

Metro D.C. Synod Racial Equity Team (RET) Report to the Synod

I write this report, on 6/1/20, during the pandemic in which over 100,000 people have died in this nation since its start. I am sitting on the second floor of Luther Place, where tonight a team of 10 young adults are offering support to protestors. The protesting follows the murder of George Floyd by 4 white police officers in MN as a response to the ongoing racial injustices of this nation fueled by white supremacy and hate.

Last year at this time, at the 2019 Synod Assembly, the RET engaged the members of the Synod in two ways.

We offered a table filled with many recent books about race, racial history and challenging racial injustice. We also included some free copies of Luther's Small Catechism with African Descent Reflections.

Second, we offered a workshop focusing on the 400th Anniversary of the beginnings of the slave trade in Virginia, using a resource for a bible study and devotion created by the Bread for the World.

During the summer of 2019, the Church Wide Assembly made a formal statement, "A Declaration to People of African Descent. This statement was presented to representatives of the African Descent Lutheran Association, and it expresses a confession of our church's bondage to the sins of slavery, racism, discrimination, white supremacy and quietism. The declaration begins the work of repentance, which this church confesses to be "the chief topic of Christian teaching."

In reply, the Rev. Lamont Wells, president of the African Descent Lutheran Association, said, "We must abandon our lust for oppressive power, wealth and even our own comfort for the sake of fulfilling God's fulfillment to love others. Throughout history, people have been hurt by this very particular sin. Therefore, we the people of African descent of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America can receive this apology as a divine mark of repentance that serves as a catalyst for change."

On September 23, 2019, the team sponsored a day with The Rev. Lenny Duncan who spoke on his recent book — Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the US. The day included lunch with leaders and a book talk followed by a reception and book sale. The gathering was very challenging and filled with grace.

The team held a retreat in February 2020. At that retreat, facilitated by the Rev Angie Shannon, we viewed the film, *White Savior: Racism in the Church*. (available on Amazon Prime). We did planning for the year ahead.

On Wednesday, June 17, 2020, the Metro DC Synod Racial Equity Team will commemorate the martyrdom of the Emanuel 9 — the nine people shot and killed on June 17, 2015 during a Bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC. We will mark this day with an on-line worship service of repentance at 6pm, affirming our commitment to repent the sins of racism and white supremacy that continue to plague the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, and our nation. The preacher of the evening is The Rev. Angela Shannon, and Bishop Leila Ortiz will share remarks.

As I finish the first draft of this report, I went outside and the helicopters overhead plus the sirens on the ground make the air feel heavy on this clear night. I look up at the moon, and it is a Waxing Gibbous — by Friday it will be a full moon. The moon shimmers tonight.

My prayer is that as the moonlight increases this week, it illuminates the ways love and justice are moving through the efforts of ordinary people distributing snacks, water, toilet paper and masks to our neighbors. And I pray that the path towards a way of living together that nurtures all of our children, be illuminated before us soon.

In Christ,

Pastor Karen Brau, Chair

Present team members: Pastor Renata Eustis, Pastor Angela Shannon, Pastor Tom Knoll, Vicar Kevin Tracey, Ted Steege, Pastor Tony Carpenter,

We publicly thank Pastor Margrethe Kleiber, who recently completed several years of faithfully serving with this team. We are deeply grateful for her wisdom and care for this ministry of justice and love.

We also thank Vicar Kevin Tracey who concludes his internship in DC. We publicly thank Vicar Kevin for sharing his time and gifts.