

Episcopal Diocese
of Washington



Diócesis Episcopal
de Washington

Task Force on Black Ministries Report September 1, 2022

Task Force Members

Ricardo Sheppard, Atonement DC, Chair
Eugene Aaron, St. Mary's, DC
Kim Turner Baker, St. Luke's, DC
Antonio Baxter, Atonement, DC
Timothy Grandy, Calvary, DC
Caron Gwynn, UBE Representative
Michele Hagans, Washington National Cathedral
John Harmon, Trinity, DC
Diane Quinn, St. Luke's, DC
Sibyl Moses, St. Augustine's, DC
Charmaine Romear, Trinity, DC
Paul Ruffins, St. John's Mount Rainier, MD
Andrea Thomas, St. George's, DC
Sharon Wardlaw, St. Timothy's, DC

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Introduction/Reflections on Task Force’s Work

The evil and sin of racism have very deep roots in American society, culture, and church. Many white families and institutions who benefited from their direct or indirect participation in the institution of slavery also imposed conditions that prevented the Black community and Black Church from thriving in America. The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Washington are no exceptions in the pernicious acts that left deep wounds scarring ‘the souls of Black folk.’

The legacy of slavery and the determined effort of white supremacy sought to diminish and destroy the lives of Black people. Yet their undaunted faith in God expressed through the prayers and songs of both enslaved and free Africans in plantation fields and would-be churches, that gave them hope against all hopelessness.

The unintended rise of the Black Church, amidst ‘undeserved suffering’ and against all odds, created a unique Black community of faith and a redemptive path that arguably saved the Black community in America.

Black people have been part of The Episcopal/Anglican Church since 1624 when large groups of English missionaries were sent to America under the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (S.P.G.) to christianize the Blacks and Indians. These Black Anglicans typically worshiped in balconies separate from white people. It was not until Richard Allen and Absalom

Jones, and their followers left the Methodist Church and applied to join The Episcopal Church as an organized body with their own local leader that the Black Episcopal church was created in 1794. More Black churches were formed and eventually Black bishops were ordained to oversee the creation of a separate Black church. As the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum in the 1950s and Black Episcopal churches were included in the polity of The Episcopal Church and their members attended conventions, there were no longer separate bishops. Several churches formed at this time still exist and are recognized as Historically Black Churches. In the Diocese of Washington, other Episcopal churches considered Black Churches are formerly white churches that became predominantly black churches during the “white flight” to the suburbs in the 1960s.

Predominately Black Episcopalian churches serve as a reservoir of hope, social justice, and racial equality for the Black community within the confines of our own apartheid state of America. In the 1980s, our first diocesan Black bishop, the Rt. Rev. John T. Walker, stirred up the consciousness of this diocese among both Black and white congregations to take the church to the streets for social and racial justice that entailed community partnership, mobilization, and advocacy launching for the future connecting the church and community as partners. The Black Church possesses an immense history, power, and influence despite generations of ill treatment and racism, and because of this, black churches need to re-empower ourselves to thrive, continuing to speak truth to power and serve black communities beyond the sanctuary. ¹

¹ <https://sojo.net/articles/importance-thriving-black-church>

I. Executive Summary

Pursuant to the resolution from the 127th Convention, the Task Force on Black Ministries was appointed in mid-March, 2022. Its fourteen (14) members, coming primarily from historically Black churches, churches with a majority Black congregation, interested Black members of diverse congregations and a representative from the Union of Black Episcopalians, interacted via workshops and large or small group meetings. Currently, within the Diocese of Washington there are twenty-two (22) churches (see Appendix A) identified as historically Black or having a predominantly Black congregation; these churches represent roughly 25% of the eighty-six parishes within the Diocese of Washington.

The Task Force focused on defining reasons for the resolution and the best way to address the following question: *What are the issues that prevent the Black Church from thriving in the Diocese of Washington?* This question evoked extensive and thought-provoking discussions. These discussions helped the Task Force identify issues that must be addressed in order for the Black Church to thrive. Following the identification of these issues, the Task Force settled on a framework to discuss and address the issues, from which recommendations were developed. While the Task Force sought to provide an extensive and comprehensive report, due to time constraints, several issues identified will require considerably more time to adequately address. Therefore, the members of the Task Force agreed that its work should be continued.

Addressing the issues that prevent the Black Church from thriving in the Diocese of Washington requires a sustained effort, additional support, and innovative and transformative ways of thinking around leadership development, clergy recruitment, innovative and relevant worship programs, socio-economic justice issues impacting congregations and constituents within our beloved communities, as well as financial and in-kind support to Black churches. The

Task Force recommends the establishment of a permanent commission (or committee), by the Diocese of Washington staffed to explore, design, and implement strategies to make Black churches viable and prosperous in the Diocese of Washington. The permanent commission would build on the work of the Task Force and ensure that these issues/recommendations are addressed.

II. Background

In January 2022, the Rev. Antonio J. Baxter submitted a resolution to the 127th Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington calling for the creation of a Task Force on Black Ministries in the Diocese of Washington. The concept of the resolution originated based on conversations with current organizations such as The Episcopal Church's Office of Black Ministries (now called African Descent Ministries) and the Diocese of New Jersey (Missioner of Black Ministries). The resolution requested that the Diocesan Council appoint ten individuals to the Task Force based upon the criteria that they be members of churches that are historically black or have a significant Black membership. The Task Force would be commissioned to undertake the following work by September 1, 2022:

1. Examine issues such as racism and its impact on the vitality of Black churches in the Diocese of Washington.
2. Identify strategies needed specifically to ensure vitality of Black churches in the Diocese of Washington.
3. Identify specific resources needed to make these strategies successful.

After the resolution was introduced at Convention, an amendment was made to include a representative from the Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE) on the Task Force. This amendment was successfully passed, after which, the resolution was voted on and approved by the convention with over eighty percent (80%) approval. Following the approval of the resolution,

the Diocese solicited volunteers to serve on the Task Force via an application process. The Rev. Ricardo Sheppard was asked to serve as the chair of the Task Force, and the Rev. Dr. Anne-Marie Jeffery, Canon for Congregational Vitality, to serve as the diocesan staff liaison.. The Task Force on Black Ministries began meeting in March 2022.

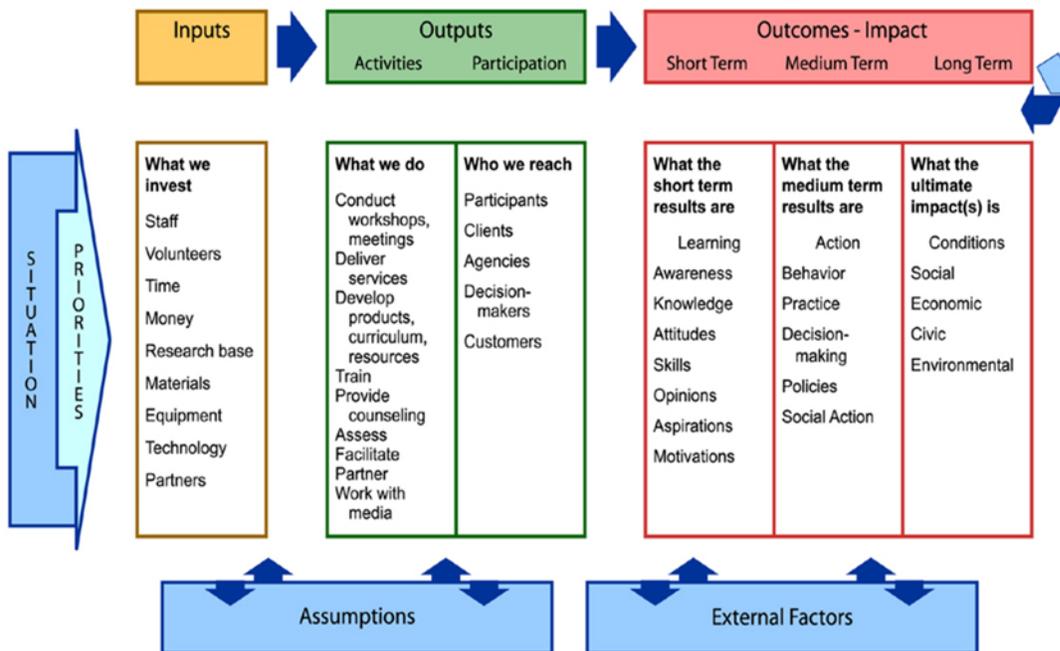
III. Approach

The Task Force met over several months in person, online and in hybrid meetings to define the issues, develop a framework for our discussions, gather information on the history of Black churches, and to understand and appreciate our relevance in our beloved communities. On May 7, 2022, the Task Force on Black Ministries met at Trinity Episcopal Church, DC and held a planning workshop. The workshop planning session was facilitated by Canon. Anne-Marie Jeffery using the Consensus Workshop Method (from the Technology of Participation Network) to create alignment around the issues and set team priorities. This method engaged all group members, organized the group's ideas and revealed the consensus in large groups. The following question was used at our in-person meeting: What are the issues that prevent the Black Church from thriving in the Diocese of Washington? After a vigorous discussion of the multiple responses, the Task Force agreed upon six. The six central issues, not necessarily an indication of the capacity or capability to grow, are :

1. Leadership that lacks vision, missional focus, and a capability to identify and raise up new leaders.
2. A lack of understanding of why the Black Church was relevant and is relevant now.
3. The inability to engage and have partnerships in the communities around our churches in which many of us no longer live.
4. Lack of financial resources due to inequitable disbursement of funds and disproportionate financial income.
5. The impact and effect of internalized oppression on Black Episcopal churches.

6. The lack of programs that are relevant to current and future members and programs to support generational membership and growth.

After agreeing on the issues, members of the Task Force chose or were assigned to issue groups. These groups were tasked with discussing these issues and making recommendations. The discussion of the issues framework began by looking at root causes of the issue. Upon looking at the root causes, each group worked through the issue using the logic model. The logic model is a systematic and visual way of presenting and sharing the understanding of the relationships among the resources needed to operate programs, the activities planned, and the changes or results hoped to achieve. This is the praxis by which the Task Force developed its recommendations.



IV. Recommendations

Each group identified at the May 7, 2022 workshop used the logic model as a means to develop recommendations. As the groups utilized the logic model they identified intersections (or interdependencies) between some of the issues, i.e., there were interdependencies between the six areas, in terms of cause/effect and recommendations to address the issue. Intersections were identified as the Task Force discussed recommendations:

1. A lack of understanding of the history and why the Black Church was relevant and is relevant now, impacts:
 - a. The recognition of the Black Church (at the Diocesan and Parish level) and the ability to engage and have partnerships in the communities in which many of us no longer live.
 - b. The development of programs that are relevant to the present and future members of all generations.
2. Inadequate financial resources impact a church's ability:
 - a. To hire clergy with an appropriate blend of pastoral and leadership skills, as well as develop a staff infrastructure to support the operations of the church.
 - b. To design and implement programs that would grow the church in an impactful manner within its beloved community.

Understanding these intersections was critical to the development of recommendations because it aided the Task Force's knowledge of the way one issue impacts another issue. The Task Force believes that addressing these issues will require a sustained effort by a permanent commission (or committee), staffed to explore, design, and implement strategies to empower and revitalize the Black churches in the Diocese of Washington. A permanent commission would execute and further develop the work of the Task Force and ensure that issues/recommendations

are addressed. Following the order of the issues as formulated in our approach, the Task Force identified the following initial issues and recommendations.

1. Develop leadership that provides vision, and missional focus, and that identifies, trains, cultivates, and promotes new leaders.

The Task Force recommends that a permanent commission be created for Black Ministries in the Diocese of Washington. While the Task Force was able to identify issues and make recommendations, time constraints limited in-depth discussion. A permanent commission allows for continued discussion and the ability to engage around the effectiveness of the initial recommendations of the Task Force. It also offers an opportunity for Black churches to engage one another and to offer support to one another. (Governance)

- a. Staff will be needed to address the issues identified in the methodology section of this report. While a permanent commission will continue to build on the recommendations and work of the Task Force, it is imperative that there is dedicated staff to ensure engagement and strategic leadership on the development of Black Ministries. The Task Force recommendation on staff is explained in greater detail in the financial issues section of the recommendations.
- b. According to the article in the *Philadelphia Tribune*², the majority (over 70%) of Black clergy come from Black churches. The Task Force recommends a recruitment program to identify, hire, retain, and develop Black clergy to support the parishes. It also recommends looking beyond normal avenues for the recruitment of Black clergy (Historically Black Colleges and Universities, areas outside parishes and seminaries).
- c. The Task Force also recommends providing outside training for clergy and lay leaders, and bringing in outside leaders to engage and develop Black clergy and lay leaders for leading Black churches.

2. Create an understanding of the relevance of the Black Church in the past and now.

The Black Church has always served as a focal point for the Black community. When things were bleak, the Black Church was a bastion of hope. When Black people were left hungry and homeless, the Black Church provided food and shelter. When our country created social divisions for people based on race, the Black Church formed a base of solidarity. The Black Church has doubled as school, community center, political hall, and community theater for both religious and secular programs.

² Yonat Shimron. "Worries About Black Episcopal Churches Surface" accessed November 30, 2021, https://www.phillytrib.com/religion/worries-about-black-episcopal-churches-surface/article_5304facb-a4e7-5a56-bd76-d8119a59bb61.html

To accomplish this, many Black churches developed a variety of social services including libraries, job training programs, basic education programs, and health care programs. The Church is sensitive to the changing cultural and social realities encountered by Black Americans. The Church is willing to break boundaries of “tradition” to accomplish both the salvation of the individual and the community.

Black churches also were the first institutions built by Black people and run independent of white society in the United States, with the earliest Black Christian congregations roughly contemporaneous with the Declaration Independence of 1776, including churches in Georgia, South Carolina, and Virginia. Since then, African Americans have taken their “masters’ religion” and made it their own through a flowering of denominations that run the gamut from the AME Church to the Church of God in Christ to so many storefront sanctuaries that remain a key refuge for many in hard times. In doing so, they have not only given the wider world astonishing cultural gifts in the form of oratory and song; they have found a new through-line in the Christian liberation story that they have used as a redemptive force to shine a line on the hypocrisy at the heart of their bondage. That was as true for Frederick Douglass as it is today for Rev. William Barber, Jr.³

If the question needs to be asked, why do we need the “Black Church,” it makes it clear that we have not done a good job of educating the masses of the role, history and relevance of the Black Church. With the creation of a permanent commission on Black Ministries, the Task Force would recommend in the area of Understanding the Relevance of the Black Church that they be tasked with:

- a. Creating a space where the history of the Black Church within the Diocese of Washington and beyond may be taught.
 - b. Creating an archive where the rich history of the Black Church may be stored.
- 3. Provide resources to engage and create partnerships in the communities around our churches, in which many of us no longer live.**

The practice of worship and forming community during enslavement times of African Americans was done in secret knowing that enslavers threatened beatings for such gatherings. This perseverance and trust in the Lord gives rise to the relevancy of the Black Church today in society.

Within the diocese, neighborhood gentrification has become a social norm along with the social implications it historically carries into the community with ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic community newness. These changes have impacted many urban Black

³ *To Understand America, You Need to Understand the Black Church*, [Henry Louis Gates Jr.](#)

congregations and their relationship with the surrounding community that may now look very little like the church membership resulting in neither the church nor the community knowing much about each other. Additionally, there is an increase of church members who are now commuters from other areas.⁴ Among the tenets identified in EDOW for congregation vitality and a healthy parish is one that places a focus on putting into action caring for our neighbors and their welfare as a faith community entitled Blessing Our Community.⁵

Becoming a blessing for our surrounding communities is upheld where the Black Church embarks upon intentionally pursuing its legacy of addressing social and justice matters. Currently, this is best accomplished by actively engaging in dialogue and listening to local community and other organization leaders to ascertain their concerns to address in partnership with the church. Additionally, the church can offer to fill in a missing need or a void within the community. Such pursuits can serve as an investment of initiating and building neighbor to neighbor relationships as servant leaders in the community to make a difference in the world. Jesus said, “Just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve...” (Mathew 20:28, NRSV)

In the long run, the Black Church faith community as the feet, hands, eyes and heart actively living out God’s love beyond the walls and front doors of the church affords the opportunity to have a viable missional partnership with their surrounding geographical community and neighbors. All Christians basically desire to make a difference, want to serve, and want to bless others. We want to be a part of a movement that believes in healing, justices, and equality for all persons.⁶ With the creation of a permanent commission on Black Ministries, the Task Force would recommend in the area of community engagement that they be tasked with:

- a. Offering specific training for Black congregations and clergy to create a cultural shift from inward ministry only toward a Jesus movement outward focus ministry centering on community outreach to serve their neighbors. Such training may entail exploring and identifying who are your neighbors; reviewing the church mission statement for community outreach alignment and budget item for the intentionality of outward ministry focus; analyzing the current church-community relationship status (how does the community see the church and would the church be missed if it moved); understanding what community outreach service is and is not; assessing the sustainability of church community service ministry (volunteers, resources), ways to approach community outreach and factors to consider for success; understanding why doing community outreach ministry is

⁴ Eight Signs Your Church May Be Closing Soon

<https://thomrainer.com/2017/05/eight-signs-church-may-closing-soon/> This source was used as part of an UBE Survive and Thrive Workshop

⁵ The Vital Signs of Parish Health. The Work of Parish Revitalization,

<https://edow.org/congregational-resources/congregational-vitality/parish-vital-signs-how-are-we-doing/>

⁶ What Does 21st Century Leadership Look Like?

<https://achurchforstarvingartists.blog/2019/10/21/what-does-21st-century-leadership-look-like/> This source was used as part of an UBE Survive and Thrive Workshop.

necessary, and designing a strategy plan and goal for community outreach ministry.

- b. Supporting and offering workshops/seminars to equip Black congregations and clergy on how to do community organizing, community mobility, and community advocacy; how to identify potential partners for community outreach; and on the importance of learning from community leaders regarding what is needed in the community and what may be missing that would be helpful for the welfare of the community. Workshop training may also entail how to do community tours and identify potential community partners (other church denominations, neighborhood councils, ecumenical groups, seminary outreach teaching initiatives Virginia Theological Seminary and Wesley Theological Seminary, area Veterans of Foreign Wars chapters, food pantries, community non-violence organizations, health nonprofits, immigration resettling organizations, schools, and many other community organizations.) Equipping may also look like inviting parishes to share best practices, challenges, and lessons learned for community outreach and challenges in group discussions.
 - c. Offer training to Black congregations and clergy on where to access and how to utilize various community resource tools such as how to do asset mapping, analyze parish parochial reports, and use MissionInsite to obtain a mission field snapshot of community-neighborhood demographics surrounding the church location.
- 4. Create resources to provide funding to Black churches recognizing that there has been inequitable disbursement of funds and disproportional financial income in part due to the inequitable development of our city and surrounding areas.**
- a. Currently, there is no formal program or office which is dedicated to Black Ministries in the Diocese of Washington. With no active program, there is no dedicated funding for the purpose of Black Ministries. The Latino/Hispanic Ministries of the Diocese of Washington provides a good example as to what the Task Force recommends for the Diocese of Washington. The Task Force recommends that there be dedicated staff for the Black Ministries by having a Missioner for Black Ministries who would be given a budget to develop programs and initiatives with Black churches in the Diocese of Washington as well as strategic plans for the Diocese for Black Ministries.
 - b. Just as there is a dedicated budget or source of funding for Latino/Hispanic Ministries, the Task Force recommends that there be a budget/dedicated funding for Black Ministries for the Diocese of Washington. The Task Force also recommends that the sale of properties from historically/predominantly Black churches should be specifically restricted for a Black Ministries endowment fund. This dedicated budget/funding can be used toward assisting in trainings that were requested in Issue # 3 (Community) as well as Issue # 6 (Relevant Programs).

- c. The Task Force would also recommend partnering predominantly white churches (those with resources) with Black churches to encourage collaboration and the sharing of resources.

5. Investigate the impact and effects of internalized oppression on Black Episcopal churches and identify resources to address this effect of this oppression.

Oppression is hatred of one group toward another group which is upheld by public policy and private action. When one group of persons is the object or target of systemic oppression over long periods of time, the mis-education, mis-information, subjugation, and lies begin to be normal, routine, customary, and acceptable to members of the group who are discriminated against. This “normal-ness” is internalized oppression.⁷

When people from targeted groups internalize myths and misinformation, it can cause them to feel (often unconsciously) that in some way they are inherently not as worthy, capable, intelligent, beautiful, good, etc. as people outside their group. They turn the experience of oppression or discrimination inward. They begin to feel that the stereotypes and misinformation that society communicates are true and they act as if they were true. This is called internalized oppression.⁸

The Church should take seriously the dehumanization of persons which stems from internalized oppression. Jesus teaches we should be free and fully human. Oppression, and the suffering resulting from it, inhibit our freedom to realize the gospel of Jesus Christ which is a message of hope and healing. Jesus said, “... I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)

It is important that we don’t assume that just because someone is a member of a group that has experienced bias, they are suffering from the results of internal oppression. Individuals are different, and have different experiences and backgrounds. If you assume internal oppression in all cases without getting to know the individual at least a little, you may, in trying to be helpful and empathetic, find that instead you’re being condescending or insulting.

With the creation of a permanent commission on Black Ministries, the Task Force would recommend in the area of Internal Oppression that they be tasked with:

- a. Working with the Episcopal Office of African Descent Ministries to make the training “Healing From Internalized Oppression” available to Black churches.
- b. Creating a framework to build Black clergy and lay leaders colloquy groups where there can be better sharing of ideas and resources.

⁷ What is Internalized Oppression, Dr. Lynne Westfield <https://www.r2hub.org/library/what-is-internalized-oppression>

⁸ [Healing from the Effects of Internalized Oppression, Community Tool Box](#)

6. Create programs that are relevant to the specific challenges facing Black churches.

Historically, the Black Church has played a vital role in the Black community, spiritually, socially, and politically. In the current period the Black Church, like the Church as a whole, is confronting unprecedented intellectual, social and political challenges. The decline in church attendance among the young and the drift to alternative forms of spirituality, the powerful influence of a take-no-prisoners culture, the financial hardship of a pandemic are all impacting Black congregations in troubling ways.⁹ Because of this, the need for programming that speaks to the needs of the membership and the community, socially and physically is imperative.

In the Gospel of Luke 4:18-20, Jesus made clear that his mission is twofold; soul liberation and social liberation. The gospel is holistic in nature. The gospel is concerned with the eternal and earthly state of mankind. The Black Church exemplifies his twofold mission through its dedication to social justice advocacy for the Black community and to the salvation of our souls.¹⁰ In today's Church there is a great need for relevant programs that speak to the different generations. The Church is at a crossroad as they have now become hybrid, reaching more people than ever before and also providing more choices of places to worship. Within this new season it is imperative that the Church reevaluate its programming.

With the creation of a permanent commission on Black Ministries, the Task Force would recommend in the area of relevant programming that they be tasked with:

- a. Assisting the Black Church to connect its leadership (lay and ordained) with training and resources that engage different generations within the Black community.
- b. Providing information, opportunities and financial resources for Black church leaders to attend workshops and training that provide information on strategic planning, virtual and hybrid church, worship and music, and community organizing.
- c. Providing training on how to formulate vision and strategic plans in areas such as: Worship, Music, Governance, Community Engagement, Building Preservation, etc.

V. Task Force -Additional Considerations

As part of its initial plan, the Task Force believed that we could consider data relative to Black churches, and also existing programs within the Diocese of Washington that could provide perspective to the root causes and recommendations of this report. The extent of our deliberations and time constraints are discussed below. We recommend that these areas be further explored by a permanent commission.

⁹ Jacqueline C. Rivers, Executive Director and Senior Fellow for Social Science and Policy, Seymour Institute for Black Church and Policy Studies, [The Black Church: Current challenges and Enduring Hope](#).

¹⁰ Raphael G. Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety and Public Witness*

Data/Statistics on Black Churches

The Task Force recognized that a key element to assessing the questions as to why Black churches are not thriving disproportionately centered on having a uniform understanding or perspective of what the history of the Black churches is in the Diocese of Washington, such as:

- What are the Black churches or Churches with predominantly Black congregations?
- What is the leadership composition of these churches and how are they deployed, as compared to white churches?
- Where does the Diocese recruit clergy for churches and is there sufficient diversity in its search?
- What has happened with these churches over the last 10 years?
- What is the percentage of supply clergy at these churches and the rationale of staffing supply clergy if the Diocese is interested in congregational growth?
- How has the Diocese supported Black churches in the past when there is a perceived need for intervention? What were the outcomes and lessons learned?
- What is the ethnic composition of the communities in which Black churches reside?
- How do other dioceses within the United States promote diversity in race and ethnic composition, as compared to the Diocese of Washington.

We recognized that this data was not readily available and, if it were, the Task Force did not have sufficient time to explore these questions in more detail. We agreed that these questions will need to be addressed by a permanent commission. We briefly explored data elements of seven (7) Black churches listed below, as there was the presumption that gentrification or Black flight was adversely affecting membership attendance at Black churches.

Missioninsite Quickinsite Data			
Demographics – Racial and Ethnic Diversity	% Black	% White	% Other Asian, Hispanic
Trinity Church DC	50%	27%	23%
St. Luke’s DC	19%	58%	23%
Our Savior Brookland	72%	16%	12%
Calvary	40%	47%	13%
Atonement	92%	1%	7%
St. George’s	49%	35%	16%
St. Timothy	94%	6%	6%

This raised a question as to whether there were underserved communities within the service area, and a compelling argument for some of us: is it that the Church is not thriving or is it that there is

a missed opportunity at the parish level and the diocesan level (in terms of support) to feed God's sheep.

Assessment of Diocese of Washington Programs Effectiveness to Strengthen Black Churches

The Task Force discussed consideration of programs and initiatives that existed or were under development at the Diocese of Washington. While this would be a worthy endeavor, we decided that there was insufficient time to adequately explore these programs and whether they were effective to address the issues we raised in our meetings.

We deliberated on the question: **If these programs are effective then why are churches not thriving and disproportionately so?** One reason is that this level of effort is fairly new. The naming of church vitalization as part of the Diocesan strategic plan in 2019 was when we saw the increase of resources and more strategic planning. The pandemic has greatly slowed the process but revitalization itself is a slow process. There is no magic wand. **Another question is whether (relevant before and during the pandemic), the churches have the bandwidth to engage in these programs.** For example, "The Tending Our Soil" program requires a clergy leader. Many predominantly Black congregations are using very part-time or long-term supply clergy who realistically cannot provide the support needed. **Another question is whether the present programs are geared towards Black churches.** Other denominations and Episcopal dioceses have created programs/initiatives specifically created vitality programs for Black churches. One example of this from the Methodist Church is Strengthening the Black Church (<https://sbc21.org>). *"We Strengthen congregations to transform communities through leadership development, discipleship-making systems, revitalization and real-time social justice ministry"*

These questions should be examined in more detail and in collaboration with lay and clergy of Black churches within the Diocese of Washington and perhaps other denominations that have been successful in developing programs.

We agreed that this task should be undertaken by the permanent commission and strategies be developed to promote participation by Black churches and strengthen its contribution and relevance within its congregation and community. The Task Force considered the following resources of the Diocese of Washington to address Church Revitalization & Vitality that should be examined by the permanent commission.

1. **The Tending Our Soil Thriving Congregation Initiative** is the signature effort to strengthen and revitalize congregations in the Diocese of Washington. Three cohorts of 12 congregations will engage in this program for a period of three years each. As of the fall of 2022, 24 congregations will be engaged in this work and of the group, 4 are predominantly black congregations – St. John's Beltsville, St. Timothy's DC, St. Mark's Fairland, and Epiphany, Forestville.

2. **Seven Vital Signs of Parish Health:** This is a tool to help congregations discover opportunities for growth and discern your next steps whether they be new ministries or revamping old ones. The vital signs undergird all of the vitality work including the Tending Our Soil Program and our clergy transition process. The Canon for Congregational Vitality works with congregations to engage with the vital signs and work on next steps. Other resources used include MissionInsite reports on community demographics and the Readiness 360 survey that helps parish see how ready they are to grow.
3. **Growing Young:** A recent addition to the vitality offerings is the Growing Young cohort, a program sponsored by the Fuller Youth Institute, which focuses on helping congregations reach younger people. Of the eight congregations signed up, two are predominantly Black.
4. **Canon 54:** At a special Convention in 2021, the diocese voted for Canon 54, a canon which would allow the diocese through the Diocesan Council to intervene and support parishes that are struggling. A team is appointed by Council who, through health and viability assessments, makes a determination of whether the long-term viability of a parish as a self-sustaining entity furthering the mission of The Episcopal Church is in jeopardy to the extent that Diocesan oversight or intervention is necessary. Upon recommendation of the Council, advice, assistance, oversight, intervention, or other involvement is provided to, if feasible, accomplish the goal of restoring the health and viability of the parish. So far three congregations have entered into the Canon 54 process. All are predominantly Black congregations. Part of the work of the first congregation to enter this process is to engage in a yearlong renewal plan which will engage them in Vital Signs and explore whether they can rebuild vitality.
5. **Congregational Growth Grants:** The diocese also provides congregational growth grants to assist congregations in exploring new ways to grow congregations and meet the needs of a changing world. These grants are awarded twice a year. In the last round, of the 15 parishes that received money, five were historically/predominantly Black churches.

**Appendix A: Task Force Black Ministries
List of Black Churches**

(Historically Black or Predominately Black Congregations)

	Parish Name	Region
1	Atonement, Southeast DC	South DC
2	Calvary, Northeast DC	South DC
3	Christ Church, Clinton, MD	Southern Maryland
4	Epiphany, Forestville, MD	North PG County
5	Holy Comforter, Northwest DC	North DC
6	Holy Communion, Southeast DC	South DC
7	Our Savior Brookland, Northeast DC	Central DC
8	St. Timothy's, Southeast DC	South DC
9	St. Barnabas, Leeland, Upper Marlboro, MD	Southern Maryland
10	St. Christopher's, New Carrollton, MD	North PG County
11	St. George's, Northwest DC	Central DC
12	St. John's, Broad Creek, Ft. Washington, MD	Southern Maryland
13	St. John's, Zion Parish, Beltsville, MD	North PG County
14	St. John's Mount Rainier, MD	North PG County
15	St. Luke's, Northwest DC	Central DC
16	St. Mark's, Fairland, Silver Spring, MD	Central Montgomery
17	St. Mary's, Foggy Bottom, DC	Central DC
18	St. Michael's and All Angels, Adelphi, MD	North PG County
19	St. Phillips, Anacostia, Southeast DC	South DC
20	St. Phillips, Baden, Brandywine, MD	Southern Maryland
21	Transfiguration, Silver Spring, MD	Central Montgomery
22	Trinity, Northwest DC	North DC
23	St. Monica & St. James, Northeast DC	South DC