

A STATEMENT ON INCLUSIVENESS AND DIVERSITY: GIFTS OF GOD

Adopted by the Twelfth Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America
Toronto, Ontario, June 28-July 5, 1984

DECLARATION

As a gift of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit, the church includes persons from every race, culture, national origin and economic class. This diversity is also a gift of God. In its 1964 social statement on race relations, the Lutheran Church in America declared that "injurious discrimination based on race is a violation of God's created order, of the meaning of redemption in Christ, and of the nature of the church." In other words, racism is sin and denies the gospel. Since adopting that statement, the LCA has made a serious effort on the basis of the gospel to eradicate the effects of the sin of racism. The Lutheran Church in America has grown in the expression of its inclusive nature since 1964. Major commitments were made in the adoption of the "Goals and Plans for Minority Ministry, 1978-1984." God calls us to renew and expand these commitments. We are called to respond to the gospel by more fully recognizing that the inclusive nature of the church is manifested in the gift of diversity.

We are a community still afflicted by our sin of racism, a community that does not yet fully accept its inclusiveness or celebrate its diversity. We all bear deep and unhealed scars of historical injustice and distrust. We often cling to sociological and socioeconomic patterns in our lives and in our society that perpetuate racism. We are called to acknowledge and confess our sin and to be servants of God and of one another. We are called to hear and to share the pain of our brokenness.

Our diversity strengthens and enriches us. We are called to listen to the voices and needs of our whole community. We are called not to try to change or diminish our differences, but to share them lovingly with one another. We are called to get to know one another, to educate ourselves and our children in the ways of other cultures in order to be more understanding of and sensitive to one another's customs and needs. We are called to respect one another's uniqueness and to rejoice in our diversity as we find unity in the inclusive Church. We are called to love and serve one another as children of the same God. We are called to transcend our own experiences and ethnicity, rejoicing in the gift of shared faith.

All members of our Christian family - American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black, Hispanic and White¹ - are called to take responsibility for implementing not just the law but the spirit of this declaration, and intentionally and prayerfully to strive to be sisters and brothers and servants of one another.

We, the Lutheran Church in America, declare our intention to:

1. acknowledge and celebrate the diversity in our membership as a gift of God;
2. confront racism as sin and to work towards its elimination;
3. increase fellowship among members, congregations and churches;
4. proclaim and celebrate the gospel to and with God's whole community in the world;
5. pursue racial justice through individual and corporate actions;
6. develop leadership that reflects and responds to the diversity of our membership;
7. organize the church so that all members are represented in and served by decisions made;

¹ In this document all racial and cultural categories are capitalized

8. monitor and be accountable for our life together as an inclusive church that celebrates its diversity.

Called by the Spirit and challenged by the Word of God, we pray:

O God, you created all people in your image. We thank you for the astonishing variety of races and cultures in this world. Enrich our lives by everwidening circles of fellowship, and show us your presence in those who differ most from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Lutheran Book of Worship, p. 42)

COMMITMENTS

1. We commit ourselves to acknowledge and celebrate the diversity in our membership as a gift of God by:
 - a. seeking out the gifts of members from diverse backgrounds to enrich the life of the church in its worship, learning, witness, service and support;
 - b. providing tools and resources that assist all members to participate confidently in the various parts of the church;
 - c. providing worship and education materials that are multicultural, reflecting the art, culture, and music of diverse racial and cultural groups;
 - d. reflecting the diversity of the church in *The Lutheran*, on Sunday bulletin covers, and in other communications media of the church.
2. We commit ourselves to confront racism as sin and to work toward its elimination by:
 - a. confessing and repenting of our sin of racism;
 - b. addressing racism as sin from our pulpits;
 - c. participating in workshops on racism;
 - d. offering consultation and programs on racism throughout the church;
 - e. examining our use of language for words and expressions that are racially or culturally offensive, in order to eliminate their usage;
 - f. developing and using educational resources dealing with racism;
 - g. producing communications materials that are free of racist language and attitudes;
 - h. removing existing educational and communications materials that are racist.
3. We commit ourselves to increase fellowship among members, congregations, and churches by:
 - a. increasing contacts among persons of different races and cultures;

- b. encouraging cooperative congregational activities with congregations of this church and other denominations whose members are predominantly American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black or Hispanic;
 - c. facilitating joint meetings among the various racial caucuses of this church;
 - d. engaging in formal and informal dialogue with denominations whose membership is predominantly Black;
 - e. engaging in exchange programs with other churches in our own communities and throughout the world.
4. We commit ourselves to proclaim and celebrate the gospel to and with God's whole community in the world by:
- a. assisting congregations and clergy to minister to and with all people in their community;
 - b. encouraging, equipping and financially supporting congregations engaged in neighborhood ministry and outreach in transitional communities;
 - c. establishing funding policies that will facilitate the ministries of American/Canadian Indian, Black, Hispanic and multicultural congregations;
 - d. establishing polices for the development of ministry in American/Canadian communities;
 - e. assisting congregations located near American/Canadian Indian reservations and reserves to develop mutual understanding and cooperative relationships with American/Canadian Indian persons;
 - f. developing evangelical outreach materials and events that will assist the church to increase membership among American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black and Hispanic persons;
 - g. developing congregations in communities in which the majority of persons are American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black or Hispanic, and in those which are multicultural;
 - h. receiving personnel and other resources from overseas churches to assist in outreach ministries in North America;
 - i. utilizing broadcast media to expand outreach among American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black and Hispanic persons;
5. We commit ourselves to pursue racial justice through individual and corporate actions by:
- a. sensitizing ourselves and our children to the inequities and oppression in society;
 - b. advocating policies and practices that emphasize the dignity of all persons, protect human rights, provide equitable access to resources and eliminate injustice based on racial and/or racial cultural identity;
 - c. using legal, legislative and symbolic means to join in solidarity with those experiencing injustice;
 - d. using our resources to overcome racial injustice in the area of human rights, education, health, housing and employment;

- e. extending hospitality, providing shelter and advocating on behalf of persons who are without homes, including action on behalf of refugees;
 - f. standing in solidarity with and supporting churches that are located in countries experiencing oppression because of racism;
 - g. engaging in ministries of service that meet the basic human needs of people who are suffering injustice based on racial and/or cultural identity;
 - h. applying our purchasing power and using our employment opportunities so that American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black and Hispanic persons can also benefit.
6. We commit ourselves to develop leadership that reflects and responds to the diversity of our membership by:
- a. providing orientation on churchwide, synodical, and congregational levels for persons entering into new or unfamiliar roles in the decision-making process;
 - b. providing opportunities for churchwide and synodical staff persons to experience various cultures;
 - c. training synodical and churchwide staff and volunteer personnel in the skills necessary to carry out their ministries in a multicultural context;
 - d. working with our seminaries and colleges to provide education that is in all aspects a multicultural experience - involving curricula, staff, consortia, recruitment and language courses;
 - e. providing the opportunity for Spanish-language training through all our seminaries;
 - f. continuing to explore ways of responding to the need for theological education in the Spanish language;
 - g. continuing to develop recruitment strategies and provide financial and other support for American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black and Hispanic persons to attend our educational institutions;
 - h. recommending American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black and Hispanic candidates to all types of parishes;
 - i. providing ways for American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black and Hispanic persons to serve in global ministries of the church.
7. We commit ourselves to organize the church so that all members are served and represented by:
- a. reflecting the diversity of our membership in the decision-making bodies of our church;
 - b. employing American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black and Hispanic persons on churchwide agency staff;
 - c. employing American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black and Hispanic persons in the development of our educational and worship resources;

- d. employing American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black and Hispanic persons on the faculties and administrative staffs of our colleges and seminaries;
 - e. employing American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black and Hispanic persons in administrative and executive positions in social services agencies and institutions.
8. We commit ourselves to monitor and be accountable for our life together as an inclusive church which celebrates its diversity by:
- a. developing plans in each expression of our church for implementing the declaration "Inclusiveness and Diversity: Gifts of God" and these commitments;
 - b. maintaining a churchwide office and constituency group that will monitor progress toward the implementation of the declaration and commitments;
 - c. working with the racial/ethnic caucuses to develop strategies to meet these commitments and monitor progress;
 - d. revising and updating the plans for implementation every two years based on results of monitoring and evaluation.

GOALS FOR CHURCHWIDE AGENCIES

TOWARD IMPLEMENTING

THE DECLARATION AND COMMITMENTS

The Lutheran Church in America, at its twelfth biennial convention, adopted the following goals to serve as guidelines for the churchwide agencies as they make plans to implement the declaration and commitments. These actions will assist the church wide agencies as they adopt goals during the 1984-1986 biennium. Other units of the church (synods, congregations, colleges and seminaries) will also be setting goals for themselves as part of the implementation process. The following thirteen goals for churchwide agencies can serve as models for other units of the church:

1. Each churchwide agency will prepare its own goals based on "Inclusiveness and Diversity: Gifts of God" prior to January 1, 1985.
2. Each churchwide agency will include in its goals a plan for conducting biennial workshops on racism and regularly providing other educational experiences to assist in eradicating racism within its staff and management committee.
3. Prior to January 1, 1988, resources in Spanish will be provided for each of the ministry areas: worship, learning, witness, service, support (such as catechetical material, adult education materials, devotional material and church bulletins), and plans will be developed by December 31, 1985, and implemented by January 1, 1988, that will provide materials for congregations serving among Asian persons.
4. Materials and events will be developed to assist the LCA in attaining a 12% annual membership growth for 1985, 1986, and 1987 among American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black and Hispanic persons.
5. At least 25% of all new congregations developed will be located in communities where the population is predominately American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black and Hispanic.

6. Prior to the 1986 convention, a specific plan will be developed and initiated to assist all expressions of this church to publicly present the LCA as an inclusive and diverse community.
7. Prior to January 1, 1988, the number of American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black and Hispanic persons in preparation for the ordained and certified lay professional ministries will be doubled, and financial support to achieve this goal will be provided.
8. Formal and informal dialogue will be initiated during the 1984-1986 biennium with denominations whose membership is predominately Black.
9. All churchwide agencies and the Executive Council will include in their goals the intention to appoint at least 20% American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black and Hispanic persons in each committee and in all representative appointments made.
10. Prior to January 1, 1988, a plan for staffing and staff development will be instituted that will ensure a pool of at least 25% American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black and/or Hispanic persons in a new Lutheran Church.
11. LCA investments in minority-owned banks and development projects benefiting American/Canadian Indian, Asian, Black and Hispanic persons will be increased by 500% during the 1984-1986 biennium.
12. There will be consultation between churchwide agencies and synods and their institutions and agencies regarding goals for implementing the commitments.
13. Each churchwide agency will report progress toward its goals annually to the Office of Minority Concerns, Division for Mission in North America, which is the office that will coordinate such reporting, and biennially to the church in convention. This information will be shared with the LCA membership periodically in *The Lutheran*.