



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF NORTH CAROLINA

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February 28, 2024

Dear Beloved Members of our Diocese:

We write to let you know of a difficult and heartbreaking situation at the most recent Bishop's Ball. On Saturday evening of the event, there was an incident involving a white child, with other children present, who used racial insults and physical aggression towards a Black child. In keeping with Safe Church guidelines, the supervising adults were housed in a different, though adjacent, bunkroom from the children. The incident was not reported to supervising adults until late the next morning after attendees began to depart.

Upon learning of the incident, our diocesan Youth Missioner, who directs Bishop's Ball, immediately followed up the report by meeting with the following parties: 1) the child against whom the acts of aggression were directed, 2) the child who exhibited the described negative behaviors, and 3) those still present who witnessed the event. Pastoral care was provided for the child against whom the acts of aggression were directed. The parents of both children were immediately notified, as well as the bishops. A number of follow-up conversations did and continue to take place, with priority for the well-being of the child against whom the behavior was directed. Ongoing follow-up and care will continue.

It is important to understand that this incident occurred in the context of a long history of oppression of, violence against, and intimidation of people of color, in this country and in North Carolina. It is a painful and graphic sign that the sin of racism still infects our culture. It has, understandably, evoked generational experiences of trauma. The [Pastoral Letter](#) we sent in December 2023 is addressed to the ongoing need to illuminate that history and to repent of the role of The Episcopal Church in chattel slavery, racism and the unchristian systemic maltreatment of people of color. That work is the moral and spiritual obligation of white Episcopalians.

It is equally important to understand that this diocese, in our time, does not and will not condone racism or cruelty. We are committed to following Jesus' command to love one another. Our fellowship - and most certainly our youth programs - must be safe and welcoming gatherings that respect the dignity of all people, as we declare in our baptismal promises. This incident reveals that there is still significant work to do to ensure that safety and welcome. Your bishops and the diocesan staff take these values seriously and are committed to doing whatever it takes to ensure, as much as it is in our power, that all our children - all people - are safe within our gatherings, and to restore their trust. As part of this effort, we are reviewing our protocols and practices for all diocesan events. Until that review is completed and reported, our diocesan youth events have been postponed.

Our primary focus is on healing for the child against whom the verbal and physical aggression was directed. We are also discerning the best path for care and accountability for the children who engaged in or witnessed this behavior. In this case, accountability does not mean punishment. Accountability means fully understanding what happened, what went wrong, what we have learned, and what we can do moving forward to ensure this never happens again.

Because this incident involves minors, we are not at liberty to share more detail. We ask that you give them the space and privacy to allow them to heal and reflect. The improvements in our process, and the emphasis on caring for one another, will continue to be a matter of open conversation. We will keep our diocesan family fully informed of our intentions and outcomes.

Conversations with impacted parties have been ongoing since leadership learned of the incident. On Monday, January 29, youth, parents, clergy, youth ministers and adult chaperones who were in the cabin where the incident occurred were invited to attend a meeting facilitated by our diocesan Pastoral Response Team via Zoom to share accounts, concerns and needs. The bishops and Canon Missioner for Black Ministries met on February 1 with the vestry of the congregation where the child who was the focus of these aggressive actions is a member. A summary of the vestry's requests follows this letter. The first two items were initially addressed, but there is ongoing work still to do to honor all four of these requests.

We will continue to engage in conversation, and our staff, in collaboration with the diocesan Racial Justice and Reconciliation Committee, will continue to review and improve our formation and safety processes to better guard against such a violation ever happening again. We are exploring the principles of restorative justice as part of our process. We will take the time needed with a pastoral approach, while understanding the urgency to keep moving forward, identifying and addressing needs. We will continue to share the progress, as ongoing accountability and transparency on our part are essential in the mending of broken relationships, broken trust, and broken hearts.

It is our prayer that these efforts, together with your prayers, will help us to learn from this painful experience, to rededicate ourselves to root out the toxicity of racism whenever and wherever we encounter it, and to live more fully and more freely into the Gospel promise of redemptive love. That love has the power to restore us all to wholeness. For those of us who are white Christians, love means learning, and facing, the truth of our history, the evil of racism, and the continuing perpetuation and tragic impact of this evil on the lives of people of color, our beloved siblings in Christ.

Faithfully and prayerfully,



The Rt. Rev. Samuel S. Rodman
Bishop



The Rt. Rev. Jennifer Brooke-Davidson
Assistant Bishop

MEMORANDUM

TO: St. Titus' Episcopal Church

FROM: Cheryl Myers, Senior Warden, St. Titus' Episcopal Church
Lionell Parker, Junior Warden, St. Titus' Episcopal Church

CC: St. Titus' Episcopal Church Vestry

DATE: February 19, 2024

RE: Resolution By the Vestry of St. Titus' Episcopal Church Regarding Racial Incident at Diocesan Event

On February 1st, the Vestry met with Bishop Sam Rodman and Bishop Jennifer Brooke-Davidson. The purpose of that meeting was to express our outrage at the aggression levied on one of our Parishioners at a sanctioned diocesan event. At that meeting, we raised concerns about that racial incident and the subsequent actions taken by the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina in response. The Vestry also shared the attached resolution which outlines the following requests:

1. Issuance of a public apology to both the Parishioner and their family and to the St. Titus' Episcopal Church members acknowledging the assault and the position of the diocese in the matter.
2. Engagement in a dialogue with the Vestry of St. Titus' Episcopal Church where members can share their stories and concerns of past and current anti-Black racism without judgment and/or defensiveness.
3. Holding a meeting with Black congregants across the diocese that serves as a healing space for them to ask questions of the Pastoral Response Team, diocesan staff, and bishops.
4. Development and deployment of a fully financed training that focuses specifically on anti-Black racism and restorative justice across the diocese.

We look forward to hearing from the bishop about the active and affirmative steps that the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina takes to begin the healing process.

Attachment