



## CALLING US TO KINGDOM LIVING

*A Pastoral Letter from The Rt. Rev. Gregory O. Brewer,  
Diocese of Central Florida, April 20, 2021*

Because of the racial violence that continues to cause so much suffering, I have been wanting to write to you for some time. I keep hoping things will get better, when they are only getting worse. While Central Florida has not made the news because of racial unrest, that does not mean we won't make the news in the future. No community is immune. So now is the time to shore up our Kingdom commitments to witness to a Biblical vision that includes "every tribe and language and people and nation (Rev. 5:9b)."

By contrast, I continue to be deeply disturbed by the racial slurs and snide comments that are still spoken among some of us here in the Diocese of Central Florida. People speak in generalities using seemingly neutral phrases like "them" or "those people." And, tragically, most of the time the people to whom they are referring are people who are from a different race, class or culture than their own.

These are people who never appear to wonder about the impact of their language on others. They do not seem to be aware that a phrase like "China virus" might be heard by Asians, or how other racial slurs might be heard by people of color. They are not aware that as the news continues to be filled with the murder of African Americans, such news exacerbates the ongoing and emotional racial trauma people of color continue to experience. Or if they do know, they do not care.

My heart breaks for people who live with such indifference. How can our hearts be so cold? When we carry such indifference or fear of people who are different from us, we do not look like the Kingdom of God, we look like the world. God's world and God's Kingdom are so much bigger than what we know. By comparison to such fear and indifference, the Kingdom of God is a breath of fresh air—casting out our fears, opening our eyes to beauty and sensitizing our hearts to the point of almost breaking them to the horrors we experience in our world. In the Kingdom of God there is far more mercy, far more tenderness, far more encouragement, far more diversity, far more joy and far more generosity than most of us have ever known.

I am not asking us to merely watch what we say to others, or adopt more sensitive attitudes. I am asking you to join me in prayer, asking God to give us what we cannot give ourselves: a new and tender heart towards people who are different from us, and a curiosity about who they are beyond what we presently know. I am also praying that we will be quick to respond to the Holy Spirit in repentance when we catch ourselves falling back on well-worn racial stereotypes, or

using language that is racially offensive. Such talk exhibits a profound failure in our Christian discipleship.

Many do not realize that such talk is used by some as permission to engage in violence we would never condone. We cannot be complicit by our words, our silence or our lack of action in this continuing national trauma. I am praying that God would help us examine our own history and give us fresh eyes to see ourselves and others as God sees us. I am praying that God would change us, encourage us and move us to plans for action in ways we never imagined. I am praying that God would cause us to be living witnesses to the Kingdom of God.

Given under my hand on April 20, 2021 in the ninth year of my consecration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a plus sign followed by the name 'Gregory O. Brewer' in a cursive script. The signature ends with a long horizontal flourish.

+Gregory O. Brewer