2019

BELOVED COMMUNITY INITIATIVE FOR RACIAL JUSTICE, HEALING, AND RECONCILIATION

ANNUAL REPORT









BELOVED COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

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BELOVED COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

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Ms. Aileen Chang Matus



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Dr. John Stewart





The work of Beloved Community Initiative grew out of the longings of people in this diocese who were articulating their desire for healing.

It grew from feeling helpless in the face of so many killings of young men and women of color and the election that exposed just how deep our racism in this country still runs. And it grew out of our denomination's long-term commitment to Becoming Beloved Community.

Thanks to grants from The Episcopal Church's Genesis Church planting and missional development initiative, grants and donated space from the Diocese of Iowa, a grant from the United Thank Offering, individual supporters, donations from congregtions, and the work of a devoted core team, the Beloved Community Initiative officially began in February 2018, housed in Old Brick in Iowa City, although the groundwork began well before that.



In our second year of operation, our thoughts have turned toward sustainability, and especially bringing additional people into our work in a systematic way. Two new advisory groups have been established, one a diocesan group, and the other a community group. We're excited at the new ideas and energy that are being generated.

We are grateful to the people of the Diocese of Iowa for supporting our work, and for the ongoing commitment to work toward racial justice, healing and reconciliation. And we are so incredibly thankful for the work and commitment of so many people who have given their time, energy, creativity, and support

to build the framework of the Beloved Community Initiative.

In hope,
MEG AND SUSANNE

Co-Founders



Activist and scholar, Lisa Covington, received the 2020 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Achievement Award from the lowa Department of Human Rights, in part because of her work with the Beloved Community Initiative.



TELLING THE TRUTH

WHO ARE WE? WHAT THINGS HAVE WE DONE AND LEFT UNDONE REGARDING RACIAL JUSTICE AND HEALING? HOW CAN WE PROVIDE SPACE AND OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE ABOUT THE HISTORY AND REALITIES OF RACE IN IOWA? THE BELOVED COMMUNITY INITIATIVE ENGAGES THIS WORK THROUGH EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, RE-EXAMINING LOCAL STORIES, AND PARTNERING WITH ALLIES AND ACCOMPLICES TO ILLUSTRATE BOTH THE STORIES AND THE ALTERNATIVE VISIONS.

IN 2019 BELOVED COMMUNITY INITIATIVE:

- HOSTED a community dinner, movie and discussion with NASA astronaut, Dr. Jeannette Epps
- ORGANIZED and LED a pilgrimage to one of the Underground Railroad routes through Iowa
- Helped LEAD a monthly community book group exploring white privilege and systemic racism
- HOSTED Interwoven//Vanitas, an evening of art and literature from bi-cultural writers and artists
- Continued to DEVELOP a resource lending library and online library
- FACILITATED a showing and discussion of the film, Cracking the Codes: The System of Racial Inequity

DINNER AND A MOVIE HIDDEN FIGURES

February 2019

The young African American woman stood confidently before a crowd of over 200 to introduce Dr. Jeanette Epps, one of two African American astronauts with NASA. "I had the privilege of meeting Dr. Epps a few years ago," she said. "Dr. Epps gave me good advice about what courses to take, including some Russian language. I did what she suggested, and today I am an engineer at Collins Aerospace."

The crowd erupted spontaneously, springing to their feet to affirm both Dr. Epps and the young woman who is following her dream.

It's a little different way of being church—and yet with the ongoing assistance of a Genesis grant from The Episcopal Church, we continue our mission toward racial justice, healing and reconciliation. On behalf of the Diocese of Iowa, the Beloved Community Initiative continues to serve as a resource for dismantling racism both in our own churches, as well as in the local community.

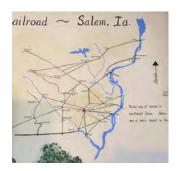
In February, the co-sponsorship of a program to bring Dr. Epps to Iowa City was representative of so much of what we do. Working with the Iowa City School District, Fastrac (a program to help teens overcome barriers to their education), and FilmScene, and thanks to a number of individual doners, we hosted over 200 people at a soul food dinner and movie screening of "Hidden Figures."



PILGRIMAGE TRUTH TELLING ALONG IOWA'S FREEDOM TRAIL

APRIL 2019

STEPPING INTO HISTORY



Sean Donaldson from the African American Museum in Cedar Rapids helped us understand some of the myths around the Underground Railroad as well as the historical events that led to the need for and use of the Underground Railroad.



The small group left lowa City and traveled south to Salem, lowa, journeying deeper into our perceptions about the enslavement of people for economic as well as power purposes.



Our visit to the Lewelling House in Salem and to Keosauqua offered us the opportunity to explore the risks some would take for a belief in freedom.



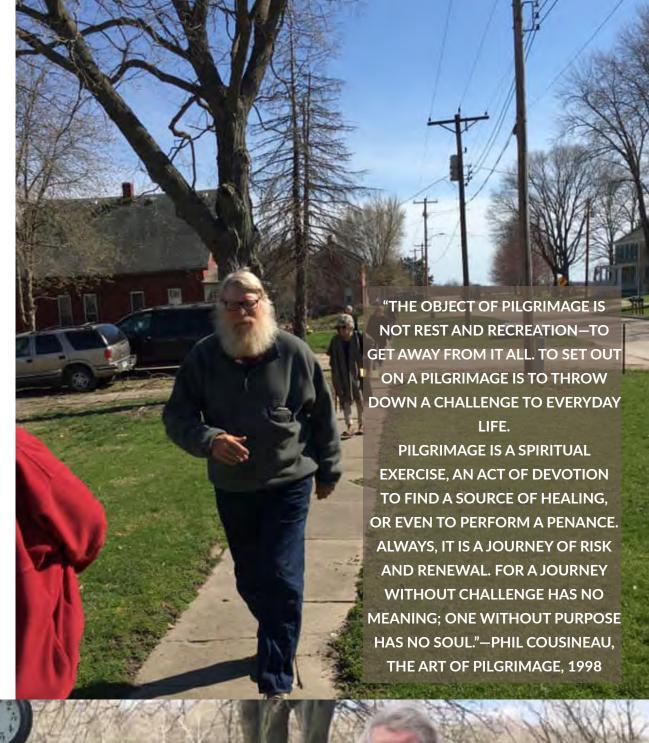
A space carved out under the kitchen served to hide people seeking their freedom from enslavement in Missouri.

Salem, Iowa, about 20 miles from the Missouri border, was settled by Quakers and became an active stop on the Underground Railroad.

Pilgrims were asked to reflect on their own understandings around the issues of enslavement and how it appears today in our lives. There may be times when it feels unsafe to express one's views, however, that hesitancy did not seem to last too long for us and by the end of the time together, we made our commitments to ongoing work toward dismantling racism in the way that fits for each of us.



Beloved Community Initiative looks forward to offering this pilgrimage again in the Summer of 2020 and hopefully will be able to build another similar pilgrimage in the western part of Iowa. There are places in the western part of lowa that were extremely active in moving freedom seekers along the Underground Railroad toward Canada. Additionally, Three Rivers Chapter is exploring offering the Salem/Keosauqua pilgrimage on an ongoing basis.





LITERATURE AND ART INTERWOVEN//VERITAS

September 2019





This event celebrated the interweaving of identity with vanitas, a genre of painting containing symbols of death or change as a reminder of their inevitability. Readers included three contributors to the BiCultural Writers' Fellowship Anthology *We The Interwoven*: Chuy Renteria; Anthony Mielke; and Sarah Elgatian, Writers' Workshop Alum Siyanda Mohutsiwa, and Midwest Writing Center Director Ryan Collins. The visual arts show consisted of five visual artists displaying their interpretation of vanitas. Visual artists include Lara Williams, Billy Pearson, Gabrielle Bakanec Rogers, J. Elgatian Romero, and Amber Morris. The night's MC was Royce Barnett from Stuck In The Middle Podcast.







PROCLAIMING THE DREAM

HOW CAN WE PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGE THINGS DONE AND LEFT UNDONE? WHAT DOES BELOVED COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE? WHAT BEHAVIORS AND COMMITMENTS FOSTER HEALING, AND RECONCILIATION? THE BELOVED COMMUNITY INITIATIVE ENGAGES THIS WORK THROUGH INTERFAITH GATHERINGS FOR REFLECTION AND SPIRITUAL PRACTICE, SEEKING REPENTANCE, DEVELOPING LITURGICAL RESOURCES, AND REBUILDING SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES.

IN 2019 BELOVED COMMUNITY INITIATIVE:

- HOSTED a retreat with Dr. Jennifer Harvey, Which Way to Justice: Dismantling Racism as a Spiritual Practice
- OFFERED Soul Tending for Change Makers, a dinner and fellowship opportunity
- · CURATED an online growing collection of liturgical resources
- CO-CREATED an experience of community visioning, called VISION 2019

LENTEN RETREAT WHICH WAY TO JUSTICE?

DISMANTLING RACISM AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

March 2019

In this day of work together—part retreat and part workshop—we worked with the Rev. Dr. Jennifer Harvey to understand anti-racist practices as spiritually formative in order to strengthen our multi-racial, multi-religious justice work in personal and communal ways.

We reflected on and shared the ways our distinct spiritual and religious traditions nurture our racial-justice commitments, but also named the ways whiteness challenges our work. We worked together to further develop our abilities to meet these challenges and understand more deeply how we can dismantle racism as a spiritual justice practice.



Rev. Dr. Jennifer Harvey



Photo top

Which Way to Justice Lenten Retreat at Old Brick, Iowa City.

Photo middle

At the retreat, participants shared about their ancestors, adding water and their story into our sacred space.

Photo bottom

Discussing the ways whiteness and legacies of racism impact our collective, multi-racial, multireligious work for justice.





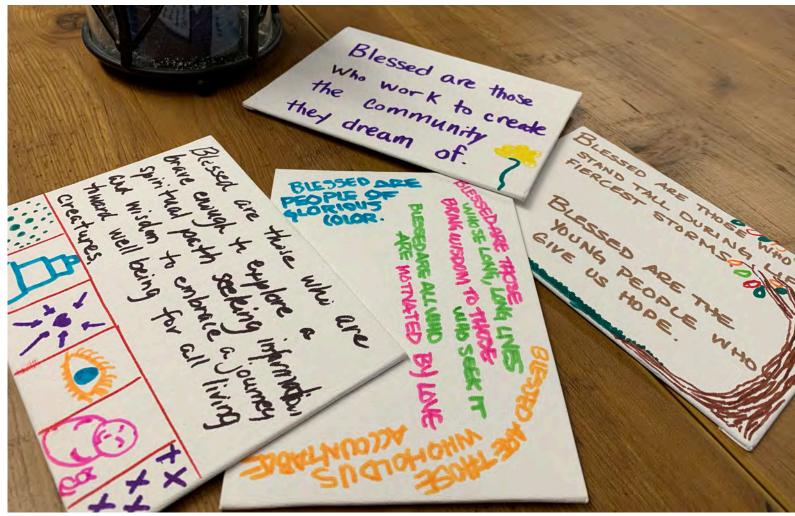


Photo above

Blessing tiles created at a Soul Tending gathering.

DINNER AND FELLOWSHIP SOUL TENDING FOR CHANGE MAKERS AND PEOPLE OF HOPE

Spring 2019

In 2019 we offered dinner and fellowship gatherings called, Soul Tending for Change Makers and People of Hope. We invited people to join us for sustenance and affirmation and to take time to connect with other people in the area who long for positive change in our world.

We shared with each other what is it that sustains us, that feeds our determined (but sometimes tired) spirits and our hearts that reach to make things better for everyone.

As we continue to explore what regular worship offerings could be at BCI, We believe that whatever continues to emerge with meditation/worship may well require new liturgies and formats, including a public one. But at the heart of who we are, as the Episcopal Church, we feel that community building around public theology simply requires more attention and in 2020 we will seek to expand our worship gatherings and resources.

PROCLAIMING THE DREAM





BUILDING COMMUNITY VISION 2019

November 2019

The leadership team for VISION 2019 sought to bring together local emergent leadership and solutions, networking together here and with others across the globe who are leading with their hearts.

VISION 2019 worked to connect and cocreate with others in the local community who aspire to make a difference. VISION 2019 combined experiential communitybuilding through deep connection, play, and collaboration frameworks where ideas were shared and trust was built.

Elements of the day included:

- An experience of community connection and authenticity beyond what we usually experience in our social spaces
- An invitation to mindfulness
- Experiential movement and play that invite us into our greater wholeness and authentic selves
- An open space where participant-driven topics were shared and explored in breakout sessions
- Optional reiki, massage, chakra work, NSA chiropractic, and yoga
- Whole, healthy, vegan foods and beverages





Photos left (top to bottom) Part of the organizing team for VISION 2019.

Small group discussion and storytelling.

Photos right (top to bottom)

Playing with art and interconnectedness.

Small group work using a "star cloth" - leaning on and trusting each other.

TOOLS USED IN VISION 2019

Part of the intention for Vision 2019 was for participants to walk away with both knowledge and experience of tools that support connection, engagement, collaboration, and emergence.

LIBERATING STRUCTURES

A collection of tools that promote high collaboration and creativity. They are easy to learn and implement, require no changes to major structures (hierarchies, building layouts, etc.), and easily scale between small groups and large groups (4-400!).

TURNING THE WHEEL

Using a working model that is based on inclusiveness, community engagement and collaboration, movement and play, these practices encourage a collective ethic of caring for others and ourselves and fostering healthy, creative communities.

GENERATIVE CONVENING

Practices that nurture the "fertile ground" for sustainable collaboration. These practices involve an interplay between convening and narrating in order to foster connecting, grounding, informing, discussing, and engaging in community.

RESONANCE

We explored how sound technologies alter neural pathways beyond mindfulness and wellness, experiencing kirtan and drumming together.







PRACTICING THE WAY OF LOVE

HOW WILL WE GROW AS RECONCILERS, HEALERS, AND JUSTICE-BEARERS? HOW WILL WE ACTIVELY GROW RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS DIVIDING WALLS AND SEEK CHRIST IN THE OTHER? WHAT DOES THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OF DISMANTLING RACISM LOOK LIKE? THE BELOVED COMMUNITY INITIATIVE ENGAGES THIS WORK BY PROVIDING SPACE FOR PUBLIC STORY-TELLING, OFFERING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL AGES, FACILITATING LEADERSHIP TRAINING, AND COORDINATING PILGRIMAGES.

IN 2019 BELOVED COMMUNITY INITIATIVE:

- LED 4 Dismantling Racism Trainings using the re-designed Dismantling Racism Training that includes Eucharist woven throughout the day and additional materials and activities. To this date BCI has TRAINED 142 leaders from 24 of our congregations plus leaders from BCI, The Way Station, diocesan staff, and 3 people from other denominations.
- DEVELOPED AND LED a week-long, in-depth educational experience for young people to connect their faith with why and how they work for racial justice.
- CO-HOSTED (with Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America) a Humanize My Hoodie training for white allies and accomplices.
- **DEVELOPED** a year-long resource for churches, groups, or individuals to deepen their work to dismantle racism in their lives or organizations called 2020 Vision for Becoming Beloved Community. Each month inludes materials that focus on a central theme introduced with a theological reflection, followed by suggestions in five areas: Learn, Notice, Engage, Reflect, Pray.

TRAINING FOR CHURCH LEADERS DISMANTLING RACISM

2019

CHAPTER TRAININGS IN 2019:

- Metro Chapter
- Three Rivers Chapter
- North Central Chapter
- Central Chapter

CHAPTERS THAT STILL NEED TO HOST A TRAINING:

- East Chapter: scheduled for 4/18/20
- Southeast Chapter: being scheduled
- West Chapter
- North Cedar Valley Chapter
- South Central Chapter

Ideally, each chapter will host a training every other year to fulfill the church-wide canonical requirement that all clergy and lay leaders complete this training AND commit to ongoing work to dismantle racism.



A day to reflect on dismantling racism To learn anew about oppression To practice skills And to covenant with God and each other to engage In this lifelong work

Dismantling Racism: Training for Church Leaders has been redesigned to include all the canonically required elements and to help ground this work in our spiritual development as people of faith. The 6.5 hour training includes:

- Eucharist woven throughout the day
- Sharing of personal stories and experiences
- An introduction to the historical and structural components of racism in this country and in the Church
- Exploration of the dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression
- Engagement with activities and discussions
- Resources for addressing bias and structural racism in churches





Photos left

Dismantling Racism trainings in Ames and Cedar Rapids

Photo right

Traveling educational display on the Doctrine of Discovery created by Beloved Community Initiative in 2018.

A WEEK OF LEARNING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE BECOMING BELOVED COMMUNITY WHERE YOU ARE

March 2019

In 2019 Beloved Community created and led a five day deep-dive for high school students at Iowa Mennonite School who desired to work together to create beloved community. Each day focused on a different part of the work: telling the truth, proclaiming the dream, practicing the way of love, and becoming beloved community where you are. Through teaching, videos, activities, journaling, discussion, and guest speakers, participants gained knowledge and tools they need to work towards a community that works for all people.

Do you have a group of students that would be interested in participating in Becoming Beloved Community over a week or a series of weekends? Let us know!





DAY TWO - PROCLAIMING THE DREAM

We examined the meaning of UBUNTU and what a reparations focus could look like. We talked about the Way of Love and practices that foster healing. We practiced meditating with a Buddhist teacher and learned how it can foster compassion. We learned about different faith practices and heard from Muslim, Jewish, and Christian leaders about the ways their faith and traditions motivate them to work for racial justice and healing.



DAY THREE - PRACTICING THE WAY OF LOVE

We spent time volunteering with organizations that foster dignity, justice and relationship-building - Agape Cafe in Iowa City and Matthew 25 in Cedar Rapids. We had dinner with and learned from recent Sudanese immigrants about their experiences in the Iowa City area.



DAY FOUR - REPAIRING THE BREACH

We spent time with people and organizations that are actively working on justice issues like affordable housing, immigration, living wages, wage theft, voting rights, affordable access to locally grown food, rebuilding neighborhoods after disasters like flooding, and reforming the criminal justice system, etc.



DAY FIVE - BECOMING BELOVED COMMUNITY

We spent time reviewing the week and exploring and dreaming of what beloved community might look like in practical terms. Through an exercise based on Wakanda from *Black Panther*, the students brainstormed and negotiated together a community design that could work for everyone.

TRAINING FOR ALLIES AND ACCOMPLICES HUMANIZE MY HOODIE

May 2019





The Humanize My Hoodie movement was started by two friends who had met as youth in Waterloo, Iowa. Andre Wright and Jason Sole began the Humanize My Hoodie Project as a way to foster critical conversations about threat perception. With the senseless killing of Trayvon Martin, many conversations spurred about people of color, Black people in particular, and their use of hoodies. This workshop helps develop allies and further the discussion on dismantling the stigma associated with clothing items.

Designed in the spirit of community, this training is for allies who want to be a part of the movement but who might not know how. They ask participants to be prepared to leave wanting to put on your hoodie and walk your streets in love and respect, ready to answer questions and promote awareness.



A YEAR OF RESOURCES

2020 VISION FOR BECOMING BELOVED COMMUNITY

Engaging with 2020 Vision for Becoming Beloved Community is an invitation to address racism in our communities. Faithful people know this work is important, and the work is both joyous and hard. Staying grounded in our faith, in constant communication with the One whose vision we seek to hold and bring to reality, is what will bind us as we engage in this 2020 Vision for Becoming Beloved Community.

From its inception as an idea from Ms. Donna Prime on a Zoom call with our Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Beloved Community Initiative, to the resource that was first presented at the 2019 Diocesan Convention, much love and prayer and gentle guidance of the Spirit have surrounded us in our work. The creation of 2020 Vision for Becoming Beloved Community involved ongoing difficult dialogue among community members, church members and committee members. We heard from white people who want to learn more about race and racism. We heard from people of color who are tired of teaching and want white folks to move from learning about oppression to focus on actively acting against it. The development of 2020 Vision was our attempt at action centered on learning. We want

66

I give you a new commandment:
Love each other. Just as I have
loved you, so you also must love
each other. This is how everyone
will know that you are my disciples,
when you love each other.
(Jn. 13:34-35)

2020 Vision for Becoming Beloved
Community was developed as a year
of resources to aid people on their
journey to follow the path laid out by
Jesus to love one another as God loves
us. We have heard feedback from
3 other dioceses that are looking at
ways to integrate 2020 Vision into their
dioceses this year.

people to understand learning as the beginning, not the end, of our commitment to racial justice.

Each month you will find materials that focus on a central theme introduced with a theological reflection, followed by suggestions in five areas: Learn, Notice, Engage, Reflect, Pray.*

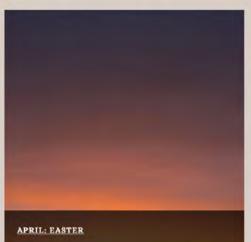
The **Learn** section will provide you with opportunities to read materials, listen to podcasts or speeches, and watch videos to continually build your understanding of difference in the United States. The **Notice** section will encourage you to take notice of your surroundings and everyday interactions and experiences. The **Engage** section will give you suggestions for taking what you are learning into a more public arena and/ or to seek out others to connect with as you learn more. The **Reflect** section invites you to journal about what you are learning, feeling, and how you might invite others into what you are learning. The **Prayer** and a **Theological Reflection** ground all of the work as part of our ongoing spiritual formation.

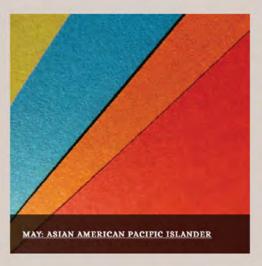
BECOMINGBELOVEDCOMMUNITY.ORG/2020VISION



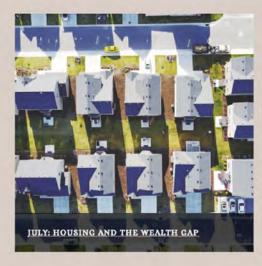


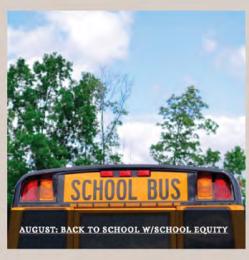








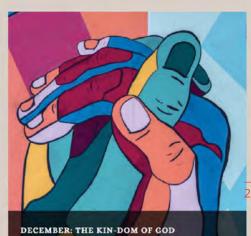














REPAIRING THE BREACH

WHAT INSTITUTIONS AND SYSTEMS ARE BROKEN? HOW CAN WE PARTICIPATE IN THE REPAIR, RESTORATION, AND HEALING OF PEOPLE, INSTITUTIONS, AND SYSTEMS? THE BELOVED COMMUNITY INITIATIVE ENGAGES THIS WORK BY BUILDING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS, OFFERING SPACE FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS, CREATING AND OFFERING JUSTICE INITIATIVES, SUPPORTING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE INITIATIVES

IN 2019 BELOVED COMMUNITY INITIATIVE:

- HOSTED the monthly meetings for the Johnson County Interfaith Coalition (JCIC) and worked with them on the passing of a city hate crime ordinance.
- HOSTED a Black Graduation celebration with the Afro House at the University of Iowa.
- WELCOMED a Sudanese celebration of Eid el-Adha
- HOSTED a weekly Native American AA group, providing a safe space for healing during the Spring of 2019.
- HOSTED Living in Two Worlds

Johnson County Interfaith Coalition (JCIC) is a collection of churches, the synagogue, the mosque, and other community organizations that have covenanted to work together to address racial justice issues in Johnson County. They meet monthly at Beloved Community Initiative.

This year, in an effort to address the increase of racially charged literature, messages, and harassment experienced in Iowa City, JCIC worked to pass a city ordinance that makes harassment and trespass with intent to harrass (based on a person's protected status) a hate crime. The ordinance was developed in collaboration with University of Iowa Law students, the ACLU, the NAACP, the City Attorney, and the police chief. It

WORKING FOR CHANGE JOHNSON COUNTY INTERFAITH COALITION



passed unanimously. Plans for 2020 include taking this ordinance to more cities and eventually to the state legislature.

Much of the end of the year was spent in planning the first of several Voter Engagement Events in the Iowa City area with the hope of encouraging more participation from African American voters and new citizens.

Photo left

Monthly meeting of JCIC at BCI.

Photo right

Prayer vigil at Church of the Nazarene after their building was vandalized with swastikas and racist language.



HOLY HOSPITALITY OFFERING OUR SPACE



BLACK GRADUATION

with the Afro House at the University of Iowa

In May, over 200 people came to celebrate the annual graduation ceremony specifically for African American students at The University of Iowa. The AfroHouse, the Black Leadership Institute and Beloved Community Initiative planned and hosted the celebration of the 2019 graduates. Graduation ceremonies for students of color at predominantly white institutions allow students to be able to hold space as a community without judgment or microagressions from a campus community that is often isolating.



LIVING IN TWO WORLDS

with Dawson Davenport, Meskwaki Tribal Council member

Participants enjoyed an evening of story, art, dance, fashion, music and food. Dawson Davenport shared his story of Living in Two Worlds and how art and hip-hop led him to learn about climate change, social justice for Native peoples, love and self-awareness. Traditional food was provided by Red Earth Gardens and Meskwaki chef Desse Davenport. Dancers included: Rosie and Micah Youngbear and the UI Breakers.

