

The Beloved Community Commission

The Beloved Community Commission of the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts was formed in 2018 as a separate episcopal commission from the Diocesan Social Justice Commission in anticipation of the new framework of The Episcopal Church's long-term commitment to racial healing, reconciliation and justice.

A New Framework: This framework, approved and legislated at the 79th General Convention this summer in Austin, TX, is a church-wide effort of ECCAR, the Executive Council Committee on Anti-Racism. Resolutions directed at eliminating the sin of racism from the life of the church were passed and funded. *Racial healing, justice and reconciliation are fundamental and requisite parts of Christian formation.*

Our work in the diocese will be to provide support and training for different levels of awareness, competency, and mastery of concepts and skills that we, as baptized Christians, need to dismantle racism and restore right relationships between God and God's people through love as the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement. You will hear more from us during the coming year!

Knowing Our Local History: While we have been waiting for the new framework this summer, the Beloved Community Commission has not been idle. We continued our discovery of the local racialized history in the diocese. The Commission organized activities in 2018 around the 150th anniversary of one of our local saints in *Clouds of Witnesses*, W.E.B. Du Bois, the eminent sociologist and founding member of the NAACP, who was born in Great Barrington in 1868. We promoted the reading of *The Souls of Black Folk* which is the seminal examination of the effect of slavery and a failed national reconstruction on the bodies of black people. Several parishes had book reads, including Grace Church, Great Barrington, Christ Church Trinity Lutheran in Sheffield, and St. John's, Ashfield.

On February 23, Bishop Fisher joined members of the Commission as well as interns from Lawrence House in the Du Bois birthday celebration at the Mahaiwe Theater in Great Barrington. The Episcopal Church and Lawrence House got a nice shout-out from Dr. Whitney Battle-Battiste during the announcements to the sell-out crowd. Photos are on our Facebook page.

On August 4, the Commission celebrated the Du Bois Feast Day (August 3) with a visit to the W.E.B. Du Bois Center in Great Barrington, a visit to the adjacent Mahaiwe Cemetery where Baby Burghart and other family members are buried; Libby Wade and Cynthia Pease delivered brief homilies about the lack of medical care that precipitated the Du Bois' baby's death. The day end with Eucharist and lunch at the Great Barrington's only operational African-American church, Macedonia Baptist. Several participants also visited the Du Bois boyhood homesite on Route 23 between Great Barrington and Egremont. If you did not hear about this activity, please let us know how we can get the word out.

Facebook: Like us and follow us on Facebook page—**Beloved Community WMA**—where there are photos of our activities

Membership: Members of the commission are appointed by Bishop Fisher upon recommendation from the co-chairs of the committee. We are anticipating openings in each corridor, so if you are called to devote your time and energy and have a passion for this work, please speak to Harvey or Lee, or email: belovedcommunity-WMA@gmail.com. There is plenty good work.

Mission Statement: "In the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King and in keeping with our baptismal covenant, we join with others to study up, speak up, stand up, and show up in order to bring the Beloved Community closer to realization in our time and place."

Commission Membership as of October 2018: **Pioneer Valley:** Harvey Hill, *convenor*; Michael Ramsey-Musolf, Pam Porter, Peter Swarr, Wende Wheeler; **The Berkshires:** Lee Cheek, *convenor*; Mary Frances Curns, Cynthia Pease; **Worcester:** Zena Link, *convenor*. **Bishop's Canon:** Pamela Mott.