

ST. STEPHEN'S
ANGLICAN CHURCH
BE REAL BELONG BELIEVE IT

Thursday, October 15th, 2020

The Most Reverend Gregory Kerr-Wilson
The Synod of the Diocese of Calgary
180 - 1209 59 Avenue SE
Calgary, Alberta T2H 2P6

Dear Archbishop Kerr-Wilson:

Re: Anti-racism Statement and Anti-Racism Strategy for the Diocese of Calgary

In our worship at St. Stephen's we have always worshipped with an aim towards authenticity; we extend that goal to our approach to social justice, walking our justice journey together as we strive for equality for everyone.

As you are aware, at St. Stephen's we are recognized allies in the LGBTQ2SIA+ community. We seek to demonstrate similar allyship with parishioners and those within the broader community who identify as members of racialized and Indigenous communities. At St. Stephen's we want to responsibly own our history, acknowledge harms that have been perpetrated, and go forward in a renewed spirit of care and reconciliation, applying anti-racism principles, particularly as it relates to racialized and Indigenous people in the Anglican Diocese of Calgary.

Many in the Anglican Diocese of Calgary have a lived experience of racism. For those who have experienced racism, whether blatant or otherwise, it is a pernicious and injurious experience. The impacts of systemic racism are a decline in financial capacity, a reduced social well-being, and a myriad of negative health (including mental health) outcomes.

We believe that racism exists and directly erodes the health, prosperity, and well-being of people of faith in this Diocese. With respect, we are deeply concerned that the

Diocese of Calgary may be failing to reflect the times by failing to actively acknowledge and address systemic and institutional racism. We are unaware of any deployment by the Diocese of Calgary of an anti-racism lens in its decision-making process, discourse, discernment, dialogue and devotions. We specifically note the following:

1. *A Charter for Racial Justice in the Anglican Church of Canada*, drawn up by the Church's anti-racism working group, was received by Council of General Synod (CoGS) in 2004 and formally approved by General Synod in 2007. The document commits the church to fighting racism in various ways, and provides the theological rationale for doing so. It also includes a brief history of racism in Canadian society and in the Anglican Church of Canada^a.

To our knowledge, this charter has never been implemented in the Diocese of Calgary.

2. The Primate and the Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada issued a joint statement in June 2020 to articulate the Church's commitment to addressing racism and to acknowledge racism in Canada's history and present. The statement was introduced on the Anglican Church of Canada's website as, "*Our own house is not in order*": *Bishops issue statement on confronting racism*".

The joint episcopal statement provides that "[w]e re-commit ourselves and our Dioceses to confront the sin of racism in all its forms and the patterns of silence and self-congratulation, which have silenced the experiences of people of colour, First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples of this land."^b

We do not see this episcopal statement posted anywhere on the website of the Anglican Diocese of Calgary.

The leadership at St. Stephen's firmly believes that silence on racism may be viewed as an act of complicity. Therefore, on September 27, 2020 St. Stephen's Parish Council unanimously passed the following motion:

In light of A Charter for Racial Justice (2007) and the Episcopal Statement of June 2020, Parish Council will send a letter to Archbishop Kerr-Wilson urging preparation of a clear anti-racism statement from the Diocese, creation of an implementation strategy and actions arising.

Accordingly, we most respectfully urge your Grace to take the following steps:

1. Implement the 'Charter for Racial Justice in the Anglican Church of Canada' in the Diocese of Calgary by actively sharing the Charter among the parishes in the Diocese and by providing perspective on the Diocese's plans to fulfill the seven commitments articulated in the Charter;

2. Post the June 2020 Episcopal Statement from the Primate and the Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada on the Diocesan website;

3. Prepare, distribute, and post a clear anti-racism statement from the Diocese of Calgary; and

4. Create and implement an anti-racism strategy for the Diocese of Calgary.

The anti-racism strategy, should include, we respectfully suggest, a pledge to deliver on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action^c. The Calls to Action should be considered in the context of the residential schools that existed in and were operated by the Anglican Diocese of Calgary. With this consideration for these specific residential schools, the anti-racism strategy should therefore provide: (a) regular reporting to the people of the Diocese on the Diocesan progress on Calls to Action 48 and 49 (relating to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples); (b) detailed reporting to the people of the Diocese of Calgary on the Diocesan actions to support Calls to Action 58, 59, 60, and 61 (which speak directly to church apologies and reconciliation); and (c) continuous reporting to the people of the Diocese of Calgary on Calls to Action 71 - 76 (which are related to missing children and burial information).

We further urge that in the development of the Diocesan anti-racism strategy the leadership of the Diocese engage members of the Diocese from racialized and Indigenous communities, following the principle of “nothing about us, without us”. A broad range of Diocesan members, true allies in the anti-racism work, should be included in the anti-racism strategy development.

We very much look forward to receiving your response to this letter.

Sincerely,

St. Stephen’s Anglican Parish Council and Lay Members of Synod

Patricia Cochrane

Heather Dumka

Paul Goud

Vesna Somborovic

Jean Springer

Gavin Stuart

Robert Walker

St. Stephen’s Anglican Wardens

Cameron Bush, Incumbent’s Warden

Heather Campbell, People’s Warden

Lynda Greuel, Deputy People’s Warden

Louise Redmond, Deputy Incumbent’s Warden

Clergy

The Reverend Charmaine Evans

^a Folkins, Tali. (2020 June 11). Anglican Journal. *Black Anglicans of Canada aims to give life to church's racial charter*. https://www.anglicanjournal.com/black-anglicans-of-canada-aims-to-give-life-to-churchs-racial-charter/?utm_source=Anglican+Church+of+Canada&utm_campaign=008ee5ee84-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_07_13_10_54&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_6285aca377-008ee5ee84-243796809

^b General Synod Communications. (2020 June 9). "Our own house is not in order": Bishops issue statement on confronting racism. *Anglican Church of Canada Episcopal Statement*. <https://www.anglican.ca/news/our-own-house-is-not-in-order-bishops-issue-statement-on-confronting-racism/30026802/>

^c Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Summary: honouring the truth, reconciling for the future*. Winnipeg: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf