

## Racial Justice and Equity Statement of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin

The people and congregations of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin believe we are a stronger and better church and society when we walk together instead of separated by skin color or *ethnicity*<sup>1</sup>.

In response to the history of injustice and *racism* in America, the congregations of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin reject systemic racism as sin that must be addressed by our church and society.

As the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, we seek to join Jesus in the restoration of the world by first confessing our sin, brokenness, and separation from God. We encourage all the congregations and ministries in our region to ask God to forgive us and guide us into repentance where we acknowledge the broken world:

- **We confess** that we – the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, its member congregations, campus ministries, and social ministry organizations – live in broken relationships with our neighbors because of the divisions of *race* that we have failed to correct. “Because we are sinners as well as saints, we rebuild walls broken down by Christ. We fall back into enslaving patterns of injustice.”<sup>2</sup>
- **We confess** that many of our stories, our *cultures*, and our celebrations are based on racist ideas, concepts, and origins. “A wall of hostility stands intact. Captive on one side of the wall, people with access to opportunities and institutions are largely unaware either of their own cultural biases or the worth of other cultures. On the other side of the wall, people scarred by slavery and other forms of degradation and suffering [including genocide] have seen their cultures ridiculed and reviled, or destroyed.”<sup>3</sup>
- **We confess** our complicity in systemic racism through our direct and indirect actions and our silence that allows evil to exist in the world. Racism is not only a sin against our neighbor but a sin against God. Our world is imprisoned to the sin of racism and we ask God to guide us toward freedom (Luke 4:18).
- **We confess** that we are called to move beyond empty promises and engage in the work of *anti-racism*.

As the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin we know that the institutions people create need to be held *accountable* for the harm caused to African Descent (African American, Afro-Caribbean, African National), American Indian and Alaska Native, Arab and Middle Eastern, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Latin American people [named as "people of color" for the rest of this statement] and to their communities. Like Jesus and the prophets before him:

- **We condemn** the killings of unarmed people of color at the hands of law enforcement in our

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<sup>1</sup> All italicized words can be found in the Racial Justice and Equity Statement Glossary of Terms for further explanation.

<sup>2</sup> *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, Culture*, ELCA, 1993, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, Culture*, ELCA, 1993, p. 4.

communities and throughout the country. Killing of kin is sin (Genesis 4)

- **We condemn** institutions and systems that place profit and status over the safety and well-being of our neighbors who are people of color (2 Corinthians 8:13-15).
- **We condemn** any and all racist assumptions, stereotypes, and biases that continue to persist in the institutions we build and maintain.

As Church together, we ask God to help and guide us in joining Jesus in the restoration of the world:

- **We recognize** that different ideas exist on the solutions to the racism that plagues our communities. As a predominantly white synod we commit ourselves to actively listen to, learn from, and be led by people who have been harmed and silenced by systemic racism.<sup>4</sup>
- **We know** that 600+ years of systemic racism in our country continues to divide our communities, and are as powerful and dangerous today as they were in the past. People were, and are, dehumanized and their cultures discounted and destroyed. Their minds, bodies, and spirits continue to be under attack.
- **We acknowledge** that we occupy the ancestral homelands of indigenous peoples of the Council of Three Fires including the Ho-Chunk, Menomonee, Dakota, and Lake Superior Chippewa Nations. We have benefited from the rich natural resources and diverse flora and fauna. These lands were stolen through acts of violence, forced removal, and genocide. These acts of atrocity were committed by *our* ancestors *against* the ancestors of Native Americans in the name of God through the Doctrine of Discovery and Manifest Destiny.
- **We acknowledge** that voices from those we have marginalized can agitate, challenge, and lead to uncomfortable conversations. As a synod, we commit to listening and sitting with the discomfort instead of rejecting calls for God's justice that challenge our sin (Luke 4:14-30).
- **We support** policies that will invest in healthy and safe communities for everyone. We encourage transformational and bold thinking that will put people and communities first. As a synod, we commit to work through local, state, and national advocacy efforts to support policies that seek justice in our world.<sup>5</sup>
- **We commit** to lifting up and supporting people of color as leaders in our congregations, our synod, our ministries, and our communities. Working together as a synod and within our communities, we will join Jesus in the restoration of the world. We will seek to tear down oppression and lift up those who have been harmed by systemic racism for far too long (Luke 1:46-53).

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/27/the-most-and-least-racially-diverse-u-s-religious-groups/>

<sup>5</sup> See *The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective*, ELCA, 1991.

[https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Church\\_SocietySS.pdf?\\_ga=2.70518421.424791730.1593614271-1503398755.1593099244](https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Church_SocietySS.pdf?_ga=2.70518421.424791730.1593614271-1503398755.1593099244)