of the Diocese of Olympia.*



## **The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia**

### **The Episcopal Church in Western Washington**

Dear People of the Diocese of Olympia and beyond,

At our most recent Diocesan Convention you overwhelmingly passed a resolution supporting the Anti-Racism Covenant put forth initially by the Rt. Rev. Deon Johnson, Bishop of Missouri, and co-sponsored by many other bishops. My name has been on this covenant since just after its posting, however, I have now, on your behalf, added not just my name and office but the entire Diocese of Olympia. I provide a link below which will take you to the official website for the Covenant where you can view those who have signed, and sign yourself. More importantly, is to read it regularly, to use it as a rule of life right now, to study it in your congregations, and to hold it up as the ideal we are striving for. My plan is to post this quarterly on my blog and our diocesan website, to remind us as a community to continue to use it. As I said at our convention, signing such documents, passing such resolutions, really is the easy part. The difficult part, the part that will change this Church, this country, this world, is our following it, acting on it, living into it. I offer it here as I vow to do just that personally.

Blessings,  
+Greg

You can read more about this Covenant, see the list of signers, and sign yourself here: <https://antiracismcovenant.org/>

### **A Covenant to Root Out Racism**

Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters are liars;  
for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen,  
cannot love God whom they have not seen."

– 1 John 4:20

The sin of racism disrupts the harmony and oneness that God intends for humanity. Racism is dangerous, divisive, and damaging. Racism purports that some are deserving of dignity over others and disregards the image and likeness of God found in every human being. We are created in the image of God; therefore, to engage in racism of any form is to refuse to acknowledge the image of God in the other and the stranger. The fact that we were created in the image of God should remind us that each person is a living expression of God that must be respected, preserved, and never dishonored.

Throughout our history, courageous people of God have taken the risk of standing up and speaking out for the least and the lowest. God now challenges us to become courageous people who seek to create sacred communities of hope by dismantling the sin of racism. This work involves risking ourselves for the sake of God's love, moving beyond ourselves in order to seek and serve Christ and one another.

We invite you to add your name to this covenant and join us as we work to root out racism. Individuals, parishes, groups, dioceses as well as community leaders and businesses are all welcome to be a part of this project.

### **We lament...**

As people of faith, we acknowledge our sins and our failure to respect the dignity of every human being. We have, individually and corporately, fallen short of the glory of God, and now call to mind and name the aspects of our lament.

- We lament the Church's role in the subjugation, enslavement and genocide of societies of indigenous peoples, including Native Americans and Pacific Islanders.
- We lament the Church's role in profiting from the selling, trading and genocide of people of African descent and the lasting effects of the peculiar trade present with us today.
- We lament the Church's complicity-by-silence in the commoditization, dehumanization and belittling of peoples brought to this country to toil in brutal labor, including Latinx people, Asians, Pacific Islanders and other immigrant and undocumented populations.
- We lament the church's complicity in failing to honor the language, culture and civil rights of Latinx people, both American citizens and those from other countries.
- We lament the places in which we have been spectators and participants in the public and private lynching of people of African descent.
- We lament the Church's lack of moral courage to stand with and on the side of the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed.
- We lament the systems of white supremacy, white exceptionalism and white privilege present in the Church that have condoned people – particularly people of African descent – being viewed as less, inferior or unworthy rather than as beloved children of God, made in the image of the Divine.
- We lament the ways in which the stories of People of Color have been diminished or erased from the histories of our churches, institutions and communities of faith.
- We lament the collusion of the Church with systems that directly and indirectly promote racism, oppression, segregation and disenfranchisement.
- We lament the willful blindness of Christian leadership in promoting and advocating for systems of over-policing, the militarization of the police, mass incarceration, school-to-prison pipelines, poverty and violence.
- We lament the resounding silence and the crippling fear that often infects the Church in matters of racial reconciliation and social justice.
- We lament... (additional context and specific acts may be added).

### **We covenant...**

As people of faith, we are called to "love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul and with all our mind and to love our neighbors as ourselves." Recognizing the places in which the church and people of faith have fallen short of God's love, particularly in the legacy of racism and white supremacy, we seek to amend our lives to more fully reflect God's dream of Beloved Community.

- We covenant to re-examine the history of our communities of faith and institutions to, in tangible ways, acknowledge racist legacies and to recognize, remember and retell the stories of Native American, enslaved persons and other People of Color, whose labor contributed to white privilege.
- We covenant to engage our communities of faith, staffs, colleagues and experts in critical discourse that propels us forward.

- We covenant to devise and implement standards, policies and programs that make our commitment to diversity and inclusion a visible reality.
- We covenant to invest in local businesses that are owned and operated by People of Color and underrepresented populations.
- We covenant to listen to and to validate the stories, experiences and feelings of People of Color as companions along the journey, valuing those experiences as being sacred.
- We covenant to adopt an intersectional approach in all aspects of our common life, remembering that all forms of oppression are connected.
- We covenant to financially support the important work of Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
- We covenant to work towards the dismantling of the school-to-prison pipeline and other systems of institutional oppression.
- We covenant to stand up and speak out against everyday micro and macro acts of oppression or aggression.
- We covenant to struggle and speak out against denial of civil liberties and voter suppression.
- We covenant to educate ourselves, and share with others, the many places where our privilege blinds us from being compassionate to others.
- We covenant to call out bigotry and hate speech in all aspects of our common life.
- We covenant to gather with others, including faith leaders and decision makers, at all levels of the church to ask the hard questions:
  - Does the leadership of our institution reflect the diversity of those we serve?
  - Are the many faces of the diverse body of Christ represented in decision-making processes?
  - How are we inviting and forming leaders?
  - Who is missing around the table?
  - Whose untold story do we need to hear?
- We covenant that in our corporate worship and other activities of our communities, to intentionally cultivate welcome, hospitality and participation for people of all cultures, ethnicities and backgrounds, and to include their rich musical and liturgical offerings in worship.
- We covenant to invite all members of our faith communities to reflect about and seek a better understanding of racism and privilege.
- We covenant to preach about and pray together for an end to racism and white supremacy, not to bring down people of European descent, but to lift all others up.
- We covenant to join with local community organizations in working for racial justice.
- We covenant to... (additional context and specific acts may be added).