Pursuing the Beloved Community
A Five-Part Formation Series

A Resource from the Episcopal Diocese of Southwestern Virginia
Pursuing the Beloved Community is a five-week formation series featuring Dr. Wornie Reed, Professor of Sociology and Director of the Race and Social Policy Center at Virginia Tech, produced by the Episcopal Diocese of Southwestern Virginia. This series will help congregations and individuals begin unpacking issues of race, racism, and privilege, while examining the theological commitments to justice and peace found in scripture and our Anglican tradition.

The series is divided into five sessions of an hour each. Each session will feature prayer, video clips from the Pursuing Beloved Community lectures held in Fall 2017 and other sources, reflection questions, and follow-up action steps. These sessions can be done on a weekly basis during Lent or at any other time.

**Session One: Introductions**
**Session Two: Telling the Truth**
**Session Three: Repairing the Breach**
**Session Four: Proclaiming the Dream**
**Session Five: Practicing the Way**

Each session follows the same format and will take roughly one-hour. Sessions will begin with an opening prayer that can be said by the entire group or by one person. One session begins with an optional song. Following the opening prayer there is either background information or a section from the Baptismal Covenant. With this information and background in mind, watch the video clip selected for the session. After the video is complete, you may discuss the material for that session. There are reflection questions to help guide conversation. If your group would like to take the discussion further, there are optional action steps.

Thank you for taking part in this process and for the willingness to engage in the hard and necessary work of racial reconciliation in the name of Christ.

Peace,

The Rt. Rev. Mark A. Bourlakas
Bishop, The Episcopal Diocese of Southwestern Virginia
Session I: Introductions

Opening prayer: *The Lord’s Prayer*, BCP, p. 364

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those
Who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
And the power, and the glory,
For ever and ever. *Amen.*

During the 78th General Convention of our Church in summer 2015, we were invited as a church to take up the Jesus Movement. We were asked to commit to evangelism and the work of reconciliation and further, to begin with racial reconciliation.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. did not originate the term *Beloved Community* but he used it as he preached non-violence as a way to achieve peace and justice. For him, it was a realistic goal if enough people committed to it.

At this time, “*Beloved Community* represents not so much a set of programs as a journey, a set of interrelated commitments around which we as Episcopalians may organize our many efforts to respond to racial injustice...” (From “*Becoming Beloved Community: The Episcopal Church’s Long-term Commitment to Racial Healing, Reconciliation, and Justice*.”)

Dr. Wornie Reed, who will be featured in video clips most weeks, is Professor of Sociology and Africana Studies, and Director of the Race and Social Policy Research Center at Virginia Tech.

Previously, he was director of the Africana Studies Program at the University of Tennessee/Knoxville and was a Professor of Sociology and Urban Studies at Cleveland State University where he also developed and directed the Urban Child Research Center.
Dr. Reed chaired the Department of Black Studies and developed and directed the William Monroe Trotter Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts at Boston. He also held positions at Morgan State University, Washington University (in the Department of Sociology and the School of Medicine), and the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine.

In his career, Dr. Reed has produced seven books and numerous articles and research reports. A graduate of Alabama State University, he earned his masters and doctorate degrees in Sociology at Boston University. In addition to academia, he has worked in the Federal Government at the U.S. Bureau of the Census and in private industry with IBM Corporation.


Video:  
[https://youtu.be/Ay-KJUejiYo](https://youtu.be/Ay-KJUejiYo)

**Reflection Questions:** What assumptions of yours have been challenged by Dr. Reed's presentation? What do you think about Dr. Reed’s emphasis on institutional racism creating prejudice, rather than prejudice creating racism? Does this understanding make it easier to discuss racism, because it is not personal, but rather, an institutionalized thought structure? Given this understanding of racism, how should we focus our efforts to become Beloved Community?

**Action Steps:** Find a recent article or book to read about institutional racism, e.g., *Just Mercy*, by Bryan Stevenson; watch a film about institutional racism, e.g., “I Am Not Your Negro”, a 2016 documentary based on James Baldwin's unfinished manuscript, *Remember This House*. What recommendations are there among your group members?
Session II: Telling the Truth

Opening prayer:  The Confession, BCP, p. 360

Most merciful God,
We confess that we have sinned against you
In thought, word, and deed,
By what we have done,
And by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
Have mercy on us and forgive us;
That we may delight in your will,
And walk in your ways,
To the glory of your Name. Amen.

From our Baptismal Covenant:
We will persevere in resisting evil, and whenever we fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord.

Video:
https://youtu.be/0BzUm6b7pNg

Reflection Questions: Did anything surprise you in Dr. Reed’s history of Reconstruction? What things have we done and left undone regarding racial justice and healing? How can we name the past and current sins of racism as a society? What does it look like to tell the truth about our own history?

Action Steps: How much do you know about the history of slavery? Take this quiz from the Southern Poverty Law Center: https://goo.gl/XXakHm

Session III: Repairing the Breach

Opening or Closing Prayer: *Prayer for Social Justice*, BCP, p. 823

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart [and especially the hearts of the people of this land], that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

From our Baptismal Covenant:
We will strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

Video:
https://youtu.be/KmXUqag7LJg

Reflection Questions:
What institutions and systems are broken? How can we participate in the repair, restoration and healing of people, institutions and systems? Dr. Reed highlights two forms of institutional change: “Top down” change (e.g. military integration) and grassroots change (e.g. Montgomery County coalitions). What are your reflections on these two processes? What can you and your congregation do to repair the breaches in society?

Action Steps: What issues are before the General Assembly and Congress that relate to institutional racism – either maintaining is or dismantling it? Find out at the following links: Tracking the U.S. Congress - https://www.govtrack.us/, Virginia’s Legislative Information System - https://lis.virginia.gov/

Find the resolution on felony disenfranchisement passed by the 99th Annual Convention of the Diocese at www.dioswva.org/ministries/pursuing-the-beloved-community.html.
Session IV: Proclaiming the Dream

Opening Prayer: Prayer for the Human Family, BCP, p. 815

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Optional Song: Lift Every Voice and Sing, often referred to as the “Black American National Anthem”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ya7Bn7kPkLo

From our Baptismal Covenant:
We will proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.

Video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pEKpuiyPN10
**This video is a TEDx Talk delivered by the Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers**

Reflection Questions:
How can you and your parish participate in the work of reconciliation in your community? How can you proclaim the dream of beloved community? What connections do you see between “proclaiming the Good News” and pursuing beloved community? What behaviors and commitments foster healing, reconciliation, and justice? How can we listen to the stories of others?

Action Steps: Contact The Rev. Anne Grizzle (annefgrizzle@gmail.com) and request help with a story sharing event in your community. Read The Beloved Community: How Faith Shapes Social Justice from the Civil Rights Movement to Today by UVA Professor Dr. Charles Marsh; Radical Welcome: Embracing God, The Other, and the Spirit of Transformation by the Rev. Stephanie Spellers.
Session V: Practicing the Way

Opening Prayer:  *Prayer attributed to St. Francis*, BCP, p. 833

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. *Amen.*

From our Baptismal Covenant:
We will seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Video:
[https://youtu.be/jF2_51f3New](https://youtu.be/jF2_51f3New)

Reflection Questions:
How will we grow as reconcilers, healers, and justice-bearers? How will we actively grow relationship across dividing walls and seek Christ in the other? In what ways is the Church responsible for speaking up about injustice in society? Dr. Reed said, “If the Church can’t make a moral argument it shouldn’t exist.” Do you agree or disagree? What is the role of the Church in the public sphere? What do you see as the next steps for you and your parish in the pursuit of the beloved community?

Action Steps:  Sign up for allyship training (coming in March/April 2018) or a “Claiming our Stories” event in your convocation (Summer 2018). Pursue a reconciliation pilgrimage as they are developed this year. Reach out to churches of other denominations and racial demographics in your community to create fellowship events. For questions about next steps, email the Ven. Melissa Hays-Smith at [mhaps-smith@dioswva.org](mailto:mhaps-smith@dioswva.org).