



Part of “A Toolkit for Reparations in Community:
A Resource for the Body of Christ”

Reparations 101

Developed by the Subcommittee on Reparations
Racial Justice Commission
Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts
November 2021



What are reparations?

Reparations have been defined in different ways throughout time. A simple definition is a “replenishment of a previously inflicted loss by the criminal to the victim. Monetary restitution is a common form of reparation.”¹ However, reparations are about more than monetary restitution. In some discussions there are five categories of reparations: 1) restitution, (2) compensation, (3) rehabilitation, (4) satisfaction, and (5) guarantees of non-repetition. The National Black Cultural Information Trust says, “**The purpose of reparations is ‘full repair’** to the lives and future of Descendants of Africans that were Enslaved in the United States (DAEUS). Real reparations must encompass a holistic approach that goes beyond focusing entirely on cash payouts. The concept of full repair in discussions of reparations means to address the economic, educational, health, and healing needs”² of DAEUS. We are a long way from “full repair” and there are many thoughts, ideas, opinions, and feelings about what reparations are, who receives them, who decides, and how we decide on what reparations look like in our diocese, but our collective conversation and commitment begin here.

There will be many questions to consider: Who pays reparations? Who receives reparations? And how? These are just a few logistical questions. But we know one moral and theological answer: We are Christians called to live the Gospel, called to receive one another as siblings, called to love, called to be menders of the breach, called to repair. We cannot live the Gospel if we do not face the injustices done to our siblings.

1 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reparation_\(legal\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reparation_(legal))
2 <https://nbcit.org/reparations/>

Beyond our Christian call, why are we doing this?

In 2008 a resolution was put forward in the Diocese of Massachusetts to begin the journey toward reparations. It was adopted, and while some work was done, very little came of it. In 2020, a large group of Episcopal leaders in our diocese put forward a new resolution that calls out our inaction and complicity and calls us to repent, reconcile, and account to our siblings of color, and calls for institutions in our diocese and the diocese itself to “prayerfully and purposefully explore their historic involvement in and present wealth derived from the forced labor of enslaved people,” to “prepare a toolbox of resources and expertise to assist congregations and individual Episcopalians in the examination of their assets and their history,” to “report their progress and actions to the Racial Justice Commission no later than the next convention...in November 2021,” and to “explore models and best practices for the creation of a Reparations Fund.”³ Our “recommendation for remedies will include the distribution of funds from unrestricted endowments and from our restricted endowments as may be permissible,”⁴ but we also acknowledge that our remedies must extend beyond our budgets to our actions, our systems, our leadership, our very bodies. So we pick up this work again and continue our faithful first steps in our work: to do the historical homework of telling the truth, to share it with you, to collect and curate resources for the hard conversations ahead in our diocese and in each of our congregations and communities, and to offer some recommendations on how to move forward paying reparations for the harm we, the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, actively contributed to through racial injustices.

3 <https://www.diomass.org/diocesan-convention-2020>

4 *ibid*