

The following Resolution was submitted late. According to the Synod's constitution, late resolutions may not be considered by the Assembly unless a majority of Voting Members vote to allow it to be brought to the floor. The Resolutions Committee has had an opportunity to review the Resolution and recommends that the Voting Members vote to allow it to be brought to the floor for action.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION 2016-05

African Descent Lutheran Lives Matter

Rationale:

The United Nations declared 2015-2024 the "International Decade for People of African Descent". African American, African Caribbean and African national communities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are gifted and culturally diverse, represented by more than 200 million people living in the Americas. Whether as descendants of the transatlantic slave trade or as more recent migrants, people of African Descent constitute some of the poorest and most marginalized groups with limited access to quality education, health services, housing, and Social Services.

People of African Descent represent 13% of the total population of the United States of America. Within the ELCA there are more than 54,000 members that identify as people of African Descent, or 1.2% of the ELCA's total population.

As the ELCA prepares to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, the political, social and economic injustices affecting African Descent communities still remain largely invisible to a society indifferent to black life. The legacy of slavery, post-Reconstruction 'Jim Crow' laws and racial subordination in the United States remains a "serious challenge" as there has been no real commitment to recognition and reparations for people of African descent. Despite many advances by people of African Descent within the ELCA and society, racism and racial discrimination, both direct and indirect, de facto and de jure, continue to manifest themselves in inequality and disadvantage.

The 1993 ELCA CWA adopted the social statement, "Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity & Culture" as a confession of the sin of racism. However, Black Liberation Theology is often rejected and avoided within Lutheran academic institutions. African Descent rostered leaders acquire higher education debt, wait longer to receive calls, are less likely to receive full-time calls, and less likely to reach synod compensation guidelines.

The majority of African Descent ELCA congregations were birthed out of "white flight," a divestment from urban areas, taking socio-economic resources and abandoning a connection, call and witness. What is left are deteriorating, debt-filled buildings with shrinking memberships, in part due to the systemic and structural issues of discrimination and lack of full inclusion of our gifts of leadership and worship styles.

The African Descent community is within a denomination that affirms "There is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; for all of you are one in Christ (Galatians 3:28)." We are called to be a church that embraces each person and confronts racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, age, gender, familial, sexual orientation, physical, personal and class barriers that often manifest themselves in unjust treatment, inequalities, exclusion and violence. The ELCA constitution (7.31.12 section A number 7), states "Consistent with the faith and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, every ordained minister shall: speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world." Justification by faith is a principle of scripture and Lutheran identity for all races, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, sexual orientation, class, cultures or nationalities.

Resolved, that the Southeast Michigan Synod Assembly memorializes the 2016 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to include as part of its observance of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation and the commemoration of the United Nation's International Decade of People of African Descent the following:

1. Direct the Church Council to create a "Declaration of the ELCA to the African Descent Community" similar to the "Declaration of the ELCA to the Jewish Community (4/18/1994)" acknowledging the Lutheran church's complicity in the 400+ years of slavery and the oppression of other marginalized groups; that people of African descent were victims of slavery, the slave trade and colonialism and continue to be victims of its consequences; and, the ELCA has perpetuated racism and discrimination through attitudes, actions, policies and practices these communities still endure. The Council will bring this "Declaration" to the 2019 Churchwide Assembly for its consideration and action with a recommendation to include this Declaration in the governing documents of the ELCA;

2. Direct the Church Council to require the Theological Education Advisory Council (TEAC) in partnership with the Conference of International Black Lutherans (CIBL) to recognize and dismantle white hegemony by lifting up, encouraging and incorporating academic exploration of Black Liberation theology across ELCA educational expressions, to allocate funds for the development of resources and to accomplish this by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly; and,

3. Direct the Church Council to require the Congregational and Synodical Missions Unit of the ELCA, to work in partnership with the African Descent Lutheran Association to increase by 10% the number of African Descent leaders, congregations and communities served, thereby renewing its commitment (see African Descent Strategy, CWA, 2005) to create, sustain, reinvest in and support this plan of action by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly and to encourage Synods and congregations to do likewise.

Submitted by,

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The Resolutions Committee recommends that this Memorial be adopted.