

Background

At the urging of Archbishop Michael Curry and Bishop Morris Thompson, in the summer of 2020 St. Andrew's Episcopal Church embarked on a journey to respond more fervently to issues of injustice and seek racial reconciliation. The Vestry conducted a detailed review of its activities dating back to 1955 as part of this journey. By better understanding the history of our church, we are able to position ourselves for the future.

This page outlines our church's [history](#) on issues of racial reconciliation, a [response to our history](#), and our [ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion work](#) as we seek to live the teachings of Christ.

History

The review of 70 years of Vestry notes found no evidence that St. Andrew's Church or St. Andrew's Episcopal School were overtly racist, segregationist, or sexist institutions via the formal actions of their boards. However, like many institutions of their time, the Church and School did not take a leading role in ending these unchristian practices and thus helped to perpetuate these evils.

A summary of the Vestry's review can be found below:

May 1954	February 1957	August 1958	June 1960
Brown vs. Board of Education decided by US Supreme Court, established that racial segregation in public schools is unconstitutional.	SAEC Vestry votes to establish a nursery and early elementary school beginning in Fall of 1958. Trinity (1960), St. Paul's (1961) and St. George's (1969) follow suit by founding their own schools.	Nursery and K school opens with 47 students, 6 on scholarship.	From Vestry minutes: "Mr. S read a letter from the Women of St. Andrew's recommending that a colored woman be hired to clean restrooms and kitchen for Sundays. After discussion, upon motion duly made, seconded and carried, it was resolved that the Women of St. Andrew's be authorized to employ a colored girl at \$5.00/week to do the job subject to the supervision of the women's organization."

June 1960 (cont)	May 1961	September 1961
From Vestry minutes: "There followed a discussion lead by the rector on the	From Vestry minutes: "There followed a discussion of National Council of	From Vestry minutes: "Mr. C read two letters, one from Grace Episcopal Church in Monroe, LA and one from St. George's here in New Orleans. In each case the vestry of

<p>problem in our City and nationally with regard to the racial issues facing the country today. The rector distributed to those who desired the pamphlets published by the National Council of Churches."</p>	<p>Churches of Christ and the news that St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Shreveport was in the process of printing certain documents following their investigation of the said council. It was also stated that St. Mark's had passed a resolution requesting the Protestant Episcopal Church to withdraw from the National Council. There followed a general discussion on this topic but no motions were made and no action was taken."</p>	<p>those parishes adopted resolutions suggesting the withdrawal of the Protestant Episcopal Churches of Louisiana from the National Council of Churches. A rather vigorous discussion followed with a motion by Mr. T which was seconded that we adopt a resolution such as those of Grace Church and St. George's and that it be presented to the General Convention in October of this year. A substitute motion was made by Dr. B, properly seconded, that a committee of two comprised of Mr. C and Mr. W be appointed to a "fact finding committee" and present certain questions to Bishop Jones regarding the National Council of Churches.</p>
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March 1964	September 1964	November 1964	January 1968
<p>National Episcopal Church sets aside funds for "one year financing of an Episcopal priest in an interdenominational venture to "strengthen communication and further bi-racial efforts in the five states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina," in cooperation with the NCC Commission on Religion and Race.</p>	<p>Special meeting called to discuss next steps re: NCC. It is unclear from the minutes what the ultimate resolution was, but it is clear that a strong percentage (though likely not a majority) of Vestry members were displeased with the NCC's involvement in the Civil Rights movement and allegations of the org's involvement with Communism, and wanted to withdraw as a result.</p>	<p>Vestry minutes report that an amendment to withdraw the national church from the NCC did not pass.</p>	<p>St. Andrew's votes at annual meeting to allow women on the Vestry by a vote of 59-24. Passes 2/3 requirement by 4 votes.</p>

Spring 1970	October 1970	1980
<p>Royce Jackson becomes the first black Boy Scout to consistently attend Troop 48 meetings. The Vestry was notified of his attendance and took no action. Within 2-3 years of his attendance, two additional Scouts began</p>	<p>From Vestry minutes: "The reason for this first combined meeting of the two boards was to discuss and debate the proposal to include in our minutes the statement that St. Andrew's School does not, in accordance with the canons of the Episcopal Church, discriminate against the admission of any child on the basis of race, creed, skin color, or national origin. This matter was discussed by the combined boards, and a motion was made by Member A and seconded by</p>	<p>First non-white graduate from St. Andrew's Episcopal School</p>

<p>attending meetings. Royce eventually made Eagle Scout and attended a Troop 48 reunion as recently as 2019.</p>	<p>Member B that the vestry go on record as affirming that, in conformity with the Canons of the Episcopal Church, race, color, and ethnic origin are not and never have been the basis for acceptance or rejection of a student at SAES. <u>After much further discussion the motion passed with a vote of 6 for and 4 against.</u></p>	
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<p>1985</p>
<p>First black graduate of St. Andrew's Episcopal School, 27 years after the school's founding.</p>

A Response to Our History

In a small but necessary step, the Vestry passed two motions to kick off the current Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work.

Motion #1: Condemning Racist Acts in Our Past

The Vestry of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church affirms the writing of Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry in our belief that "long-term commitment to racial justice and reconciliation is embedded in our identity as baptized followers of Jesus." We condemn racism in all its forms, and commit our church to continue advocating for those who are discriminated against even when the "work is not fashionable, and the way seems hard, and we feel utterly alone."

We also recognize that our own church and school have played a role in discriminating against non-white New Orleanians.

- This church's Vestry founded a white-only private school three years after the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown vs. Board of Education*;
- A significant portion of the Vestry, if not an outright majority, opposed the activism of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s;
- In 1970, almost half the Vestry opposed a resolution declaring that St. Andrew's Episcopal School did not discriminate in its admissions practices. Despite a self-professed policy of non-discrimination beginning in 1970, the school--our church's largest ministry--did not have had a non-white graduate until 1980, and is not known to have had a Black graduate until 1985.

Bishop Morris Thompson wrote in 2019 that "the idea of 'good' must yield to new circumstances, and that words like 'good' and 'truth' evolve." With this in mind, the Vestry of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church condemns the actions and inactions by our church and school listed in this motion, as well as any others that have been lost to history. We are proud of the work that St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, School, and affiliated organizations have done in New Orleans for the past 117 years, but we recognize that we have not always loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we

humbly repent. We ask for God's forgiveness, and we apologize to all of our Black and non-white brothers and sisters who were hurt or felt unwelcome by our words and deeds.

Motion #2: Establishing Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Ministry

The Vestry shall create an ad-hoc advisory committee to develop a plan that seeks to make amends for the previous sins of overt or implicit racism at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church and St. Andrew's Episcopal School. This committee shall explore ways that the Vestry, church, school, and affiliated organizations can take "concrete, productive and powerful" anti-racist actions to work toward justice in our community.

Ongoing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Seminar Series

We live in such an ever changing world, and as a community of faith, it is essential to continuously learn and grow in our understanding and awareness of the ways in which we can live out our values and faith. This is particularly important in light of racial unrest and other forms of injustice that occur everyday.

St. Andrew's has initiated a four-part series on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion led by K. Allen Consulting. As part of this series, St. Andrew's congregants were afforded the opportunity to not only build and deepen our awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion conceptually, but discover concrete and actionable ways to operationalize diversity, equity, and inclusion within multiple domains. This work represents the foundation, not the conclusion of our DEI initiatives moving forward.

Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion through Music

As St. Andrew's attempts to make itself a more welcoming place for people of all races, one way to do that is through the rich a racially diverse musical tradition that exists in New Orleans. With this in mind, St. Andrew's has capitalized on our city's musical talents and diversified the types of music performed in church. At least once per month, St. Andrew's music ministry infuses an entire service with music from jazz, spiritual, African, and other non-white traditions. The response to this action has been extremely positive from both white and non-white parishioners, and will continue as we seek to become a more racially diverse institution.

Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion through Art

Jantel McKenzie (www.janetmckenzie.com)

"Jantel McKenzie's sacred paintings honor diversity and inclusion -- those marginalized and unheard. Her art supports racial justice, the rights of women, immigrants and the LGBTQ community. Her work is regularly carried in protest demonstrations and vigils across the country."

St. Andrew's is proud to feature Janet McKenzie's art in our the nave of our church. Her Stations of the Cross surrounds the congregation and was been used to see the face of Christ in the diversity of her work.