

The Beloved Community Commission of the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts 2020 Annual Report to Convention

Our mission is: “In the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 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.”

On November 11, 2019, we represented the Diocese at the **Province I Episcopal Peace Fellowship Pilgrimage for Racial Reconciliation**, on a panel at the Center for Reconciliation house at the Cathedral of St. John, in Providence, RI. The theme was telling the truth about the history of our treatment of African Americans. Lee Cheek shared the story of how hearing stories from Black musicians and scholars at the 50th Anniversary of the dedication of the W.E.B. DuBois Homesite in Great Barrington (October 2019) impacted a white high-schooler who had joined the Grace Church Choir for the event.

In January, the Commission announced **Howard Thurman’s *Jesus and the Disinherited*** as the 2020 book read. Co-Chairs Harvey Hill and Lee Cheek led two book groups for two sessions each in May.

On January 25, the Commission partnered with the Diocesan Social Justice Commission for “**Bending Toward Justice**,” a day of prayer and reflection at All Saints, South Hadley. The keynote speaker was The Rev. Arrington Chambliss, Executive Director of Episcopal City Mission which builds relationships and collective power across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for racial and economic justice as the expression of God’s transforming love. Members of the commission led a breakout workshop on Beloved Community.

On September 8, the Commission sponsored a Zoom webinar with Bishop Fisher and Rev. Liz Theoharis, national co-director of the Poor People’s Campaign, for clergy and lay preachers on the topic of “**Preaching Racial Justice**.” The well-attended event was recorded and is available on YouTube.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues and in-person trainings are suspended, the Commission has been helping to certify **candidates for Holy Orders** for anti-racism competency.

The Commission asks all congregations to share with us how they are educating parishioners about their local history of white dominance and how they are taking action to address systemic racism. For example, several congregations are hosting **Sacred Ground**, a ten-session film-based dialogue series on race and faith: St. John (Williamstown, 3 groups), Southern Berkshires (St. Paul and Grace), St. Philip (Easthampton), Christ Church Cathedral; Church of the Atonement (Westfield); Saint David’s (Agawam) and Saint Andrew’s (Longmeadow). Contact us on Facebook “Beloved Community WMA” or email: belovedcommunitywma@gmail.com

Submitted on behalf of the Commission by Lee Cheek and Harvey Hill, co-chairs