

June 4, 2020

National, Synod Bishops Acknowledge Racism "Within Us And Within Our Communities"

In a letter to the church, ELCIC National and Synod Bishops acknowledge that, racism is within us and within our communities. The leaders call on all congregations and members to commit to doing the hard work and change our ways of thinking and our actions that demean and hurt. We need to listen, learn, hear the stories, stand alongside of, speak up, speak out, and stand up against injustice.

The full text of the letter follows. [View the pdf here.](#)

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Earlier this week, National Bishop Susan Johnson, along with the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Moderator of the United Church of Canada, [issued a letter to the churches regarding "the ongoing sin of racism in our communities."](#) We are including this document along with this letter so that as many people as possible may see it.

We, as the bishops of the ELCIC, want to add our voice to that letter and we commend it to you.

We all have watched in shock the tumultuous events taking place across the United States. We acknowledge the hurt, pain, and anger and people's desire to seek systemic change against racism. As Bishop Susan, Archbishop Linda and Moderator Richard have stated: "Centuries of anger at injustice and anti-Black racism are literally bursting into flames as people stand for political and cultural change to address these deep-seated systems that work to oppress so many members of our communities."

To think that this is something that occurs just in the United States is to be blind to the realities here in Canada. Racism is within us and within our communities. We need to acknowledge that there is deep-seated, systemic racism within our country. Individually and collectively, we are guilty. We perpetuate stereotypes and racial slurs. We fail to challenge certain ways of thinking that are part of our upbringing but do not reflect Christ's call to love God and to love our neighbour. We often exclude people of colour from full participation in our churches. Our actions often treat people of colour as less than, inferior, as "other."

Each of us, as bishops, recognizes our inherent white privilege. We have been afforded opportunities and experiences not available to all people. We recognize that we are unable to fully appreciate the anger and desperate calls to action that we are witnessing.

To stay silent enables racism and injustice to continue. We affirm [the statement issued by the Racial Justice Advisory Committee of the Eastern Synod](#), which accompanies this letter. The Committee calls us to account with the following:

Furthermore, when we fail to speak out against acts of racism, we become silent perpetrators of injustice. In short, if we do not condemn racism, then we are guilty of it. It is our work, particularly as a community of faith, to speak out against acts of racism. It is our work to say loudly and clearly that we do not accept this reality. We must call out racism as sinful and deadly. That is only the beginning, for once we speak out against it, we must do the work of dismantling the systems that oppress.

We need to repent — to kneel on one knee — in prayer, in faithfulness, and in compassion. And we need to commit to changing our ways of thinking and our actions that demean and hurt. We need to listen, learn, hear the stories, stand alongside of, speak up, speak out, and stand up against injustice.

We have difficult work to do ourselves. We need to educate ourselves. We need to look into the history

of racism in Canada. We need to understand how our actions have impacted and oppressed others. We need to listen to the experiences of our black and other racialized members of our congregations and communities. We need to stand in solidarity with all who experience racism on a daily basis. We need to speak out against acts of racism and discrimination.

We urge all of our congregations and members to commit to doing the hard work that lies before us.

The Rev. Dr. Greg Mohr, British Columbia Synod

The Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer, Synod of Alberta and the Territories

The Rev. Dr. Sid Haugen, Saskatchewan Synod

The Rev. Jason Zinko, Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod

The Rev. Michael Pryse, Eastern Synod

The Rev. Susan Johnson, National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

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