One Day, One Step Toward the Racial Healing of Richmond

Written by Pastor Chris Carr from First English, Richmond

What is *One Day, One Step*? It's an annual multi-church event for racial healing in Richmond, Virginia. It begins with a Service of Repentance and Healing, hosted by a different church each year, where we tell the story of our city's racial wounds. Because this is a Christian event, we lament and repent for the role that the Church played in creating, or being complicit in creating, these wounds. As a body, we pray through a biblically founded process: Lament, Repent, and Forgive. We believe that the way forward for our city is healing through forgiveness and repair. However, we can't authentically move to forgiveness and repair without walking through the need to lament and repent first.

The Service is followed by a Repair Fair. Our racially diverse and denominationally diverse steering team believes that we cannot have integrity in the space of racial healing without addressing the need for repair. At the Repair Fair, participants meet with organizations doing social justice work in our city and learn how we can support them (including enCircle). Last year, First English Lutheran Church hosted the Repair Fair on Monument Avenue, and this past September, Bishop Milton was able to participate in the worship service and repair fair along with other Richmond-area Lutherans.

On September 7th, 2024, the third annual **One Day, One Step Toward the Racial Healing of Richmond** event was held at Second Presbyterian Church in Richmond. Renewing RVA, a Christian mental health non-profit, hosts the One Day, One Step community event. Renewing RVA's full-time mission is to assist individual clients through Christian counseling. One Day, One Step is a multi-church collaboration dedicated to intercessory prayer for the racial healing of Metro-Richmond.

Bishop Phyllis Milton and Conference Dean Dennis Andersen joined me and members of First English Lutheran Church, Richmond, in participating in this day of healing. Bishop Milton led a blessing as a part of the worship service, and I assisted with Communion as a member of the steering team for the event. Our Virginia Synod ministry partners at enCircle (formerly Lutheran Family Services of VA) staffed an informational table the past two years in support of the Repair Fair portion of this event, where organizations that do work in the areas of racial healing, equity, justice, or advocacy are invited to set up a booth and share information about their mission. Last year, First English Lutheran hosted the Repair Fair on Monument Avenue.

You might ask, “Why does Renewing RVA, a mental health organization, host a racial healing event?” The answer is that the medical community is only beginning to understand the profound effect of racial trauma, generational trauma, and historical trauma on a person’s mental health. These are communal traumas that demand a community response — especially from the former Capital of the Confederacy.

What happens at One Day, One Step?

We begin with the Service of Repentance and Healing, where we tell the story of our city's racial wounds. Because this is a Christian event, we lament and repent for the role that the Church played in creating or being complicit in creating these wounds. As a body, we pray through a biblically founded process: Lament, Repent, and Forgive. We believe that the way forward for our city is healing through forgiveness and repair. However, we can’t authentically get to forgiveness and repair without walking through the need to lament and repent first.

We follow the Service of Repentance and Healing with a Repair Fair. We cannot have integrity in the space of racial healing without addressing the need for repair. At the Repair Fair, participants meet with organizations doing social justice work in our city and learn how we can support the good work these organizations are doing.

Who is invited?

All teens and adults are encouraged to come to this event! Every year, people who have attended (regardless of race or ethnicity) say they didn’t realize how much they needed this. Many have described the event as healing and transformative, in addition to building authentic relationships across racial and denominational lines. A team of lay and clergy church leaders from across the City of Richmond unite with Renewing RVA *across lines of historical division* to produce this event. These relationships are the heart of One Day, One Step.

Please mark your calendar now to join us on Saturday morning, September 6th, 2025, for next year’s One Day One Step event. The hosting church changes every year, so for more details and to register for this free event, please visit: https://www.onedayrva.org/. For any questions or Richmond area churches and organizations who want to join the steering committee or Repair Fair, please email RenewingRVA@gmail.com.

Please help spread the word about One Day, One Step, and follow us on social media. Above all, please pray for this event and for all the ways God is empowering us to be leaders in the area of racial healing in our communities.