

# Beloved Community Initiative Report 2024

*Submitted by The Rev. Canon Eric McIntosh*

## **BCI/Commission on Race and Reconciliation:**

- Organized and executed Anti-racism retreat for Convention Deputation (Second session Feb. 24)
- Absalom Jones/Bishop Barbara Harris Celebration held February 10<sup>th</sup>. Fireside chat with Bishop Harris Feb. 9<sup>th</sup> at St. Thomas, Oakmont.
- Facilitated a Beloved Community lens bible study for the National Church's Evangelism Huddle February 21.
- Began one on one conversations with clergy and lay leadership around the diocese.
- The "Concert for the Human Family" was held March 8 with Winchester Thruston school and March 9<sup>th</sup> at Calvary. We met with students after the concert on the 8<sup>th</sup> and had conversations with them regarding the content of the concert as well as our Beloved Community Initiatives framework.
- Hosted a screening of the Philadelphia 11 at St. James in March. Following the screening was a discussion of the film's impact on the viewers and the impact on the Episcopal Church today. Noteworthy is that this year is the 50<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of their ordination. Also, noteworthy is that the General Convention is in Kentucky in the same diocese that the rejection of the ordination of women happened 50 years ago.
- Visited Holy Cross to support their Fish Fry during lent and joined them for their stations of the cross on Good Friday. Members of St. James also attended.
- Presented to the Scandinavian Society on implicit bias. Very lively group with a lively discussion and fellowship. The focus was on how implicit bias is shaped by our environment and culture and informs our behaviors from a subconscious level. The hope given is that we can begin to train ourselves to recognize our formation and disrupt our natural behavioral inclinations.
- Attended the screening of "gODTalk: Reimagining Faith." The docufilm focused on black millennials and their spirituality and the growth of the black unchurched. Networked with other leaders in the community that attended and are concerned with the falling away of the church. A striking comment was that the millennials that left are not coming back. They do not want the church to go away, they just are not welcome as they see it. Central to their spirituality is social justice and sexuality.
- Worked with National Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE) to submit a resolution condemning censorship and book bans. We have a duty to meet with our local library councils who make the decisions. Banning claims submitted are basically by two groups who are strategic in submitting 4500 challenges as compared to the annual average of 1200, which legally must be heard, resulting in temporary banning or limited access to books that impact the communities of color as well as the LGBTQIA+ communities.
- CORR is planning Sacred Conversations (frequency to be determined) where we give courageous space to have conversations that impact reconciliation and the disruption of racism.
- Having larger conversations with practitioners of Racial Justice and reconciliation in other dioceses. We are planning an anti-racism/beloved community conference. Location and date to be determined.

- Participating global Episcopal collaborative, “The Living Waters Collaborative,” participated on the planning team for the Conference held in Minnesota this September. I facilitated workshops on Beloved Community and on the unchurched Gen Z.
- Working with parishes on scheduling visits to update parishes on progress of Beloved Community and inviting members to participate within the Diocese, national church, city and/or county on initiatives to create “Beloved Community”
- Compiling a supplemental set of prayers (Beloved Community Related) that can be used in addition to our regular prayer. This has prayers from around the globe representing various countries, ethnicities, and historical groups of people in the United States
- Met with racial justice practitioners in the tri-state area to discuss building a network of practitioners to share best practices. Met with ecumenical practitioners locally to again build a local network to collaborate and share best practices.
- Developed and facilitated: Workshop for UBE Annual Conference on Decolonizing the Black Church through reading scripture through a Beloved Community Lens. The conference was held in Kentucky and preceded the General Convention.
- Work has begun on a strategic plan to expand the work of BCI to explore the expansion of the BC initiatives. Begun conversations with laypeople as a preliminary listening campaign to imagine what’s next and new for our diocesan initiatives. We are ascertaining what is important to our people. Our plan will depend on Clergy participation.
- Met with racial justice practitioners in the tri-state area building a network of practitioners to share best practices. Met with ecumenical practitioners locally to again build a local network to collaborate and share best practices. August meeting to include Carla Robinson of the Diocese of Olympia and a new network development merging my network with practitioners connected with Tamika Gerhardt of New Orleans. Continuing conversations on best practices with missionaries in PA and Ohio.
- Receiving prayers connected to Beloved Community and Racial Justice for a compilation book for all parishes in our Diocese. BCI liaisons are working with their respective parishes to ensure maximum participation. We are making room for individuals that may want to participate in addition to the Parish work.
- Researching dialogue across “difference”. This dialogue is about building steam in the Episcopal Church. We are seeking how best to use the above mentioned practices to move Beloved Community Initiatives into a more comprehensive perspective that embraces and expands the focus from Racial reconciliation exploring how we move to dialogue across intersectionality amongst other marginalized groups.
- Program development for “Sacred Conversations” on reconciliation matters within the church is underway. Looking forward to launce this fall. Secured Canon Chris McCloud for October 29th @7. Theme is Reparations: What is it in Our Church?
- BCI liaisons continue to work with their respective parishes to ensure maximum participation.
- We have onboarded three new members of the Commission on Race and reconciliation. Dea. Guy Brown of St. Thomas, Martha Shelby of Holy Cross and Anthony Crisafio of St. Andrew’s.
- CORR now understands itself as an advisory board or BCI as well as the commission for race and reconciliation.

## **BCI/Sacred Ground:**

- 13 parishes in the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh have had participants in Sacred Ground.
- 7 Parishes have participated as hosts for Sacred Ground.
- 135 participants with 4 college students who completed the sessions for Scared via zoom as a small group due to courses and on campus living. (these students will train to become leaders for Scared Ground and want to take it to the Chatham, Carlow and Pitt Campus for young adults).
- Shahnaz and I are now consultants with the Diocese of Florida regarding their efforts with BCI and Sacred Ground specifically. They joined us for our Sacred Ground Deeper Level II sessions which was in April.
- Successfully completed our first 6 week session of Sacred Ground Level 2 with productive and viable action plans for everyone who participated.
- Beginning the new 9 week Scared Ground Level 1 on June 6th of 2024.
- Registering participants for Sacred Ground Level 1 and Level 2 for August.
- Preparing for St. Paul participation in Scared Ground Level 2 at the end of September.
- Compiling data from the feedback from level 2 and from the action plans to follow up and make sure participants have what they need to move forward with their plans.
- Met with the Sacred Ground Coordinators Andrea Lauerman and Valerie Mayo for TEC. TEC is interested in collaboration on Sacred Ground Level II curriculum developed by Shahnaz.
- Sacred Ground Deeper Level II sessions started this month. Two participants are from the Diocese of Florida. We will be working with them training them on both Sacred Ground and Level II Deeper dive.
- It should be noted that Shahnaz created the curriculum for Level II. The work she has done is making a difference and having a great impact. Participants are currently working on their personal action plans.