



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MISSOURI

1210 Locust Street | St. Louis, MO 63103 | 314-231-1220 | diocesemo.org

Lent 2023

Dear Siblings in Christ,

Ours is a faith deeply rooted in the soil of Judaism. Jesus' earthly ministry was grounded in the religious expressions, traditions, and practices of Judaism which influenced the early Christian communities. We continue to draw much nourishment from our Jewish roots. Reflecting on the impact of Jewish practice, the early generations of Christians quickly recognized that Christianity was not a superficial rebranding of Judaism.

In our own time, the proliferation of Christian Seders on Maundy Thursday has taken root in parts of Christianity. These recastings of the Jewish Seder seek to connect Jesus' crucifixion to the fulfilling of the Hebrew Scriptures prophecies surrounding God's covenanted people. These Christian Seders cast Jesus not only as the messianic paschal lamb but seek to replace or supersede Judaism's covenant with God. Christians celebrating their own Haggadah¹ outside of Jewish practice is deeply problematic and is supersessionism² in its theological view. Christian communities hosting Seders is additionally problematic because it contributes to the objectification of our Jewish neighbors.

As we approach Holy Week, and the retelling and reenacting of the stories of our salvation, rooted in deeply Christian practice and theology, it is incompatible with our faith in Jesus Christ and teachings of the Episcopal Church to host Christian Seders. Therefore, within the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri, hosting, holding, or celebrating Christian Seders is expressly forbidden as unauthorized liturgical expressions of our faith.

¹ The Haggadah, "telling", is a Jewish text that sets forth the order of the Passover Seder.

² Supersessionism is the belief that Christianity is the fulfillment of Biblical Judaism, and therefore that Jews who deny that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah fall short of their calling as God's Chosen people.



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As an aide to an additional formation opportunity, I commend to you the excellent article by Dr. Amy-Jill Levine, a Jewish New Testament scholar at Vanderbilt Divinity School; entitles "Holy Week and the hatred of the Jews: How to avoid anti-Judaism this Easter³," and I encourage our clergy and lay leaders to read the article in its entirety.

May you have a blessed and fulfilling Holy Week, as we walk the Way of Jesus.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'D' followed by 'K. Johnson'.

The Rt. Rev. Deon K. Johnson
XI Bishop of the Diocese of Missouri

³ <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/holy-week-and-the-hatred-of-the-jews/11029900>