

May 29, 2020
Special Edition of What Matters
ELCA Bishops Respond to Recent Murders of Black Americans

Dear Partners in Ministry,

In these past days I have been part of conversations among bishops leading to this attached statement, signed by every one of the ELCA's Conference of Bishops. While the week's killing in Minneapolis is the most recent, it is a reminder of many others... and a reminder that we continue to be the inheritors of a 400-year legacy of conflicted race relations, and the conscious and unconscious racial attitudes and behaviors that are part of this culture. As God's people, we are called to stand with all who are marginalized, and called to confess that we have not always done so. And, finally, we are called to work for the changes in individual, cultural, and institutional patterns of behavior that perpetuate racism and privilege that plague us. May God's spirit be with us in that work.

Peter Rogness
Bishop
South-Central Synod of Wisconsin
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
peterr@scsw-elca.org



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God's work. Our hands.



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*What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8).*

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) reaffirms its commitment to combating racism and white supremacy following the recent murders of Black Americans. Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Dreasjon (Sean) Reed, and George Floyd were our neighbors. Ahmaud Arbery was chased down, shot, and killed by a retired police officer and his son while jogging in Brunswick, Ga. (Feb. 23, 2020). Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old emergency medical technician, was shot eight times by Louisville Metro Police Department officers who entered her apartment while serving a "no-knock warrant" (March 13, 2020). Dreasjon (Sean) Reed, a 21-year-old from Indianapolis died after being shot at least eight times by an Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department officer (May 6, 2020). George Floyd was killed by police in Minneapolis while begging for his life, a block away from Calvary Lutheran, an ELCA congregation (May 25, 2020). As the Conference of Bishops, we condemn the white supremacy that has led to the deaths of so many unarmed Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color in our country. We grieve with, pray for and stand in solidarity with the families and friends of all whose loved ones have been and continue to be victims of injustices run amok, racist violence and the insidious venom of white supremacy.

The ELCA's social policy [resolution](#), "Condemnation of White Supremacy and Racist Rhetoric," adopted by the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, states: "As persons called to love one another as God has loved us, we therefore proclaim our commitment to speak with one voice against racism and white supremacy. We stand with those who are targets of racist ideologies and actions." As church, together we must work to condemn white supremacy in all forms and recommit ourselves to confront and exorcize the sins of injustice, racism and white supremacy in church and society and within ourselves as individuals and households.

On May 21, the ELCA Southeastern Synod hosted a [webinar](#): "Becoming the Body of Christ – Condemning White Supremacy" in response to the killing of Ahmaud Arbery. This is one of many strategic opportunities happening across this church to address white supremacy and racist rhetoric. On June 17, we will gather again as church to commemorate the Mother Emanuel 9 and to repent of racism and white supremacy. An online ELCA prayer service, including leaders from across the church and Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton as preacher, is being planned for June 17, 2020, marking the fifth anniversary of the martyrdom of the Emanuel 9. We encourage congregations to reaffirm their commitment to repenting of the sins of racism and dismantling white supremacy that continue to plague this church by marking this day of penitence with study and prayer leading to action. <https://www.elca.org/emanuelnine>

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