

SYNOD RACIAL EQUITY TEAM REPORT

*Lead me, guide me, along the way
for if you leave me, I will not stray.
Lord let me walk each day with thee
lead me oh Lord, lead me.*

As a Synod team, we have faith in a God who makes all people in God's image, and who longs for all to be fully alive, and fully who we are.

Our work as a team is to gather monthly, study God's word and craft ways to engage our Synod in a way that makes racial equity real among us in Metro DC.

This year has been a re-building year as we have lost two of our founding members who have responded to a call to serve the ELCA on the West Coast. The participation of the Rev. James Phillips and Wanda Rosada were crucial in launching this synod team. Through their efforts, our team was able to share the gifts of Dr. Reggie Williams who came and addressed the entire Synod Assembly. Dr. Williams book, Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus: Harlem Renaissance Theology and an Ethic of Resistance, invites us to consider the ways that Dietrich Bonhoeffer was shaped by the Harlem renaissance and his introduction to the Black Jesus in the early 1900's in New York in such a way that Bonhoeffer had the theology and incarnational where with all to resist the leadership of the Third Reich in Germany.

At that same assembly, we did a workshop that unpacked notions of white supremacy and white fragility in reference to discussion around race. We used the practice of caucusing in this workshop and introduced some contemplative practices to help us all bear the tension of difficult conversations.

In the fall, some of us attended the Decolonize Lutheran Gathering in Philadelphia. We were impressed with how many seminary students were part of this important effort.

At the beginning of 2018, our team plus the Synod Staff spent a full day in retreat learning about the brain, using a trauma informed paradigm to discuss how racism and racial bias affects us all.

In February, we offered a Racial Equity training in the Fairfax Conference. This training was led by Bianca Vazquez and Renata Eustis. We began with Bible study, talked about individual and institutional racism and offered a racial equity tool/worksheet that gets at decision making and the use of resources with the goal of racial equity outcomes.

During Holy Week we collaborated with the Synod Worship Team in presenting a retreat like setting for synod clergy. We used 2 videos entitled: Do Black Churches Matter in the ELCA. We framed the video and discussion, facilitated by team member Tamika Jancewicz, with contemplative prayer practices and the Eucharist. The musicians of the day brought beauty and power in song, sharing with us the gift of African American Spirituals. We collected reflections from the gathered, and are using these reflections in the workshop we will offer at this Synod Assembly.

The middle verse of the hymns we started with is:

Help me tread in the paths of righteousness
be my aid when Satan and sin oppress,
I am putting all my trust in thee,
Lead me, oh Lord lead me.

We count on the Lord's leading us as we continue on the path towards racial equity in our church.

in peace,
Pastor Karen Brau
Chair, Synod Racial Equity Team

Members of the team:
Rev Tony Carpenter,
Rev Renata Eustis,
Vicar Tamika Jancewicz
Rev Carmello Santos
Bishop Richard Graham
Ted Steege
Rev Paul Collinson-Streng
Rev Gary Rhinesmith
Rev Shannon Anderson