
RESOLUTION #3

ON SUPPORTING RACIAL JUSTICE THROUGH POLICE REFORM

The following resolution is proposed by the following members of the Clergy and Laity of parishes within the Episcopal Diocese of Washington:

Submittedby: The Rev. Dr. Joan E. Beilstein, Ascension, Sligo Parish; Ms. Jacki Smith, Ascension, Sligo Parish; Ms. Jane Alperson, Ascension, Sligo Parish; The Rev. Dr. Sari Ateek, Rector, St. John's, Norwood Parish; The Rev. Anne Derse, St. John's, Norwood Parish; Ms. Lisa Raisner, St. John's, Norwood Parish; and Ascension, Sligo Parish Policing Action Committee.

RESOLUTION

1 *Resolved,*

2 That all parishes of the Diocese of Washington be encouraged to form Committees on Racism, Policing,
3 and Public Trust to examine the role systemic racism plays in policing and to support and develop policies
4 to combat it; and be it further

5 *Resolved,*

6 that the Diocese of Washington pledge to support and encourage congregations and their members to work
7 for meaningful reform of policing and the criminal justice system, and to recognize that the root causes
8 of dysfunctional policing and criminal justice systems are multifaceted and complex and should be addressed
9 with discernment; and be it further

10 *Resolved,*

11 that parishes seek ways to encourage more positive relations between police and citizens, by working
12 with policymakers and leaders to take action against harmful policing and by supporting liaison activities
13 that both facilitate honest communications and promote healthy engagement among police, community
14 groups and institutions, and the public.

EXPLANATION:

Recent events have shown once again that deep systemic wounds left by our nation's original sin of slavery and its legacies continue. These wounds will not heal unless they become a priority for our entire faith community.

The people of the Diocese of Washington, as disciples of Jesus Christ and persons of faith and conscience, take seriously the Church's commitment, expressed through General Convention resolutions, to being an antiracist church [Resolutions 1991 D043, D113], holding that racism is a sin [Resolution 1991 B051], that the Church was complicit in maintaining the heinous institution of slavery and was in many cases profiting from its involvement in slavery [Resolution 2006 A123]; that the Church, out of growth and atonement, should embrace restorative justice, where those who have suffered from marginalization or oppression can tell their stories and obtain redress of their grievances [Resolution 2006 A127], and that the church should enter into dialogue, listening exercises, strategic partnerships,

and internal analysis to address systemic racial disparities and injustice in the Church and the wider culture [Resolution 2015 A182].

In addition, the Diocese of Washington recently identified Equity and Justice as one of the three major objectives of its five-year Strategic Plan. In keeping with this vision, our resolution focuses on police reform as a necessary step in dismantling racism.

While trust between the law enforcement agencies and the people they are pledged to protect and serve is essential, the trust is currently broken. This trust is key to the stability of all our communities, the integrity of our criminal justice system, and the safe and effective delivery of policing services. People of color, and black men in particular, are inflicted with such extreme injustices in our society that the Church has a responsibility to act on behalf of the safety of all God's children.

Recognizing that work must be done to strengthen, even create, this trust, the U.S. Conference of Mayors Working Group on Police Reform and Racial Justice published in June 2020 a Statement of Principles for moving forward on reform and justice.

The report stated: "We know that now is the time to renew the compact between people and the police, to restore trust and accountability, to rebuild legitimacy and to reimagine policing in our country."

As Episcopalians, we should lend our voices and efforts to this work of renewal. Among other steps, we can:

- Support good faith efforts to improve relations between communities and police forces, letting both know that the church is interested and willing to be involved in these efforts;
- Support reforms aimed at restructuring the way police officers do their jobs;
- Examine state and local laws to make sure they are comprehensive and responsive;
- Follow outcomes of criminal and misconduct charges against police, and
- Be aware of community concerns that are not reflected in any formal documents.

While this work might be considered the duty of any good citizen, our faith in particular calls us to bring God's righteousness to the world by shining a light on inequity and taking actions that bring us closer to a just society.