

July 16, 2015



Dear friends,

It has become impossible to comprehend the breadth of hate that creeps into the hearts of our sisters and brothers in this country. Over the past several years we have seen an increase in violence and intolerance brought on by hatred and bigotry. This past year, in particular, has been increasingly painful as news stories continue to declare the litany of lives taken in the name of hate – the racially motivated slaughter of nine people in a Charleston, SC church, being the most recent in a list that has become too long and too distressing to bear.

At the same time, this past year we have been bringing together a new task force with the dioceses of Western Michigan and Eastern Michigan called the Lower Peninsula Diversity Task Force. This group has been trained and continues to meet regularly to discuss and share approaches across diocesan lines. Our diocese sent 3 people to join this group – The Rev. Bill Hale, Ms. Jackie Spann, and Mr. Emery Dumas. These 3 ministers will bridge the work of this inter-diocesan group with the work of a new task force we are birthing here in our diocese.

Today, I invite you to consider joining the **Race Relations and Diversity Task Force of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan**. My hope for the Race Relations and Diversity Task Force is that it will *lead the diocese in our corporate ministry to respond to the disease of hate that continues to infect our country through all the “isms” and “phobias” – racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, homophobia, xenophobia, etc. and move us toward an ethic of respect and gratitude for the incredible beauty of God’s full and diverse creation.*

We have named it a “task force” because we are calling this group to do more than discuss the issue; *we need people who will work to develop a response through the following tasks: hosting dialogue sessions, developing and sharing resources, creating a network for advocacy, cultivating awareness, and working with Whitaker Institute to develop training.*

I recognize this is a significant charge for a group to take on. But the call to this ministry at this time can no longer be ignored or set aside. The more people are involved, the more we will be able to share the load together, and the more impact we will be able to have in our communities. So, if you know of others who would like to join this effort, please invite them.

To begin, I ask you to attend any of the organizational meetings listed in our diocesan communication vehicles, including the website. Please *RSVP directly to the Rev. Michelle Meech*, the diocesan Ministry Developer to let her know you’re coming. She will be organizing the effort – helping work groups to form, making connections, maintaining communication, etc. More organizational meetings will be scheduled into the early fall – please stay alert for announcements.

RSVP to Michelle Meech at mmeech@edomi.org or 313-833-4411.

Thank you for your ministry and for seriously discerning this call to grow more deeply into your discipleship.

In Christ’s hope,

The Rt. Rev. Wendell N. Gibbs Jr.