



## REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL REGARDING RACIAL EQUITY ASSESSMENT AND HEALING

### Statement of Purpose

The Synod Council of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod of the ELCA seeks a consultant to engage with synod leaders to (i) review internal systems for bias and inequitable outcomes, (ii) propose changes that are more likely to yield equitable results, and (iii) identify barriers to achieving equity, including instances in which our polity makes change more difficult.

This work arises out of an [October 7, 2020 letter](#) from the Synod Council that expressed lament for the sins of racial injustice and white supremacy and recommitted to building a more just and equitable society. The Synod Council acknowledged the complicity of our church and our contribution to racism and white supremacy while also expressing hope in the ways our church and society at-large is making progress towards racial justice and greater racial consciousness. The Synod Council recognized that the scope of our work to dismantle white supremacy and end racism requires sustained commitment and long-term investment to provide opportunity for meaningful amends and progress to be realized. To that end, the Synod Council wishes to examine institutional processes within the synod and identify how we can update processes for the sake of equity and to remove anti-Black and racist biases.

### Background and Introduction

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with nearly 3.3 million members in more than 8,900 worshipping communities across the 50 states and in the Caribbean region. Despite [stated intentions to increase diversity](#), the ELCA remains [one of the whitest denominations in the United States](#).

The Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod is one of 65 synods in the ELCA and includes approximately 35,000 worshipping members within 80 congregations in the District of Columbia, parts of Maryland and Virginia, and Bermuda. Our mission statement calls us, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to cultivate a bold and boundless love for Jesus and for God's beloved creation. Synod



priorities include (i) equipping and developing healthy leaders, (ii) empowering and nurturing vibrant communities, and (iii) encouraging and modeling faithful accompaniment. We are a [Reconciling in Christ](#) synod, which means we affirm and welcome people of all gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations.

Our synod employs six individuals and is led by Bishop Leila Ortiz, who is serving her second year of a six-year term as Bishop. The synod's board of directors is the Synod Council, an elected group of both rostered and lay members of the synod's congregations. The synod hosts an annual Synod Assembly in June to conduct the business of the synod. The Assembly consists of all rostered leaders and representatives from each of congregation within the synod. Between assemblies, the Synod Council has interim legislative authority.

The work of our synod is also conducted through various teams and committees, including:

**Candidacy Committee:** participates in the church-wide process of discernment, preparation and formation leading to approval for public ministry in the ELCA in partnership with candidates, congregations and seminaries.

**Committee on Discipline:** stands ready to be called upon if a disciplinary process arises during oversight of pastoral and congregational relationships in the synod.

**Committee on Appeals:** an ELCA committee that stands ready to be called upon in the case of an appeal from a recall or dismissal of an officer of a synod.

And our work is conducted through various processes, including:

**Mobility:** the process through which Rostered Ministers are called to congregations within our synod or through which Rostered Ministers express interest in seeking a new call either within or outside our synod.



**Personnel Guidelines:** developed by the Synod Council and voted on by the Synod Assembly, the personnel guidelines are offered to assist the members of a congregation in personnel decisions including the employment of Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Rostered Ministers of Word and Service, and lay staff members.

**Compensation Guidelines:** developed by the Synod Council and voted on by the Synod Assembly, the compensation guidelines are offered to assist the members of a congregation in preparing an initial salary for Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Rostered Ministers of Word and Service. A compensation package includes, but is not limited to, salary (including the cost of housing), medical and dental benefits, social security offsets, and pension contributions.

More information about our synod is available on our website:

<http://metrodcelca.org/our-synod/>

and in our constitution: <http://metrodcelca.org/forcongregations/forms/>.

### **Project goals, scope of services, and timeline**

The Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod is seeking a part-time consultant to conduct an internal examination of our processes and practices to assess where bias exists, identify strategies for removing bias and racism, and implement those strategies in an effort to create equitable systems. While this work arises out of a desire to identify and remove anti-Black and racist biases, the synod recognizes that such biases are impacted by additional issues, including economics, gender, and sexual orientation. The synod anticipates the work of seeking equity to be intersectional and that the work must be viewed through this broader context. We envision the work taking place in three phases:

1. **Assessment:** this phase will include a combination of tools and tasks to enable the consultant to get to know our synod and our context. This could include, but is not limited to, interviews of synod staff and synod leaders, examination of governing documents and processes, surveying congregations and congregational staff and leaders, and reviewing prior work and prior/current outcomes. In particular, the following



committees and processes (which are described above) are to be assessed: candidacy, mobility, personnel guidelines, compensation guidelines, discipline, and appeals.

2. **Identify Strategies:** this phase will synthesize information learned during the assessment phase and identify, with specificity, the changes that could be made to create more equitable structures and systems. Strategies will be relevant to our context and mission to live out the Gospel.
3. **Implementation:** this phase will include production of a written report with the consultant's observations from the assessment phase, recommended strategies to update systems from the second phase, and a strategic plan for implementing and holding ourselves accountable for communicating the results of the project and making needed changes.

We anticipate each phase would take approximately three to six months and would include strategically scheduled conversations with synod leaders throughout each phase to discuss the consultant's progress and findings.

The consultant's work would also take place alongside the synod's efforts to: (i) create learning spaces for rostered ministers and laypeople to learn about racial justice and equity, to increase shared language and understanding of structural racism across the synod, and to engage in curricula and events to foster these conversations; and (ii) study how the synod and its constituent congregations may issue reparations to people of color and work toward meaningful reconciliation. The consultant should be aware of this work but will not be involved in managing these processes.

### **Submission of proposals**

Questions and proposals should be submitted to Katharyn Wheeler, Administrative Assistant to the Bishop, at [KWheeler@metrodcelca.org](mailto:KWheeler@metrodcelca.org).

### **Proposal deadline / anticipated selection schedule**

This RFP will be made publicly available on the Synod's website in **July 2021**.



Questions about this RFP should be received by **August 31, 2021**.

If needed, Synod leaders will host a Zoom call in **September 2021** to respond to questions. Zoom information will be posted on the synod website and the call will be recorded.

Synod leaders will provide additional responses to questions, if needed, by **September 30, 2021**.

Proposals should be received no later than **October 15, 2021**.

Synod leaders will review proposals and select top bidders and notify unsuccessful bidders no later than **October 30, 2021**.

Negotiations with top bidders will begin no later than **November 1, 2021**.

Contract will be awarded and unsuccessful bidders will be notified no later than **November 30, 2021**.

Consultant will begin work in the fourth quarter of 2021 or first quarter of 2022. We are, however, open to negotiations regarding scheduling for the right candidate.

### Elements of proposal

Proposals should include:

- Information about the consultant's qualifications, strengths, and experience relevant to the proposal;
  - If applicable, include examples of relevant work done in a non-profit and/or faith-based organization or ways in which the consultant would approach the work in this setting;
- Information about the consultant's firm, if applicable, including general overview, relevant experience, and size of firm;





- Three to five references, including organization(s) for whom the consultant has done similar work;
- Description of the full scope of tools and tasks the consultant would seek to utilize, including interviews, surveys, review of internal documents, etc. and the projected number of hours needed for each tool or task;
- Consultant's rate of compensation for each activity/phase of the project, fee schedule, and total fees;
- The consultant's availability to begin work and proposed timeframes to complete each phase of the project;
- Any factors or additional information that would affect the consultant's proposal whether in terms of substance, timing, or budget; and
- The consultant's contact information.

### **Evaluation criteria**

Proposals will be evaluated based on the consultant's expertise, relevant experience, references, comprehensiveness of proposed plan, timeline, and whether the proposed fees are within the synod's budget.

### **Possible roadblocks**

The synod exists in partnership with – and does not have decision-making authority over – the ELCA and congregations located within the synod. These partners include a wide variety of individuals and communities who are all on their own journeys and understandings of how, when, and why we should be engaging in the work outlined in this RFP. The synod intends to work with these partners throughout this project, knowing that consensus building is both worthwhile and time consuming, and that while we engage in this work, justice is often delayed. In instances in which consensus cannot be reached or actions are needed that require third-party involvement, the synod is committed to the Gospel's call of loving our neighbors and working for justice.



Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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## **Budget**

The synod's projected budget for current work is \$40,000 with the possibility of raising additional funds through a matching campaign. There is the possibility of extending the contract into a second year if additional work is needed and desired by both parties.