

The Beloved Community Commission: Resolution to Diocesan Convention 2023

The Title: A commitment to healing the legacy of slavery and racism through an act of atonement.

The Names of the Submitters:

Members of the Beloved Community Commission

The Rev. Tim Crellin, Priest in Charge, St. Paul's, Gardner

The Rev. Dr. Harvey Hill, Rector, St. David's, Agawam

The Rev. Vicki Ix, Vicar, St John's, Ashfield

Mr. Eric LaForest, co-chair of commission

The Rev. Dr. Nina Ranadive Pooley, Rector, St. Stephen's, Pittsfield, co-chair of commission

The Rev. George Porter, Rector, Southwick Community Church

The Rev. Pamela Porter, Retired

Clergy

The Rev. Sandra Albom, Interim Rector, Church of the Atonement, Westfield

The Rev. Jane Beebe, Priest in Charge, Christ Memorial Church, North Brookfield

The Rev. Rick Bellows, St. Andrew's, Longmeadow

The Rev. Dcn. Jason Burns, Saint John's, Northampton

The Rev. Christopher Carlisle, Director of Veterans Initiative, Diocese of Western Massachusetts

The Rev. Tom Callard, Dean, Christ Church Cathedral, Springfield

The Rev. Mary Frances Curns, Rector, All Saints Berkshires, North Adams

The Rev. Mike DeVine, Interim Rector, Saint Peter's, Springfield

The Rev. Aileen DiBenedetto, Rector, St. Mark's, Leominster

The Rev. Dr. Valerie Bailey Fischer, Priest Associate, St. John's Church, Williamstown

The Right Rev. Doug Fisher, Bishop

The Rev. Mia Kano, Priest in Charge, Saint Mark's, East Longmeadow

The Rev. Beatrice Kayigwa, Deacon, All Saints, Worcester

The Rev. Charlotte H. LaForest, Rector, St. Andrew's, Longmeadow

The Rev. Joel Martinez, Rector, Saint Paul's, Holyoke

The Rev. Dr. John McGinty, FCC, Rector, Church of St. Matthew, Worcester

The Rev. Jim Munroe, Associate Rector, St. Andrew's, Longmeadow

The Rev. Dr. Molly Scherm, Associate Rector, Saints James and Andrew, Greenfield

The Rev. Martha Sipe, Rector/Pastor, Christ the King-Epiphany Church, Wilbraham

The Rev. Noreen Suriner, Pastor & Priest, St Luke's Church, Lanesborough, MA

The Rev. Dcn Linda Taupier, Christ Church Cathedral

The Rev. Tanya Wallace, Rector, All Saints, South Hadley

The Rev. Meredyth W. Ward, Urban Missioner for Worcester, Diocese of Western Massachusetts

The Resolution:

Resolved: that the 122nd Convention of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts directs Diocesan Council and invites the congregations and institutions of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts including the Trustees of the diocesan endowment, and others -- in the name of repentance, reconciliation, and accountability to our siblings of color in our Diocese-- prayerfully and purposefully to explore their historic involvement in and present wealth derived from the forced labor of enslaved people, and to explore remedies including the distribution of funds from our unrestricted endowments and from our restricted endowments as may be permissible in acknowledgment of and repentance for the sin and legacy of slavery. We as a Diocese humbly commit to an act of atonement in acknowledgement of our collusion in patterns of systemic racism throughout our history.

The Diocese of Western Massachusetts commits to this action, with the acknowledgement that the injuries and harms from 400 years of abuse in the United States and its colonial antecedents can never be fully healed.

The Diocese commends those congregations that have undertaken a serious study of racism through Sacred Ground and other anti-racism curricula and calls upon all congregations and their leadership to undertake anti-racism training and education, and to research and publicize their own specific histories with the legacy of anti-Black racism.

We recommit ourselves as a Diocese to God's dream of the Beloved Community and take the next necessary steps toward restitution for the sinful legacy of racism that we have inherited.

The Diocesan Convention shall authorize the Beloved Community Commission to investigate and make recommendations on:

- Historical research that has been completed and be prepared to share a report with the Diocese focusing especially on the diocesan endowment and the originating funds transferred from the Diocese of Massachusetts upon our founding.
- What initiatives on the part of the Diocese are advisable to support the healing, atonement and repair of historical injuries against Black communities.
- Appropriate communication approaches for truth-telling and story-sharing regarding this history, and methods for distributing information to the wider community.
- What actions and goals would be most appropriate to provide redress for harms done, including specific financial commitments and other targets.
- What Diocesan resources, both financial and otherwise, would be appropriately used to achieve such redress.

-What administrative and/or legislative action would be necessary to make such resources available for redress.

- Fair and sensible criteria to identify eligible recipients for disbursements.

- Proposed policies and mechanisms for disbursements.

- Reasonable timeframes for disbursements.

- Appropriate methods to educate diocesan parishes about the Committee's findings.

PROGRESS REPORT — The Beloved Community Commission shall submit a report of current progress for the consideration of Diocesan Convention held in calendar year 2024.

REPORT.— Not later than September 1, 2024, the Committee shall submit a report with recommendations to the Bishop, the Diocesan Council, and the Standing Committee.

We can never right the wrong that was done to generations of our sisters and brothers in Christ long gone. But we can acknowledge our history, shine light on its troubling chapters, and recognize its impact on lives today.

[Adapted from Diocese of Washington resolution – passed 1/28/23, and Diocese of Massachusetts resolution passed 11/20]