



# **ELCIC Task Force Addressing Racism, White Supremacy and Racial Justice Issues**

**Report to NCC in advance of ELCIC National Assembly 2022  
(March 2022)**

The task force addressing Racism, White Supremacy and Racial Justice Issues has met several times over the last two years. All meetings were online (Zoom). These meetings include time to get to know each other and discussion of the mandate of the task force.

On May 12, 2021, the task force met jointly with the Racial Justice Advisory Committee (RJAC) of the Eastern Synod. This was an important conversation, and the task force is grateful to the members of the RJAC.

The task force identified the lack of an anti-racism policy as a major gap in ELCIC policy, and thus have drafted a proposed ELCIC Statement on Racism. Several anti-racism statements from partner churches and other organizations were reviewed to help inform the wording of this ELCIC statement. This proposed statement forms the bulk of this report.

The task force is grateful for the opportunity for open conversation about becoming an anti-racist church.

The members of the task force are:

- Rev. Ron Flamand (he/him)
- Emma Fomgbami (she/her)
- Rev. Nathan Fong (he/him)
- Richard Kotowich (he/him)
- Dr. Mary Philip aka Joy (she/her)
- Rev. Aneeta Saroop (she/her), Chair

## Proposed ELCIC Statement on Racism

For submission to National Church Council, February 11, 2022

“Seek justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God.” Micah 6:8<sup>1</sup>

“Racism is a social evil and ‘dehumanizing to everyone it touches.’”<sup>2</sup>

[We are] “Convinced that any doctrine of superiority based on racial differentiation is scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous, and that there is no justification for racial discrimination, in theory or in practice, anywhere.”<sup>3</sup>

We, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), as a church of Christ acknowledge the presence and perpetration of the sin of racism. We admit that we have been, both explicitly and implicitly, guilty of racial discrimination in the church. We confess the longstanding and historical patterns of neglect, abuse, and maltreatment perpetrated on People of Colour, which includes people who identify as Indigenous, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander and other racialized people in our church and societies.<sup>4</sup>

We recognize the deep pain and frustration some people have experienced as consequences of systemic racism that permeate our church and society. We recognize that we have not fully welcomed the presence, voices, and talents of our fellow members who are racialized into our various councils, committees, and leadership. People of Colour have been absent in the life and learning of the ELCIC at the national, synodical, and congregational levels for far too long.

We recognize that racism can be conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional, active or passive. Racially discriminatory acts have far-reaching negative impacts, whether purposeful or not. Racism as an issue is also systemic; with historical, political, and cultural roots in colonialism and settlement immigration. Systemic racism is real in all aspects of the church. In our calling to be an anti-racist church, we need to purposefully identify, study, discuss, and challenge the social construct and issues of race and colour and their impacts on our individual congregations and people.

We also recognize and accept that it is not enough to simply condemn racism; we must intentionally become an anti-racist church. We must diligently confront racism so that our anti-racism commitment will be reflected in the life and culture of the church through our policies, programs, practices, and people.<sup>5</sup> Trusting our faith and one another, we stand willing to be convicted of our biases by the Spirit in order to learn, confront, and correct all and any injustices and inequities that we discover. We will gain

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<sup>1</sup> Micah 6: 8

<sup>2</sup> University of New Hampshire, College of Health and Human Services anti-racism statement. <https://chhs.unh.edu/social-work/about/anti-racism-statement>

<sup>3</sup> *The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, United Nations General Assembly, December 21, 1965. <https://ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CERD.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> American Society of Transplantation statement on racism. <https://www.myast.org/about-ast/who-we-are/statement-racism>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

a better understanding of ourselves as individuals and collectively as the church, as we continue to grow in our ministry of reconciliation and identity as new creations in Christ as we learn in 2 Corinthians 5:16-18.

We believe that by grace we are recipients of God's forgiveness and mercy. We have the assurance that no one is beyond the bounds of Christ's reconciling and redeeming love. Luther said that to know Christ is to know a new justice;<sup>6</sup> and we understand this justice to be one that sees, hears, accepts, and values People of Colour and their contributions in our midst.

We recognize that in striving to become an anti-racist church we are answerable to the past injustices, and that we have a shared responsibility to create a better and more accountable church that upholds and promotes the values of respect, equity, diversity, and inclusivity. We commit to being a compassionate church by welcoming, receiving, appreciating, respecting, and celebrating all for their unique identities as children of God created in God's own image. We commit to working for equity and justice in the church and in the world. We commit to accountable anti-racist action as individuals, as congregations and as the wider church.

We are called to engage in the decolonizing work of dismantling racism. We recognize there are languages, choices, and actions that may serve to privilege certain groups of people and impede others. We understand that the foremost prerequisite to being an anti-racist church is to assume this decolonizing mindset, posture, and lens. There should not be any aspect or avenue or institution of the church and its mission and ministry that does not go through the fine-toothed comb of decolonizing change. This will push us out of our comfort zones and into the new and the unknown. In the words of Lutheran poet Friedrich Hölderlin "Yet where danger lies, grows that which saves."<sup>7</sup>

We commit to zero tolerance for racism and racial discrimination, and we commit to eliminating such behaviour within the church and its ministries.<sup>8</sup>

We commit to creating an environment within the ELCIC where People of Colour feel safe and are empowered to speak about their experiences of racism and racial discrimination and to seek redress without fear of retaliation. We also pledge to ensure that such experiences and concerns are duly addressed.<sup>9</sup>

In faithful discernment as God's forgiven people, we the ELCIC, as a tangible expression of our commitment to address racism, white supremacy, and issues of racial injustice, hereby commit to dismantle systemic racism and bring about justice, equity, diversity and inclusion, and adopt the following as definitive actions:

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<sup>6</sup> WA 31/II, 439, 19f.; Martin Luther, "Isaiah 53:11," Luther's Works vol. 17 Lectures on Isaiah 40–66, ed. Hilton C. Oswald, trans. Herbert J. Bouman (St. Louis: Concordia, 1972), 230.

<sup>7</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, "Patmos," in *Gedichte/Hyperion* (Augsburg: Wilhelm Goldmann, 1978), 138.

<sup>8</sup> Statement by Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). "Racism and Racial Discrimination in the Humanitarian Sector," 10 September 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

## Recommendations

1. That the ELCIC implement ongoing certified anti-racism training for national staff, National Church Council, and national committees. Curriculum should address privilege, power structures, and movement towards more equitable representation at ELCIC decision making and governance tables. Training should happen at least every three years.
2. That Synods, seminaries, and schools ensure that all rostered leaders, councils, committees, board members, employees, candidates for ordination, and students participate in ongoing certified anti-racism training at least every three years.
3. Anti-racism training for congregational councils, committees, leaders, and employees of the local congregations. Encourage critical conversation and intentional formation on how faith communities can better confront racism at the congregational level.
4. That each Synod create a racial justice committee based on the Eastern Synod model.
5. That the ELCIC develop a National Church Theological Study on Anti-Racism, White Supremacy, and Issues of Racial Injustice to encourage members in learning and ongoing reformation.
6. That National and Synodical Bishops issue frequent public statements condemning Systemic Racism and calling for ongoing reformation in our church.
7. That the ELCIC review and modify nomination, election, and hiring processes to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion.
8. That the ELCIC work with educational institutions (schools and colleges) to decolonize the curriculum and require educators and administrators to put the responsibility of equity, diversity, and inclusion at the center of their teaching and research. For example, create mandatory scholarship and innovative certificate programs in Black, Asian, and Indigenous Studies.
9. That the ELCIC communicate and possibly collaborate with ELCIC Group Services Inc. and Canadian Lutheran World Relief regarding the ELCIC's new commitments to anti-racism.
10. That the national office provide for staffing with dedicated responsibility for diversity, equity and inclusion.
11. That NCC appoint a task force to continue the work of addressing Racism, White Supremacy, and issues of Racial Injustice. The task force will report and be accountable to NCC and will report to the National Convention in 2025.