

Interview with Bishop Jennifer Baskerville – Burrows by Denise Senter

**Taped at the Episcopal Church of All Saints, Indianapolis, IN
February 2023**

Transcribed by Catherine Crouch

Denise Senter Thank you so much, Bishop Jennifer, for being with us today.

Bishop Jennifer It's a delight.

Denise Senter I want to start by asking you to please tell us about the racial justice and education team and how it came about?

Bishop Jennifer So the Episcopal Diocese of Indianapolis has a racial justice and education team, which was created about two and a half years ago out of a desire to reinvigorate the ways in which we help congregations and parts of our diocese engage the work of racial justice. Prior to the racial justice and education team, there had been an anti-racism committee or commission that had operated faithfully for many years. And I understand from the time before I arrived as Bishop in 2017 that there had been some ebbs and flows and the - not quite the energy to engage the work of racial reconciliation in the ways that leadership had hoped. So when I arrived, we re-thought about, "What can we do to have a start over? There was so much energy and desire to engage racial justice issues. And in a state like Indiana, where there's a -like many places- a long history of racial injustice, you know, from all from the founding of the state. Our diocese was clear that dismantling systemic racism and helping us think about it as a part of our work as Christians to do, because that was really foundational work. So the Racial Justice and Education Team was formed to help resource congregations and individuals in engaging this work.

Denise Senter That's exciting. What does the Racial justice and Education Team... how does it model (racial justice) for the body of the wider church, the wider Episcopal Church?

Bishop Jennifer Our Racial Justice and Education Team is one that is formed for our diocese to do this work that we're all called to do across the Episcopal Church and all of the domestic dioceses and the places around the world where the Episcopal Church has a presence. And so I think our modeling is really in doing the faithful and ongoing discernment about how, in this particular time, are we called to help dismantle systemic racism? Which means having an ongoing engagement around encountering the matter by reading about it, films, curricular engagements like Sacred Ground, and deciding that instead of this being a piece of our own work that we could check off saying, you know, I've looked at anti-racism work, I've looked at my soul, and now I'm done. But making the commitment to doing this as the work that's core to following Jesus faithfully. So I'm hoping what we do as a model- I'm aware that many dioceses across the Episcopal Church have their own versions of doing this work. And when I was in Chicago working for Bishop Lee on his staff, I

helped to staff the anti-racism commission of that diocese. And I know that they're continuing to work really hard on their work- but I would say the part that's a model is the ability to do the kind of truth telling that's necessary to make a difference in dismantling systemic racism and to tell that truth in a way that lowers the threshold for people to get involved.

Denise Senter Thank you.

Denise Senter I so appreciate what you just said about the work and the focus that it takes. And if we think of this as a practice of faith and what's central to deep introspection. Can you speak to the ways that a practice of confession, the practice of confession and repentance can be built into this work of the team that's already been done?

Bishop Jennifer I would say that the work of dismantling systemic racism is core to our baptismal identity. And one of the great gifts of the prayer book that the Episcopal Church endorsed in 1979 was that we would be baptized under a particular covenant and we would reaffirm the covenant that's about respecting the dignity of every human being and working for justice as a part of how we understand our call to walk in Christ. And all of that, I think, is an acknowledgment that because we are God's created beings, that we are not perfect or perfected, that we all have ongoing need to reaffirm our relationship with God and Christ and to admit when we fall short and we fall short all the time. And that repentance, that means that turning back towards God whenever we've done the things that turn us away from God is a part of our ongoing spiritual renewal. And we turn away from God every single time we decide that other people, because of how they look or where they come from or what class they are in, are not as worthy as we are, are not as beloved as we are. So confessing that is just a natural part of what we are called to do, to be faithful. On the other side of confession, though, even though we do a confession most Sunday mornings as a corporate, call it corporate confession, we do that as a body. The need for individual confession and reconciliation where we not only confess the things we've done wrong, but we chart out a course for making amends, for making the - repairing the good that we've done and the good that we haven't done. So it's sort of getting my confessional words mixed up. But we say that we've done a bad thing or we have not lived up to what God would hope for us. So here's how we're going to work to repair it. So the work of confession and reconciliation, which is the other side of confession, you confess and then you go forth to be reconciled. And that reconciling requires that some things happen. And so the work of racial justice, where we are broken in relationship because we don't honor everyone as God's beloved fully and equally means that once we've confessed it, we have our own work to do to get to that reconciling point. And I would just add that one of the dangers that we often fall into in the Episcopal Church in most Christian communities is wanting to rush to reconciliation too soon. That without having done the work to get to reconciliation, you can't just confess and be reconciled. You actually have to make repair.

Denise Senter So that's an ongoing, introspective process that you're speaking to. Can you see that as a type of work that's part of that anti-racists having an anti-racist mind? So I say that again.

Denise Senter Okay. Your description of the confession and reconciliation reminds me of an introspective process that's ongoing. How do you see that as probably necessary in creating an anti-racist mind or mindset?

Bishop Jennifer I think the work of creating an anti-racist world means that individuals have work to do at both the individual and the societal level. So often there's a critique about: Well, if I'm a good person, then I'm not a racist or I'm not in a racist system. And the fact is that some things just are particularly in our American context. We could talk about anti-Blackness and other kinds of biases that exist outside of the context of the United States. But in this particular context, it's always a work that's meant to be done internally, individually and also as a body, because we are individuals existing in a context in a system where individuals put in the policies or they reinforce the policies and the other kinds of things that keep the systems that prejudice people based on race in place. So you can't have one without the other. If you're going to make changes to our corporate life as a communal body of people living in a particular place, we also have to be constantly doing the reflection internally. And it doesn't mean that every single minute of the day we're thinking: How can I be an anti-racist now? Or how can I change? But it's about having a posture that is not afraid to reflect on the way the world is and the way we contribute to it, and to seek to do better towards making it, at least for us as Episcopalians, making the world reflect God's dream a little bit more faithfully. And we all have a role to play in that, no matter what our color or how recently we've come to this country. You know, there's often a thing of, "I'm an individual, I never grew up here, and all of a sudden I have to do this work." And I would say yes, because individually we're all a part of the community and that means we all have the capacity to make it better.

Denise Senter What are you looking forward to seeing, to seeing develop as this work continues toward racial reconciliation with the racial justice and education team?

Bishop Jennifer One of the things I would say about what I anticipate and what I hope for as we do this work of racial reconciliation is that we'd all come to understand that, again, no matter how recent we've come to this work, that we're all here now. And I would hope that everyone in the Diocese of Indianapolis would feel called to engage it in some way. There's still resistance in places where people might say to me, "Well, you know, Bishop, there are no people of color here, so we don't have any work to do." And I would say there's a reason why there are no People of Color where you live. So that means absolutely, you have work to do. And so it's about creating avenues for people in a variety of ways to engage this work. And so my hope is that every single person in the diocese who can read and who can engage socially, meaning have relationships, would be thinking about how we undo the things that we've been taught intentionally and unintentionally about bias and racial prejudice. And the Racial Justice and Education Team will be working on, you know, forever and ever. Amen. On helping to help us find those ways. There's a way for all of us, and I would hope that everyone would find their path.

Denise Senter As you were discussing earlier, this is not just something you listen to and you've done that and it's over. It's an ongoing, ever evolving piece of work. How do you see this continue to evolve in the year and years ahead for the Episcopal Church?

Bishop Jennifer I'm not sure what the future is going to bring for us. I think the thing that keeps me optimistic is that we're having conversations that we didn't have 15 years ago. And I think that's a growth out of the work that people have done for a long time to get us to this place. One of the things I often will remind myself is that when I became a Christian, when I was baptized as an adult and I didn't grow up with any church background, and after I was baptized in my - I was 22, I took other Christian formation classes and I joined other committees at my church. And one of those committees was the anti-racism committee. And, so, I equate my following Jesus and dismantling racism as being really connected. And, so, I would hope that, you know, we claim this work as something that we're called to do and that we would grow in doing it. And the Episcopal Church may have been afraid to talk about these things decades ago. But I think that we are seeing that the consequences of not having these conversations and doing the work are too high. And so we're fractured and polarized as a society. Our church has been a part of that polarization in decades past because we didn't talk about the things. So now we're beginning to talk and engage. And I think that's a really wonderful thing for us.

Bishop Jennifer I was baptized as an adult at age 22. And one of the things that I take for granted sometimes is knowing that after I was baptized, I continued to take Christian formation classes and I joined the anti-racism committee at my church. And so for me, understanding myself as a Christian and someone called to dismantle systemic racism go hand in hand, they're just a part of how I'm faithful to following Jesus. And I would hope that others would have that sensibility about this work. It's not a political thing. It's what we do because we follow Jesus.

Denise Senter Do you know of particularly good examples or stories from parishes who are doing this work?

Bishop Jennifer I'm not sure I'm prepared to have a big story out of the Diocese of Indianapolis. But let me let me say this. I mean, one of the things that drew me to the diocese was the question that was apparently not on the profile, but as the advertisements, you know, are you our next bishop are being put out, there was a question that was raised about: we wonder why when we gather a convention, why we are so white? And I thought, well, that's really a question I'm, I want to work with. And part of it was because out of 2000, I think it was the 2006 House of Bishops letter on the Sin of racism. The church I was serving at the time in Syracuse decided to spend an entire year looking at dismantling systemic racism and doing our own individual work. And so we had an eight week small group process where we looked at systemic racism. We had speakers coming in every single month. We had a weekend roundtable, and we brought in Chuck really(?) Of Blessed Memory and Michael Battle, the Reverend Michael Battles, the professor who worked with Bishop Desmond Tutu. And we said, we're going to talk about this all the time because that congregation was and still is, I think, very well integrated, racially, half Black, half white. And they wanted to stay that way. So I that's my prime example. I don't think I'll ever have that kind of engagement again. It was of its moment, but in other ways, I watched it in the Diocese of Indianapolis, folks saying, "No, we're going to really engage." Right up before the consecration, I remember going to Trinity, Bloomington and their CRP, CPR. Compassion... I'm going to get it wrong... but their sort of justice group is called anyway, they decided that they were going to have a white

privilege conference day and brought in people from across the region to talk about white privilege and racism. And I thought, "More of this, please." Like, they were not doing a training. They just wanted to raise the issues and invite people to have conversation about it. And it was exciting and invigorating and encouraging. And so there are those kinds of things happening across our diocese in really beautiful ways. And I, my invitation to the folks here is to figure out, like, what it is about this really broad and deep and complicated issue that draws you to want to know more and then do that. And it's that process over and over again of engaging, reflecting, wondering, praying, showing up, building relationships across difference. That's - I see signs of that in various ways. And so it's a hard question to answer, like name one or two because it's in a lot of places, which is something that not every diocese I think can say or... maybe more can now. But I would say that our diocese is a real model as a diocese about looking at some of these issues and doing the work congregation by congregation.

Denise Senter What should a parish do with their knowledge of racial histories?

Bishop Jennifer If a congregation is taking the time to do the historical research, whether by going through archives or taking oral histories, the first thing they should do is tell our historiographer so that we can take note of that and add it to our diocesan archives and histories. That's number one. Number two, I would say, of course, they should think about how they share that information in the congregation and as a way of understanding who they have been and which helps them to understand who they are now. And with that kind of knowledge, they can chart a different future, particularly if they're a congregation that doesn't reflect the racial diversity of their neighborhood. And sadly, most of our congregations do not reflect the racial diversity of our neighborhoods where that diversity exists. Some of our churches are in places that truly are 95% white, but that's a small number. So I would hope that upon hearing those histories, there are some really good questions to ask about. Well, what does this mean for us? What kind of future do we want to have and what kind of history do we want people to know about what we've done when they're doing this for 15 years or 30 years or a hundred years from now? What's the story we want told? And so we look at the history of the past so that we can understand how we can write a different story. We do the history of the past so we can understand how to write a different story for the future.

Denise Senter What should a parish do with icons that have documented racist histories or ones that are racially triggering to our congregants?

Bishop Jennifer I love the question about the iconography and images in our buildings. On my not so good days, I often say my picture might be the only bit of diversity hanging on the wall in one of our churches, which is really sad, especially given what we know about the historical color of Jesus. So there's a whole lot of commentary I could make about art and Western art and the ways in which we've interpreted this Middle Eastern man and how he should look. So that being said, the issue around monuments and other kinds of icons that have been problematic are being faced in all kinds of places, from the public square to our church buildings. And I think asking the questions about what do we do about these is actually the first place to start, because asking the question means you have to deal with, well, what was the story of this person? What was their history? What were they a part of? And

is that something that we still want to claim? As a historic preservationist who loves buildings and history, I would also say that it is not always the right thing to remove all those things. I mean, we would have very little left in many of our places, but it's also our story and we cannot deny that the story that we have inherited, whether it's told in photographs or stained glass, is the story. We are lucky in our region that we have lots of academic institutions that can help us with understanding how to interpret those stories. And I would love to see particularly where there are icons or statuary, where there are, let us say, problematic histories, that there might be descriptive cards that say something about that. It is the un-acknowledgment, the lack of acknowledgment about those troubled histories that can be really triggering for some folks who would say, I don't want to pray in a space that has a Confederate monument in it. And I think there are two parts; the work of acknowledging what that is and that we know that what this is and it's troubling history and then a commitment that every congregation can make, no matter what kind of iconography it has to diversify the imagery within its buildings. You know, we can't always put in new stained glass windows, but we can put up different kinds of artwork. We can have different kind of images of Jesus in our Sunday school classrooms. We can do all kinds of things really, really easily. We just have to want them. And part of wanting those different images has to do with our own internal work. And this is for the individual pieces. Really important to say that actually the image of God, as it is said in Genesis, is actually quite diverse and it doesn't look one particular way. And how about we think about what that means for what we decorate our sanctuaries and parish houses with?

Denise Senter You served during the Bishop Absalom Jones service with Mother Nan Peete. Have you known her long? And can you share some memories about her time here at All Saints?

Bishop Jennifer Well, the Reverend Canon Nan Peete, Nan Arrington Peete has been a model mentor for me for probably close to 30 years. I didn't know her when she was here at All Saints. I didn't arrive to the diocese until 2017, but I did know she was at All Saints because she was one of the first... the very first of Black women rectors in the Episcopal Church's history. So because of her historical nature as one of the first Black women ordained in the Episcopal Church, she's got a legacy that is really long and deep. I knew her as my priest when I was a member of Trinity Church, Wall Street. She had moved to different cures (?) After leaving Indianapolis and had landed in New York City, where I had been baptized and all of a sudden found myself with the great Nan Peete in the parish house. And I will say I think at that point I was off to graduate school and to seminary, but she would reach out to me and I was too afraid to actually return her phone calls because I thought, "She doesn't mean it. Like she's got - she's talked to Lambeth people. Like she's addressed on the world stage, all of these people. She cannot actually want to talk to me." And she was insistent about it. So that's part of the origin story of our relationship. She said, "You know, I mean it. Call me, I want to support you." And from that point on, she was and has been an incredible support. The vestments that I was ordained to the diaconate in and to the priesthood were given to me by Nan Peete. And so I went off to seminary and I would come home to visit in New York City because that was home during the breaks. And she would ask after me, give me advice whenever I was looking. After I was ordained and I would think about a new call, a new position, I would seek her counsel. So to be bishop of the diocese where

she served is like the full circle moment. And some will remember I asked her to be the preacher at my seating at the cathedral the day after the consecration, just because of all of those relationships personally and her relationship to this diocese.

Denise Senter Do you know she had credible death threats that were resolved by the police here at All Saints? Were you aware?

Bishop Jennifer] No, I did not know that there were death threats. But I do know that the early women who were ordained in Episcopal Church had death threats on a regular basis because the church and others who were not a part of the church didn't always think that women could be priests, and they didn't take their orders as being valid. But I don't know the stories about her time here in that way.

Catherine Crouch We call it credible because the man who was making - the person who was making the threats was a known murderer. Had murdered someone.

Bishop Jennifer Oh, wow.

Catherine Crouch And the vestry did not tell the congregation.

Bishop Jennifer Wow.

Catherine Crouch And we were concerned about that. And considered that to be a little disservice to her and to support her. And if you don't want to talk about it, that's fine. But it's a big, big black. Yeah. Big red mark on our, um-

Bishop Jennifer -I mean, I read Gordon Chastain's history, but I don't know if I saw that in there. So this is new information of this moment, so I can't really talk about it. I don't know anything about it. Yeah. Yeah.

Denise Senter didn't want to surprise you with that either. I just didn't know if you knew of that.

Bishop Jennifer No, but, you know, I mean, the safety of women in leadership is always an issue. And so I'll never forget going to Kim Lucas's consecration a few years ago, the bishop of Colorado, and seeing all of the police outside of the cathedral kind of getting organized to be able to provide security for the service, because her predecessor, who was, who is a white man, who had advocated for gun safety and the reduction of gun violence, he had to wear a bulletproof vest for his own sake because he got death threats. And so they were especially concerned that a Black woman being made a bishop would be pretty vulnerable. And safety is something that I think about from time to time. But it doesn't surprise me that those are the stories in her experience here. Unfortunately, she's not alone in that.

Catherine Crouch Do you think it's surprising that the vestry didn't tell anybody in the congregation? Or is that normal?

Bishop Jennifer I mean, how a large body of leaders decides to help a congregation understand something that's quite sensitive from the safety point of

view, trying not to make the congregation nervous about coming to church? I mean, there are just all these dynamics. I don't know anything about those. But I do know that if I were trying to figure out how to make a decision, it would not be so clear cut about when to tell people and when not to. You know, vestries are the spiritual and fiduciary leaders of a congregation, and they hold a lot of things in confidence for the good of the body. And they probably were making the best decisions they could under the circumstances.

Bishop Jennifer But if you want to talk about that generally I could talk about it. I just feel like I can't comment on something I know absolutely nothing about. So, you know, I mean, it depends on. I don't know what the storyline is of that part of the documentary to say.

Bishop Jennifer But I mean, I think it's one of the few Black women she was probably feeling alone all the time, generally because she didn't have many colleagues. Right. So. So that's one of the one of the challenges of being an only. Right. Do I need to say that again? Is camera still rolling?

Denise Senter So I think we're posing it in a general sense. Not specifically to any one person, but if you want to speak to the challenges of being represented, representing an only in service or in your, in one's position, what does that do? I'm looking at Linda.

Bishop Jennifer Let me start. Let me come at it this way. I think the challenges of being a Black woman in leadership is always a huge challenge because our world, because of all the things we're talking about around racial injustices, misogyny, make it complicated for women to lead. You mix in sacramental religious space, and that becomes even more complicated because there's a way in which people identify their spiritual leaders and God as being in the same pool. And sometimes those do not cohere for people. So our church, which comes out of a particular tradition, we know Absalom Jones and the fight for racial justice in the church generally is one where while Black folks have been a part of the church, the Episcopal Church from the very beginning, understanding them as full citizens, full, fully accessible to all of the ordination rights and all of those things has not been equally distributed. So we find ourselves we're still celebrating a lot of firsts, right? And so I think about and tell the story often about what it means to be the first Black woman diocesan here in Indianapolis. And the fact is, is that there are not enough Black women in leadership in the Episcopal Church, in the ordained orders. And when you're one of a few or one of the only, it's really it can be isolating and lonely. So the instances we were referring to a few minutes ago around threats to bodily harm are ones that I don't know. I suspect because of where we live in this country in this time, we kind of like, Oh yeah, that comes. I can be fairly nonchalant about it because I'm like, Well, yeah, you know, when folks were willing to bomb schools with Black children in the sixties, you come to understand that anybody who is a Person of Color represents a threat and is liable to have all kinds of threats made to them, particularly women. So I would have hoped at that point, and I, but I understand the stories that Mother Nan has told me is that she's had a sisterhood of support in those other Black women, particularly who were ordained early and other sisters and male allies in the church. And but I suspect that if she had not had the kind of support that she needed, she would not still be preaching and serving the church today all these many years later,

50 years later. Right. So that's a testimony to her building the kind of support she needs. And I think anyone in this position of leadership, whether it's bishop or it's a rector of a church, needs to have a circle of support. And as a bishop now, I insist on that kind of circle of support for every cleric in our diocese, because it is essential to being able to do the ministry in a healthy way and having a place where you can talk about the hard things, like having threats of any kind is something that folks need to not keep to themselves, but needs to have a place where they can talk that through and then seek the safety and care that's necessary.

Denise Senter Thank you. Do you have any particular hopes and prayers for Mother Andrea coming into an integrated but clearly a mostly white church.

Bishop Jennifer This congregation? My hope is that she will be a - Mother Andrea is one who has come up through our diocese in that way. She was ordained. I was delighted to be able to ordain her on behalf of Bishop John Taylor and for her to serve as a curate in the diocese. And so, like all the clergy, I want her to have a wonderful and successful pastorate rectorate here. Just period. It is not lost on me that she is the second Black woman to serve as rector here. And so I, I said to my own soul, and I'm sure perhaps she does as well, like there's some pressure that comes with that because we don't have a long legacy of Black women serving as priests at leading congregations in our diocese, which is something I would love for our diocese to reflect on. Why is that the case? We've had a few, but we haven't had a lot leading long term, so I want her tenure to be long and fruitful as she cares for God's people here at All Saints. And that together with the people of All Saints, they'll discern how best to do that and how to do good mutual ministry here.

Denise Senter Is there anything that you would like to say or to add as you as you're thinking about the reconciliation work that's being done across many dioceses in the church and of your particular commitment to this work?

Bishop Jennifer The work of dismantling systemic racism is really largely the work of white people to do. And in our church, which is predominantly white still, despite all our efforts, I... I want to see us continue to lead and to lean into this work. When Presiding Bishop Michael Curry became our presiding bishop in 2015, it was an interesting time because there were conversations happening after the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and the sense that if we didn't start talking about racism and dismantling it in a different way, we would continue to be complicit in its ongoing chokehold on our country. And so Michael Curry had already come with all of this work under his time serving as priest and bishop around the Episcopal Church. And there was this other conversation saying, we must talk about this as a church. And so the fact that those things align so that we could have a priority of the church be racial justice work was huge. Some folks may not remember that the three different priorities all around reconciliation of one kind or the other is there's evangelism, there's creation care and racial justice work. Bishop Curry is going to be concluding his term in 2024, and because he is the first as a Black man holding the position of presiding Bishop, it would be my deep hope that we would continue even more aggressively to do the work of dismantling racial hatred and prejudice and all the things that keep us from being all God calls us to be. Because one of the realities is, again, this is a life and death issue for many people. The way racial oppression works, both in our souls and in our lived experience, to belittle and demean the

people of God that we say God loves. But we're not so sure we want to do anything about that. Like, what can we do? So I hope it remains a priority as we transition into new leadership at the top of the church's level of hierarchy, because the lived experience for all of us is going to depend on us continuing to do this work until, I don't know, until Jesus comes, because we're human and we're not going to get it perfect. So it's the work of our lives to continue doing it. I don't want us to lose that focus. So that's my hope going forward. And I think because of the work we've done to get this far, we have a pretty good chance of being able to continue it because folks are not going to go back. Right? We can't go back to the way - like pretending we don't know, pretending that we don't have the ability to do anything about these things. We have all the ability in the world to change it. We just need to continue to have the will and the courage.

Denise Senter Well said. Okay, here's easy ones. These are just the conclusions. Um, as we consider the need and call for social justice, what can you say to us about what social justice means, particularly when there may be different societal or community expectations?

Bishop Jennifer When I am asked about social justice, what I say to Christians is stop using that term. It really doesn't mean anything anymore. And it probably had a sense of deep meaning for us a couple of decades ago. But what we're talking about is following Jesus. And what Jesus did was looked at situations where people were being oppressed or hurt or left behind or marginalized and changed the system, or at least brought it to the attention of the authorities. And he got into trouble about it and he continued to press on. And his desire and all of the ways in which he lived his ministry was that other folks would join him in following in that way. So I want people to just be Christians who follow Jesus. We make it often a lot more complicated and the buzzwords that, you know are here today and then problematic tomorrow, like not to get trapped up in all of that. When someone says, well, what are you doing for social justice? Or are you doing too much social justice? The reply should be, Jesus called me to make sure that everybody would be fed, that the hungry would have food, that the words of the Magnificat as a good friend of mine, Jim Nottin likes to say, that he wants to live his life in such a way that the Magnificat would be made real and true in people's lives. That things would be upended and the things that oppressed people would be taken away, that folks would be liberated. All of them, no matter who they are, what they look like, where they come from.

Denise Senter Many young people are opting out of church or traditional forms of worship. Many of our children and youth see the world as with a lens, a different lens. What are some areas where our churches could ignite or reignite the imagination of youth so that they can see their call within a body of people who need them?

Bishop Jennifer I thought you said the questions were going to be easier. This is another huge topic. So I'm just. I mean, that's a whole other thing. But, I mean, I'll just say, I mean, if you're asking, like, how do we engage our young people? And people in the diocese of Indianapolis have heard me almost rant about this before. And it's the thing I say is that we have to give up controlling everything and give the young people what they're asking for. It's really that simple. I mean, our young people need guidance, they need community, they're hungry for it and they're getting

it in other places. And we do not communicate in so many ways that they are welcome and fully able to lead us. I mean, teenagers have the ability to lead. They're leading in their classrooms and leading in their clubs. They're doing all kinds of things to show that they've got the skills and our churches sometimes say, but when you come in here, you just sit down and listen. I want to turn the church over to some of these young people and to say, "Tell us how you would want us to worship, help us help you do that, and then let us receive." That is also true for how we're active out in the world and in the community. The, often, the young people, and this has been true ever, forever and ever: they want to lead us where adults might not want to go because we're tired. We've already done that fight or we don't have the energy to envision what that might look like. But we need to let some of that guard down and just follow where they're leading us, because the world that we're leaving to them is not going to be one that I think is good unless we're able to help listen to what their needs are and to say, you know, "You may not come to worship here every week. That's okay. When you come, we want to hear from you and we want you to lead us outside of these buildings to ways that helps us to transform the world and to actually walk the talk that we're talking about all the time inside the sanctuary." So I have a lot to say about that. Yeah, it's... it's a challenge for us because we have fewer and fewer young people to talk to because we have not always made space for them in ways that they would like. We give them space in ways that adults want; it's not always ..., but it's the most right thing to do.

Bishop Jennifer We're afraid of young people. I mean, that's the fact of it. We are afraid of them because we don't want to confront the world that we have created for them to live in. And because of that, we have to deal with our own inadequacies, shame about that. But honestly, and it's not that we don't love our tradition, but they may interpret it in a different way. Lord knows All Saints is not the same All Saints it was a hundred years ago. so why don't we make a little bit more room? But that's... it takes a lot of time and intention to do that, and we are often short on those things.

Bishop Jennifer One of the fallacies about what it means to be a part of a diocese is that churches tend to think that they're isolated units connected only by a bishop, and that's not the case. The case is that in any day, any time a church can call up another church and say, "Hey, let's do something together and collaborate." So one of the things is my expectation is that that should be happening. And I am working with our executive council to help our neighborhood structure, which is our geographic region of congregations who are in proximity geographically to think about how they can just pick up the phone or send an email and invite other churches to collaborate without asking. No one needs permission. We're in relationship. And so my assumption, partly because of how I've come up in the church, the churches that did that on a regular basis, my question is like, why aren't churches talking to each other and collaborating? So I actually expect that and would hope that there are opportunities to do that, whether it's sharing a worship service or a potluck or an effort around dismantling racism, that the lay leaders don't have to wait for a priest. I mean, you can just make the decision to make that invitation. And then we would be making those invitations at every opportunity so that we could collaborate.

Bishop 2-14-2023 Interview.

Linda Ferreira Oh, and we are doing some of that, but we're missing many things that are great, I think. Are there some programs or structures that are being added so kind of top down to guide us? We know about Sacred Ground.

Bishop Jennifer To guide you in the relationship?

Linda Ferreira Some work and with ourselves and with other parishes.

Bishop Jennifer I'm not sure what you're asking.

Linda Ferreira What resources are being put together for the parishes?

Bishop Jennifer The Racial Justice and Education Team has been working really hard to come to every neighborhood meeting, and I think they plan to come to the neighborhood meetings in the spring of 2023, which will be happening in March, I believe. I'm not sure. I mean, I'm looking at sabbatical time, but so I know that they're organizing for those meetings now because the Racial Justice and Education Team just met last night to begin to plan those. And so they will meet with all of the representatives from all the churches who are part of each neighborhood to talk about what they can offer. They've been making this invitation for the last two years, saying that we can come to your church, please invite us. We'll come and do a workshop. We can invite you to register for Sacred Ground that just started another round just about a week or so ago. But one of the things that I think I want us to be clear about is that the opportunities and the initiative goes both ways. And so we have, I don't know, 40 different resources on the Racial Justice and Education Team page on the Indy Dio.org Website saying here are some books to read; here are some things that to... movies to watch, conversation starters and anybody at any time could say, "Hey, let's do a parish to parish conversation, watch a movie and have a dinner and then talk about it." And so my invitation is that all of the pieces to do that work are there. We just need to have the courage to call each other up and do it.

Bishop Jennifer Are you going to interview anybody from the Racial Justice and Education Team? I mean, that might be a good thing to do if you're going to focus on that.

Catherine Crouch Yeah, we had a Zoom meeting with them.

Bishop Jennifer Oh, good. Okay. So you. Yeah. Yeah.

Catherine Crouch There was a Zoom, way back, before we could meet.

Catherine Crouch It was about the churches to, you know, share what they've been doing. There was four people from our church, three people from the diocese and three other people.

Bishop Jennifer Three people from my office, from the bishop staff or from?

Catherine Crouch I think so.

Bishop 2-14-2023 Interview.

Bishop Jennifer When you say the diocese I'm thinking like other churches. So like...

Catherine Crouch No, I don't know what I'm talking about here. So it was supposedly with the people who are running the project and that we were going to do a check in.

Bishop Jennifer Oh, I see.

Catherine Crouch But like, nobody came. It was bad. And it was only four churches represented and four people from one church. And so that was our only - like we had invited them to come visit us and check with us on the documentary and be sure we were right and they didn't. Larry's Krauser. Fraser What's his name?

Bishop Jennifer Oh, Krauser.

Catherine Crouch Krauser. Yeah, we tried to get him to come a couple of times. It didn't work out for whatever reason, you know.

Bishop Jennifer Have you been in touch with Shanna Tetzlaff? She's one of the new co-chairs, and she, like, wants to talk about this all day. Every day. She would return your call.

Catherine Crouch Yeah. And then sometimes we were just like - this guy from Bloomington, talked about redlining, another lady talked about their book club, and then we started talking about, you know, interviews and this. And then someone came on and said, "How come I don't know about this?" And we said, "Because no one would come to our meetings" kind of thing. And then he said that they were making a documentary and they had hired someone and could we give all our footage to them? And we did.

Bishop Jennifer Oh, okay. Yeah. Because that was the other I mean, that's why I was so confused about setting this up. I'm like, Well, I already did that video. What is this? And I thought this was just the Parish of All Saints. So I think, you know, there's duplication of efforts because we're so siloed and the pandemic kind of siloed us a little bit anyway. But I would say Marion Scott, who is leading the Sacred Ground and is just, you know, I mean, she just, you probably already know if you're looking at beyond All Saints, she would be a person who could really go deep in this work because with the covenant to weed out racism that we just adopted at convention in November, we're having conversations. It's a major item on our agenda for executive council because the executive council is now tasked with making sure that we do the work of rooting out racism at every level and trying to figure out exactly what to do that's manageable and doable is the conversation that she's leading right now. So the thing is, a lot of this work is just happening all the time in lots of disparate ways. And the goal of the Racial Justice and Education Team is not to catalog all of that, but to help us at particularly the congregational level to engage it. But I mean, there's I could have gone a thousand different ways with like, oh, yeah, here are these other things that are happening. Some of them just are organizing under the surface. But I mean, I talk about dismantling racism more than I ever thought have would. It's like it's everywhere. And again, it's that's a particular thing. I mean I talked to sibling

bishops. It's not the same in other places so and to your point about death threats and hate mail like, I'm not, I don't get the hate mail from my diocese about the fact that we're doing this work; other bishops do. So I get hate mail from other people from outside the diocese, but I don't really take - I don't care about that. Like, they're not they're not my person. I don't need to worry about that. But the tone here is wanting to do the work, I mean, the fact that we're talking about duplicating efforts is a good thing. It's a ...it's a complicated like you don't want to waste resources, but the fact that so many people are wanting to do the work, I think, is that's a that's a pretty wonderful thing because it's hard. We need everybody on board.