

Becoming Beloved Community

by Meg Wagner



Dismantling Racism Training at Old Brick

In February 2018, the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa launched the Beloved Community Initiative for racial justice, healing and reconciliation.

The vision for the Initiative was initially supported by a \$5,000 discernment grant from The Episcopal Church and the commitment of space at Old Brick in Iowa City from the Diocese of Iowa, as part of the focus of the Board of Directors on racial justice.

As a core group of people from Iowa City and Cedar Rapids were discerning how best to focus on this work, The Episcopal Church announced its long-term commitment to racial healing, reconciliation, and justice, called Becoming Beloved Community. The Beloved Community Initiative will endeavor to be a concrete commitment to the work called for in that document.

Core team member Ellen Bruckner says, "I have believed in wholeness for some time. Working with the Beloved Community Initiative offers the hope of moving toward this wholeness I seek. Finding ways of opening space for all

to be included in conversations and all parts of life motivates me to join with others who share this desire. We also share the understanding of movement and all the individual ways we contribute to this movement toward wholeness."

The Beloved Community Initiative has been awarded a \$75,000 Mission Enterprise Hybrid grant from The Episcopal Church. That money, along with an Alleluia Fund Grant and a local grant will help the Initiative get underway.

With our current political climate, emboldened white supremacist groups on the rise, and the divisive rhetoric we hear everywhere, the Initiative hopes to serve as a resource that can inspire and empower people to work for reconciliation and justice that restores dignity and respect.

Dianne Dillon-Ridgely, part of the core team says, "Having been a child during the civil rights protests and activism of the 60's, I was a witness to the end of 'Jim Crow' laws, Americas's legal Apartheid. Now when I hear people say, 'we did that already.' I bristle. No one expects to be clean for life from a single bath or shower—we have to bathe frequently. Equality, justice, and freedom are fragile—we have to protect, cherish, and work for them diligently!"

The Beloved Community Initiative for racial justice, healing, and reconciliation in Iowa aims to equip people to grow as a community of reconcilers, justice-makers, and healers. The Beloved Community Initiative is focused on four

long-term components of this work: telling the truth, proclaiming the dream of Beloved Community, practicing the Way of Love, and repairing the breach in society and institutions.

As part of its work, the Initiative will sponsor Dismantling Racism trainings across the diocese, and will be offering a Train the Trainer opportunity at the Summer Ministry School and Retreat. People who are interested in becoming a trainer must also participate in several monthly online meetings after June.

The training is a day of spiritual formation for the work of dismantling racism in our lives and in our churches. It grounds the work in Eucharist and our baptismal promises, using the training that the Diocese of Atlanta Beloved Community: Commission for Dismantling Racism has developed and adapting it for our context.

Visit the Beloved Community Initiative website at becomingbelovedcommunity.org. There you can see upcoming events, sign up for updates, and donate to the work of the Initiative.

The Rev. Meg Wagner serves as Missioner for Communications and Reconciliation.



Beloved Community Initiative hosted a community meeting for Black Voices Project at Old Brick.

Our Mission

Telling the Truth through educational programs, re-examining local stories, partnering with allies and accomplices.

Proclaiming the Dream through interfaith gatherings for reflection and spiritual practice, seeking repentance, and rebuilding systems and structures.

Practicing the Way of Love by providing space for public story-telling, offering training opportunities for all ages, facilitating leadership training, and coordinating pilgrimages.

Repairing the Breach by building community partnerships, offering space for community groups, creating and offering justice initiatives, and supporting restorative justice initiatives.

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**Beloved
Community
Initiative**

for racial justice, healing, and reconciliation