

The Social Justice Commission: Resolution to Diocesan Convention 2025

The Title: An act of atonement towards racial healing and reconciliation.

Submitted by:

The Rev. Tim Crellin

The Rev. Dr. Harvey Hill

The Rev. Canon Steven Wilco

The Rev. Canon Vicki Ix

The Rev. Meghan Mantler

The Rev. Jimmy Pickett

The Rev. Dr. Nina Ranadive Pooley

The Rev. George Porter

Co-Sponsored by:

The Rev. Nathaniel Anderson, St. John's, Williamstown

The Rev. Margaret Bullit-Jonas

The Rev. Julie Carson, Holy Spirit, Sutton

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

Susan Hubbard, St. Paul's, Gardner

Beth Kronlund, St. David's, Agawam

The Rev. Eliot Moss

The Rev. Michael Tuck, Trinity and St. Helena's, Lenox

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

The Rev. Meredyth Ward

Resolution:

RESOLVED that the 124th Diocesan Convention commits to supporting the following initiative:

Diocesan Missioner for Racial Reconciliation and Priest-in-Charge of St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Springfield; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Missioner for Racial Reconciliation would lead and promote diocesan initiatives towards racial healing, including Sacred Ground, anti-racism training for postulants and candidates, anti-racism training for clergy, additional training on preaching racial reconciliation and the theology of reparations, as well as other efforts to be identified in conjunction with the Social Justice Commission; and be it further

RESOLVED that our diocese affirms our intention to fund this initiative for three years at a total cost of \$500,000 drawn from our endowment; and be it further

RESOLVED that annual reports on the progress of this initiative will be provided to Diocesan Convention from the Missioner for Racial Reconciliation with ongoing diocesan evaluation to determine the future direction and feasibility of the ministry. The atonement fund will remain regardless to enable congregations to make acts of repair, as they see fit. A subsequent resolution will discuss how we propose to continue moving funds to the ministry of repair ongoing.

Explanation:

The 122nd Convention of the Diocese of Western Massachusetts resolved in 2023 to invite 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, and we committed as a Diocese to an act of atonement in acknowledgement of our collusion in patterns of systemic racism throughout our history.

The Beloved Community Commission (now part of the Social Justice Commission) completed a thorough study of our diocesan history in 2024, with a focus on the endowment, and identified connections to wealth derived from the labor of enslaved people throughout the New England economy.

The Social Justice Commission has been working closely with the Budget and Finance Committee. The funds have been identified and will be drawn over three years so that funding continues to accrue over the three-year period.

St. Peter's is now the last historically Black congregation in the Diocese, having been founded as a multicultural mission in 1892, and having welcomed the parishioners of St. Simon of Cyrene after it closed. St. Peter's is a loving, faithful community in the heart of downtown Springfield. This initiative emerged in collaboration with the people of St. Peter's in support of the congregation's work to grow in mission and to deepen relationships with the surrounding community. This first act of repair will call a full-time clergy person to nurture the Episcopal faith in the city of Springfield and hold diocesan responsibility for our ongoing work of racial justice, atonement, and becoming beloved community.