

**In response to 401 years of white supremacy in the United States and its predecessor colonies that continue to divide our communities, The Southern Ohio Synod, which believes we are stronger and better together, condemns white supremacy, white privilege, and racism as sin that must be addressed by our church and society.**

As the Southern Ohio Synod, we seek to join Jesus in the restoration of the world by first confessing our sin, brokenness, and separation from God:

- We confess our complicity in racism and white supremacy through our direct 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—Southern Ohio Synod, comprised of congregations, a seminary, colleges, 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>1</sup>
- We confess that many of our stories, our culture, our celebrations are riddled with 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 have seen their cultures ridiculed and reviled, or destroyed.”<sup>2</sup>
- We were called by the ELCA “into a season of confession and lamentation” in the summer of 2019. This requires us to “move beyond empty promises or well-meaning intentions” and recommit “to the work of racial justice, socioeconomic equity, and racial reconciliation.”<sup>3</sup>

**As a Synod, we encourage all the congregations and ministries in our territory to ask God to forgive us and guide us into repentance where we acknowledge the broken world.**

As the Southern Ohio Synod,

- We condemn the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tamir Rice, John Crawford, Henry Green, Julius Tate Jr., and many others in our community and throughout the country who were killed at the hands of law enforcement. Killing of kin is sin (Gen 4).

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<sup>1</sup>*Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, Culture*, ELCA, 1993, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, Culture*, ELCA, 1993, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Explanation of the Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent*, ELCA, 2019, pp. 2, 9.

- We condemn institutions and systems that place profit over the health and safety of our black and brown neighbors (2 Corinthians 8:13-15).
- We condemn any and all racist assumptions and stereotypes that continue to persist in the medical and legislative communities.

**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. However, as a predominantly white/European descent denomination we commit ourselves to listen to the voices who have been harmed and silenced by racism.<sup>4</sup>
- 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 public 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 public policies that seek justice in our world.<sup>5</sup>

We call for the uplifting of black and brown leaders in our church, in our ministries, and in our communities. As a Synod, joining Jesus in the restoration of the world, we will seek to tear down oppression and lift up those who have been oppressed by racial injustice 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)