



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF NORTH CAROLINA

4800 Six Forks Road, Suite 300, Raleigh, North Carolina 27609 Telephone 919-834-7474 800-448-8775

August 9, 2024

Dear Beloved Members of our Diocese,

As we reported to you in February of this year, an incident occurred during our annual youth camp retreat, the Bishops' Ball, held at the end of January at Haw River State Park. A Black child was subjected to racial insults and physical bullying by another child. This behavior is a deep violation of our commitments to one another and the covenants the campers themselves make as part of these gatherings.

We must emphasize that this behavior has absolutely no place in any part of our church or in the life of a follower of Jesus. In the context of our shared history in the church and this country, the traumatic impact on the child, the child's family, and the community is deeply painful. We share this pain, and we grieve it. It impels us to redouble our efforts to root out the sin of white supremacy and to do the work needed to heal the wounds of racism and enslavement that continue to haunt us.

Over the days and months following this incident, the bishops have met with the family of the child who was attacked and the vestry of the child's home congregation and have made apologies on behalf of the diocese and offered other assistance. Bishops and staff have reached out to all the children in the cabin where this occurred, along with their parents and clergy, to gather information about the incident, and an investigation was conducted. The child who made the attacks has agreed to withdraw from further participation in diocesan youth events until some resolution has been reached concerning the behavior and its impact. We have engaged a professional in the practice of restorative justice with particular expertise in working with children, and have committed to support this process if the affected families choose to engage in it.

We have also undertaken an exhaustive review of the policies and practices in place at our youth gatherings to ensure that we have done everything possible to ensure that this does not happen again. As promised, we are writing to update you on those actions.

We are committed to taking the actions necessary to make all our gatherings safe for everyone.

- Our investigation of the Bishops' Ball incident revealed certain past incidents, known to some in our community but unknown to others. We are permanently documenting this history, in addition to addressing this particular occurrence.
- "Safe Church" training, required of all diocesan leaders and all adult participants at youth events, has been expanded to clarify that "safety" includes safety from racist and other demeaning behavior, with emphasis on the modules on anti-racism and anti-bullying.

- Youth event staff will include supervising adults of color, including diocesan staff and, as much as possible, diocesan clergy. The Rev. Canon Lindsey Ardrey now serves as Spiritual Director to the Diocesan Youth Council (formerly “CCY”).
- We are actively recruiting youth of color for youth leadership development programs, including the Diocesan Youth Council. In addition, anti-racism and anti-bullying training is required for Diocesan Youth Council members.
- The Youth Community Covenant has been amplified to require youth, parents, and rectors or vicars to sign the covenant, stating that they have read and discussed it.
- Specific anti-racism and anti-bullying instruction will be given on the first day of the overnight events and reviewed in daily cabin meetings.
- An expert from Episcopal Camps and Conference Centers and the American Camping Association has been engaged and has reviewed all camp safety and supervision protocols.
- Registration will be closed two weeks before overnight events. Walk-ins will NOT be allowed. This is necessary to maintain safety ratios and orderly supervision of all participants.
- Plans are underway to add trained college-age counselors to overnight events to increase supervision.
- The diocesan Youth Missioners are providing anti-racism training for youth leaders in the fall. This will equip them to then provide training in their congregations.
- Diocesan staff, working with congregational leaders, is holding a special summer celebration, “Be You,” for youth of color and Latino youth on August 17. “Be You” will be a day of fun, food, music and celebration, designed to build community and instill confidence that each person is valued and treasured.
- Policies and procedures for responding to incidents at youth events will continue to be reviewed, and adjusted if needed, as we work with consultants in restorative justice and DEI.

Finally, we are committed to doing additional work and training for youth and adult leaders in the months ahead. We are currently in active negotiation with a consulting group called Visions who has worked with our diocese in the past. The particular offerings and the details of the timing of these trainings are being fine-tuned, but we expect to share further information and registration links in September.

We ask your continued prayers as we engage and implement these practices and trainings and encourage you to join with us in our commitment to the safety and well-being of all of God’s beloved.

Faithfully yours,



The Rt. Rev. Sam Rodman
Bishop



The Rt. Rev. Jennifer Brooke-Davidson
Assistant Bishop