

November 29, 2023

Dear Rev. Bill and Traci,

We thank you for partnering with us over the last several months in a process of reflection and learning about the events surrounding staff departures of this past year. These conversations have deepened our understanding of what is needed to enable our collective process of repair and rebuilding, as a leadership team and church community. We were surprised and distraught to learn in greater detail about the level of harm you experienced starting last spring. This letter is the next step on that journey of repair and rebuilding.

On behalf of All Souls Church, we write to apologize for the harm you have experienced this year from some members of the All Souls congregation. We regret the emotional labor that it took for you to share with us the depth of the harm. We are now even more fully aware that during the events of this spring, you were the targets of unwarranted and unjustified attacks on your work and your character, including in hostile and disrespectful online communications and personal interactions. These kinds of communications and behaviors are inexcusable, and we must do better. The attacks came from members of a church community who you should have been able to trust to respond to difficult events with thoughtfulness, compassion, and grace. Instead, some members of the congregation reacted with vitriol and unfounded accusations of wrongdoing.

In particular, some of these attacks on you as Black religious professionals in a majority-white congregation were based in explicit as well as unconscious and implicit racism. While many congregants engaged in discussions respectfully and with a genuine desire to understand what happened, we feel called as the elected leaders of this church to apologize for the times when the discussions turned ugly. That caused harm to you, to other staff, to the religious education and music communities, to members of the congregation, and to the church as a whole. In some cases, we witnessed this harm and did not take action at the time to intervene. We apologize for our failures to prevent or interrupt these harms as they were happening. We recognize that we as a church community have a lot of work to do to repair the harm to you.

All Souls, at its best, is a covenantal community of learners. Our mission to create the Beloved Community requires us, individually and collectively, to continually learn new ways of being a community together. As a board, we have a lot to learn about how to prevent harm like this from occurring in the future, and we dedicate ourselves to doing that work. We are committed to helping the entire All Souls community reflect on the events of this year, work to repair harms that were done, glean the learnings from these experiences, and move toward the bright future that we all see for All Souls.

Sincerely,

The Trustees of All Souls Church

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