



# THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF KANSAS

June 2, 2020

## Transforming the Stone of Racism

From:

The Right Reverend Cathleen Chittenden Bascom, Tenth Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas  
Ms. Terrell Mann, co-chair, Task Force on Justice and Racial Reconciliation  
The Reverend Patrick Funston, co-chair, Task Force on Justice and Racial Reconciliation

Moved to our core, or onto our knees, or into the streets by the racial tensions of this Pentecost weekend, we cannot deny that the racism that clings within our systems and ourselves must be faced and excised and healed like a life-threatening illness – for so it is.

We must be transformed.

Preacher and teacher Barbara Lundblad writes about transformation:

“The word speaks of change – change so deep that nothing will ever be the same. Such change encompasses what happens in the life of one individual as well as what happens within whole communities and nations. In the New Testament, ‘transformation’ is often derived from the Greek word ‘*metamorphoo*’ (metamorphosis)...like the change from a caterpillar to butterfly.... We must be so transformed.”

As St. Paul writes in Romans, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God...” Paul isn’t speaking here primarily of individual transformation, but rather of “*your minds*,” plural. We, collectively, desperately need to be transformed.

Bishop Bascom says that when she thinks of racism, it is like a huge rock hung around the neck of our nation. The cries of those being crushed under the heavy stone of racism have reached an apex. We are called to listen, to walk alongside and to amplify their voices. We cannot be changed until we acknowledge that we all are hurt by the expression of white privilege from within ourselves and by the racism that is expressed through our institutions.

But for those who believe the gospel, we know we do not achieve transformation on our own; it is a gift from God. However, we *must* be vessels of the transforming power, by making choices like those outlined below.

God calls us to courageously act Jesus' Way of Love and be agents toward changing racism in the U.S.

Seeking God as our source, I invite everyone to join our sisters and brothers in the Episcopal Diocese of West Missouri and the ELCA Central States Synod for a prayer service in Kansas City, Mo., on Wednesday, June 3 (*a news release about this service is attached to this message*):

### **Prayer for Racial Justice and Peace**

Wednesday, June 3, 5:30 p.m.

St. Augustine's Episcopal Church (on the lawn)

2732 Benton Blvd., Kansas City, Mo.

We will pray, but then we must also begin to act. Co-chair of our newly formed Task Force on Justice and Racial Reconciliation, Terrell Mann, writes about the kind of actions that begin to transform our minds:

“The white citizens in Kentucky who formed a barrier with their bodies to protect black demonstrators from harm; the white female police officer who has gone on record to call out racism in police departments; the white man who stayed, along with others, when two young black men were pulled over by six police officers and who parked his car and got out to monitor the situation and ensure the safety of the young men.

“Black Americans have spent more than 400 years enduring systematic and systemic racism, injustice and oppression and calling for change, but we can only do so much when the majority of white Americans who, even if they disagree with racist policies, stand aside and do nothing. The white people noted above took a stand and used their white privilege to reject racism as they interacted with other whites.”

The Diocese of Kansas Task Force on Justice and Racial Reconciliation will meet via Zoom on Saturday, June 27 at 2 p.m. All current members of the task force will receive a Zoom invite. If you wish to join the group, email Jeanne Atha at [jatha@episcopal-ks.org](mailto:jatha@episcopal-ks.org).

Co-chair of the task force, the Rev. Patrick Funston, commends to us the following prayer:

Ahmaud Arbery. Breonna Taylor. Christian Cooper. George Floyd.

***Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.***

We must say the names of our African American brothers and sisters who, because of the color of their skin, are subjected to suspicion, harassment and even death. We must say their names because their names are known to God.

Whether on the streets of suburban Georgia, a Louisville bedroom, the wooded pathways of Central Park or a sidewalk in downtown Minneapolis, we must confront the ugliness of racism whenever it robs an innocent person of life or dignity. We cannot, and we must not, turn away.

Those of us in white America need to take a long, hard look in the mirror. We need to honestly acknowledge the privileges afforded us based on the color of our skin – not out of guilt, but out of responsibility. We must see the casual bigotry that dulls our sense of injustice. We cannot ignore the centuries of systematic oppression that keeps our African American sisters and brothers literally pinned to the ground.

I take for granted that I can walk down the street free of suspicion or fear; such a simple luxury is unknown to millions of Americans. Together, we must own the anxiety a family of color feels when they have to coach their children on how to survive an encounter with law enforcement. And while violence is never the answer, the flames in Minneapolis reflect the disenchantment and hopelessness that burns in the hearts of those who suffer because of their race.

Our obligation to truth demands a confession that too many people make too many decisions, large and small, based on the color of another's skin rather than the content of their character. God's justice compels us to move toward something better than where we are and who we have become.

I pray that when we look in the mirror, we do not like what we see. I pray that our conscience is stirred to say "Enough." I pray we are challenged to change and moved to act. We need to make others' pain our own, for we cannot change something we refuse to acknowledge.

It is not enough to feel bad. It is insufficient to leave the change to others. We are long past that point, and may God grant us the courage to realize it and act.

Ahmaud Arbery. Breonna Taylor. Christian Cooper. George Floyd. We must never stop saying their names because God never stops loving them, and in God's mercy, God never stops loving us.

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart and especially the hearts of the people of this land, that barriers that divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice.

*This prayer was led in Washington Cathedral on Pentecost by Dean Randy Hollerith*