



**Upstate New York Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
Congregational Racial Justice Resource

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Dear Partners in Ministry,

In the summer of 2015 a work team gathered twice at the invitation of Bishop John Macholz to think about how to address the racial justice resolution passed at the 2015 Synod Assembly. The work team identified some assumptions that guided the work.

The ELCA's 1993 Social Statement on Racial and Social Justice states, "Racism --- a mix of power, privilege, and prejudice is sin, a violation of God's intention for humanity. The resulting racial, ethnic, or cultural barriers deny the truth that all people are God's creatures and, therefore, persons of dignity. Racism fractures and fragments both church and society."

- Conversation on racial justice and white privilege must become a priority for us as a synod.
- These conversations must permeate all levels of the synod.
- These are not one time conversations but discussions that will evolve over months and years.
- Inaction and silence are no longer options.

What follows is our suggestions for addressing this issue in a comprehensive manner that provides opportunities to have this discussion within our synod, conferences and individual congregations. We see these recommendations as important first steps that help us to begin acknowledging and addressing the realities of racial justice and white privilege. As we embark on this work, we expect to learn more about how to become effective allies, advocates and public witnesses in the work of racial justice. As we learn more, we will need to revisit our assumptions and reprioritize the work still needed in the synod.

- Synod Council adopts this topic as a priority for conversation and action for the Upstate State New York Synod.
- Conference Deans are asked to identify one ministerium prior to the 2016 Synod Assembly to focus on the topic of racial justice and white privilege. This could include a discussion lead by a local organization or a conversation among leaders of how these issues are being addressed within their communities.
- Ask each conference to identify one or more people to serve as a point person for racial justice and white privilege discussions and communication. Identify an all synod read book prior to the 2016 Synod Assembly that addresses some aspect of this topic.
- By 2016 Synod Assembly, the Racial Justice team and others to create a congregational resource packet and yearlong process to talk about racial justice and white privilege within congregations. This resource would be shared with congregations at the 2016 Synod Assembly.
- We recommend that the 2016 Synod Assembly Planning team in partnership with this racial justice work group provide opportunities or identify people who can speak to the issues of racial justice and white privilege at the assembly.
- We recommend that the 2016 Synod Ministerium include a speaker(s) who can address issues of racial justice and white privilege and help leaders think about the challenges of raising these issues in their communities.

- Include on the Synod website a tab that will link individuals to resources that addresses racial justice and white privilege.
- In the summer of 2016, Bishop Macholz is asked to convene a work group of leaders from each conference to revisit the work already completed and identify the next steps.

After the Synod Council approved this plan (focused the Synod on the work of racial justice coming out of last year's Assembly), a team was formed to begin the work of identifying a Synod-wide book read and discussion, along with working on the Congregational Resource Packet. This CRP is a process for congregations to engage in a dialogue surrounding racial justice. This packet is provided to faith communities who are willing to get comfortable with the uncomfortable and carry on conversations surrounding race relations in America. This is not easy work. This is not comfortable work. But this is important work that rises out of the mission that Jesus calls us into loving our neighbor.

This packet is intended to be a faithful response to the embedded and structural racism found in our churches and communities. We hope this process will be grounded in prayer, worship, sacred listening, and a collaboration that moves us towards a more beloved community we are called to become.

It is only together through God's love enacted that we can learn from our histories, and begin to transform the discomforts and divisions between people. The CRP is structured to move between different seasons set within the Church year, to be a time of shedding light, repentance, and transformation. It begins in Epiphany and runs through Easter.

This packet is a guide for dialogue and the work of racial justice, but it is meant to be adaptable for each community as needed. One size does not fit all, and therefore if a community needed more time in a particular season or resource for discussion, please use that time as each community designates as necessary. This work is a process that will hopefully continue and become part of who we are and how we express Christ to the world.

The Epiphany Season – a time of self-reflection and assessment for a community. You will be provided with tools to help facilitate talking about difficult content and to look for signs to deal with change in healthy ways.

Season of Lent – is a time of study, dialogue, listening and learning. There will be material including bible studies, books, and resources to facilitate discussions of racial justice.

Season of Easter – time of discernment for communities to put down in a covenant concrete ways you will walk together towards a more just community and begin to transform the way your churches express Jesus' love for our neighbor.

We enter this process with humility, as we know this process will not end racism, we also know these conversations will be difficult for many of us to have, but we trust that the Spirit of God will renew us and bring us to a new day living as resurrected people.

Why should one engage in this process of with your community concerning Racial Justice?

Because...

- Engaging in this process is good for the health of your faith community. As members who dialogue with one another, we begin to practice putting into speech the action God's loving purpose for the world.
- We begin to create a more vibrant faith community truly reflective of God's diverse creation.
- We practice the skills of engaging the community members around us in a respectful grace filled way that allows our communities to deal with potentially conflict laden issues in healthier more productive ways.
- People continue to be hurt by the sins of racism. As we acknowledge the sins of racism and how it continues to hurt our communities both black and white, we identify ways in which we are complicit through our action and non-action, and ultimately through repentance and the grace and love of God, we can begin acting in love towards all people transforming our communities.
- We are called to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to live out our call to love God and neighbor, as we show hospitality to all peoples.
- We begin to hone the skills of communicating about the topic of racial justice and racism. Creating within our faith communities the specific intention to work toward a more beloved community as we live as the Body of Christ together.
- We proclaim to the wider church and world, the Synod, the cities and towns we are from, the regions, and the State that the Upstate NY Synod takes seriously our call to end racism.
- We remember our commitments to become a more diverse Church and take seriously our commitment to the Social Statement on Racial Justice that was passed in 1993.

# Introduction

A couple of guidelines to help you along your way:

Remember this is not easy work.

Be kind to yourselves.

Remain prayerful.

Let the Spirit and the Word of God guide you.

Practice love. What is love?

God is love.

Love is patient, love is kind. Love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way, it is not irritable or resentful, it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. (1 Corinthians 13: 4-8)

Practice Sacred Listening.

What is Sacred Listening?

Sometimes called holy listening or deep listening, this kind of listening comes from a place of quiet stillness. The listener, having centered himself/herself, listens intently for the voice of the Divine in the sharing of the speaker. Holding the speaker in love, gentleness, light, and lovingkindness, the listener puts aside experience fully, in service of healing. Sacred listening means listening with curiosity, with an open mind (not judging or evaluating), patience, compassion, and presence. Sometimes, just the quality of one's listening presence can have a healing effect; it is a gift to be given a space to be heard and acknowledged without judgment.

–Kathy Bozzuti-Jones

# Carry on the legacy of Dr. King

Birmingham: Privilege and Possibilities (See attached power point)

There are many lessons we can learn from Dr. King about leading change concerning Racial Justice:



1. Have commitment. There are times as a leader when you will have to stand up and do what's right. Dr. King was a person who had a dream bigger than the times in which he lived. He stayed committed to his vision even when he knew it was unpopular and his life was in danger. He was arrested upward of 25 times and assaulted at least four reported times.

2. Embrace fear. King was scared before every speech and worried that his points wouldn't be well received or that he would be met with violent protests. But he faced his fears head on. King's willingness to embrace his fear is a great lesson for leaders.

3. Disrupt the status quo. Dr. King knew that his dream was more important than the status quo. His actions shook up the popular culture of the time. Sometimes doing things different is necessary for evolution and innovation. He used the words "creative tension" to explain that fairness and change come only when you shake things up. Dr. King never accepted that just

because things were a certain way, it made them right.

4. Paint a vivid picture. Leaders should never grow weary of articulating their dream or vision. They have to help their followers see what they see. Make sure the community knows why they do what they do.

5. Involve everyone. King inspired community involvement because people wanted to be part of something bigger than themselves.

6. Always help others. We've all heard the term "servant leadership." Well, King had it down to a science. He dedicated his life to helping others, and people would follow him anywhere. Every day we have the opportunity to help others.

7. Never give up on your dreams. King reminds us that even when crawling, the important thing is to keep moving forward. Look, crawling isn't necessarily a dignified position to be in, but if it allows you to continue to move forward and reach your goal, that's what will be remembered. While his life was cut tragically short, he died in pursuit of his dream and in spite of everything he faced, he never gave up on it.

**4 C's – Character of MLK Jr.'s approach to social change organizing and life in general:**

Courage to see, speak, and hear the truth.

Creativity to chart the needed often unseen course.

Compassion for ourselves and our companions along the way.

Call to conscience, a hope to engage what is often most difficult to do in America, engage in a deep and meaningful dialogue about race, racism, and structural inequality.

**Martin Luther King Jr's Letter from a Birmingham Jail:**

Audio File:

<http://okra.stanford.edu/media/audio/630416001.mp3>

Text:

[http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/kingweb/popular\\_requests/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf](http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/kingweb/popular_requests/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf)

# Epiphany: Season of Light

The name Epiphany comes from the Greek word *epiphaneia*, meaning “revealing,” “manifestation,” or “striking appearance.”

We wish to take the time in Epiphany to ‘reveal’, to make ‘manifest’ the ways in which we can become a more ‘just’ or ‘beloved’ community. As we begin this journey together we hope to explore ways to address difficult subjects and practice the skills of reconciliation and love.

Remember as we begin this journey: We build relationships to break down barriers.

Step 1: Complete your Congregational Assessment.

Step 2: JOHARI’s Window

<http://www.theinnovationcenter.org/files/doc/A4/CLW%20pp%2012%20Building%20Deeper%20Relationships%20with%20the%20Johari%20Window.pdf>

Step 3: Controversial Topics Resource ELCA – Talking Together As Christians about Tough Social Issues

[http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Talking\\_Together\\_Social.pdf? ga=1.253585679.722953143.1452004903](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Talking_Together_Social.pdf? ga=1.253585679.722953143.1452004903)

Step 4: Become familiar with the process of Change (7 Steps)

1. Awareness
2. Exploration
3. Commitment
4. Skill Development
5. Skill Refinement
6. Internalization
7. Change

Step 5: Relationship check in before beginning study.

# Lent: Season of Reflection, Repentance, and Response

**Study Guide and Social Statement for dialogue: Freed in Christ; Race, Ethnicity, and Culture**  
[http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/RaceSS\\_Study\\_Guide.pdf?\\_ga=1.142871603.722953143.1452004903](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/RaceSS_Study_Guide.pdf?_ga=1.142871603.722953143.1452004903)

**Privilege, Process, Transformation** – (see attached power point)

## **One Body, Many Members: A Journey Across Race, Class, and Culture**

Part 1:

[http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/One\\_Body\\_Part\\_1.pdf?\\_ga=1.46402977.722953143.1452004903](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/One_Body_Part_1.pdf?_ga=1.46402977.722953143.1452004903)

Part 2:

[http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/One\\_Body\\_Part\\_2.pdf?\\_ga=1.147081905.722953143.1452004903](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/One_Body_Part_2.pdf?_ga=1.147081905.722953143.1452004903)

Part 3:

[http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/One\\_Body\\_Part\\_3.pdf?\\_ga=1.213544082.722953143.1452004903](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/One_Body_Part_3.pdf?_ga=1.213544082.722953143.1452004903)

## **Women of the ELCA Resources:**

God Colors Outside the Lines

<http://www.womenoftheelca.org/filebin/pdf/resources/GodColorsOutsideLines.pdf>

Contact the Women of the ELCA Office and inquire about the Cookbook on Racial Justice.

## **ELCA Webcast "Confronting Racism: A Holy Yearning"**

<http://elca.org/webcast>

ELCA Racial Justice Resources

[http://www.elca.org/Resources/Racial-Justice?\\_ga=1.239299973.722953143.1452004903](http://www.elca.org/Resources/Racial-Justice?_ga=1.239299973.722953143.1452004903)

## **Even the Stones Cry Out for Justice**

A powerful resource for congregations who want to reach out to and embrace people of all races, cultures and ethnic backgrounds. This resource provides biblical illustrations of how racism separates us from what God calls us to be; challenges and stimulates with questions, vignettes and discussion topics; encourages change as members challenge the obstacles racism presents.

Recognizing racism is the first step to abolishing it. "Even the Stones Will Cry Out for Justice" contains everything leaders need to conduct a three- or five-session Bible study or a one-day retreat.

**"Breaking the Bonds"** is an internalized racial oppression resource. Facilitators of this process would lead individuals through a process that will help them to get in touch with the negative messages they have internalized about themselves and others over the years from the oppressive system of racism.

As you continue your studies and dialogue, the following are some resources to help you to put into action a plan to address Racial Justice in your community.

**Understanding and Dismantling Racism: The Twenty-First Century Challenge to White America** by Joseph Barndt (Author)

More than 15 years have passed since Joe Barndt wrote his influential and widely acclaimed *Dismantling Racism* (1991, Augsburg Books). He has now written a replacement volume – powerful, personal, and practical – that reframes the whole issue for the new context of the twenty-first century.

With great clarity Barndt traces the history of racism, especially in white America, revealing its various personal, institutional, and cultural forms. Without demonizing anyone or any race, he offers specific, positive ways in which people in all walks, including churches, can work to bring racism to an end. He includes the newest data on continuing conditions of People of Color, including their progress relative to the minimal standards of equality in housing, income and wealth, education, and health. He discusses current dimensions of race as they appear in controversies over 9/11, New Orleans, and undocumented workers. Includes analytical charts, definitions, bibliography, and exercises for readers.

**Radical Welcome: Embracing God, the Other, and the Spirit of Transformation**, by Stephanie Sellers, this book is a practical theological guide for congregations that want to move beyond mere inclusivity toward becoming a place where welcoming 'The Other' is taken seriously and where engaging God's mission becomes more than just a catch-phrase.

If you desire to continue the Racial Justice dialogue and discussion, the following is another seasonal process program you can follow that takes you through a full year of the church calendar from Advent to Pentecost:

### **Troubling the Waters for the Healing of the Church**

Troubling the Waters for Healing of the Church is a resource that is developed specifically for White congregational members and others to help them understand the role that White privilege and internalized White superiority has had in shaping their own attitudes, belief systems, cultures and those of the church and society at large. This resource has been designed by White people for White people to equip them with tools that will aid them in addressing and breaking the cycle of socialization that perpetuates racism and sustains an exclusive church. The resource will help White congregational members or groups to embark on a journey of learning from one another as well as from people of color who may enter the river of conversations with them as time goes on. The resource is broken down into 18 sessions starting with the Advent season and ending with Pentecost.

The resource material should be presented by two facilitators, but can be done by one facilitator. Participants are not expected to have a copy of the resource, however, it is expected that each facilitator have a copy. The resource is separated into two sections:

1. Facilitator instruction and guide
2. Participant handout section which may be photocopied

### **Book Discussions**

1. Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness*, 2010, New Press
2. Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*, 2015, Spiegel and Grau
3. Jennifer Harvey, *Dear White Christians, For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation*, 2014, B. Eardman Publishing Co.
4. Frances Kendal, *Understanding White Privilege*, 2012, Routledge Publishing

## Easter: Moving Forward

As you complete the study and dialogue on racial justice, find ways in which your communities can be concretely connected to the work of dismantling racism in your churches and community. The following are statements we hope your community can commit to together by making a pledge towards creating a more beloved community:

**We will...**

1. Become familiar with the Working definitions and language to speak to racism and carry on the dialogue begun here. Get comfortable with the language of inclusivity, employ it in your public statements and advertising.

<http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Working%20Definitions.pdf? ga=1.213559570.722953143.1452004903>

**We will...**

2. Review and adapt the artwork, language, and environment of our worship spaces to be more inclusive.

**We will...**

3. Leadership development: Who are the leaders in your church? Take care to appoint members of marginalized groups to leadership posts. Share the power with people who often don't have a seat at the table of leadership.

**We will...**

4. Be committed to the ongoing Anti-oppression trainings that the church offers. Utilize the anti-racism team in your congregations, conferences and communities.

**We will...**

5. Begin ministry partnerships with churches and groups representing marginalized groups. Share your space, funding, and time volunteering in mission. Find a common ministry and begin to work and live together differently.

**We will...**

6. Move toward being less passive and silent in the face of racism. Stand against racism by being mindful of the language we use, and take visible stands against racist language and behavior. Begin to adapt ways in which racist behaviors are manifested in your community.

**We will...**

7. Stand against the effects of racism by reminding targeted people of the baptismal promises and proclamation of God upon us; that we have goodness, competence, and we are important to God as we live in relation with one another.

**We will...**

8. Begin to build long term friendships with people targeted by racism and challenge the racist messages of separation, difference and fear.

**We will...**

9. Build and support one another as allies in the work to dismantle racism. Reminding one another that being allies to people targeted by racism is for our own benefit since it involves reclaiming our own humanity, and establishing a world where everyone matters.

**We will...**

10. Continue to study and dialogue about how we can be more inclusive and welcoming to all peoples. Challenge our institutions and ourselves concerning oppression in our communities and the ways in which racism creates an unequal system.

**We will...**

11. Listen to our brothers and sisters who are oppressed.

**We will...**

12. Add other ways that are distinct to your community in the work of dismantling racism.



Please also check out the resolutions from our brothers and sisters in the Metro DC Synod:

STATEMENT REGARDING RACISM\*

WHEREAS, a young white man has killed 9 African-American people in a Prayer and Bible Study Meeting in Charleston, South Carolina on 17th June, 2015; and

WHEREAS, this young man was brought up in a Lutheran Church of the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, this murderer gave racism as his sole motive; and

WHEREAS, the murdered pastor of the AME Church has been trained at an ELCA Seminary; and

WHEREAS, our Lord Jesus Christ demands us to love our neighbour as ourselves (Mark 12:33 a.o.); and

WHEREAS, the Apostle Paul declares that in the Body of Christ all differences of nature, culture, and heritage are overcome (Gal 3:28ff); and

WHEREAS, the Synod Assembly of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod of the ELCA in its session on 19th and 20th June, 2015 has passed a motion with a statement against racism and encourages its congregations' church councils to pass similar statements, may it be

RESOLVED, that the Church Council of Peace Lutheran Church, Bermuda is shocked and outraged about the violent outburst of racism and the murders at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina resulting in the brutal murder of 9 people; and be it further

RESOLVED, that Peace Lutheran Church as part of the mystical Body of Christ is welcoming people of all races, colour, ethnic heritage, gender, age, or language; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Church Council of Peace Lutheran Church Bermuda holds the opinion that prejudice against people of a different race, ethnicity, colour, or faith are part of one's old sinful nature and should be overcome through faith in Jesus Christ by our new spiritual nature; and be it further

RESOLVED, that Peace Lutheran Church continues to work on overcoming open racism as well as silent remnants of racism and prejudice against people conceived as different, through prayer, teaching, preaching and discussion as the situation may demand and allow; and be it further

RESOLVED, that Peace Lutheran Church encourages all its members to protect and defend people from racial slurs, aggression and persecution, wherever possible.

- See more at:

<http://metrodcelca.org/2015/07/continued-work-to-overcome-racism/#sthash.ZUgs5khK.dpuf>