

IN RESPONSE TO THE MURDERS IN BUFFALO, NY AND IRVINE, CA – May 2022

“O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save? Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law becomes slack and justice never prevails. (Habakkuk 1:2-4 NRSV)

We have once again witnessed horrific examples of terror and violence born out of racial and political hatred.

On Saturday May 14th in Buffalo, NY – the murder of Black people by a White person fueled and encouraged by widespread racial hatred based in the sin and lie of White Supremacy. This was a young man armed with both deadly weapons and ideology, resulting in a premeditated, targeted massacre, killing 10 innocent people – and wounding 3 others, 2 white and 1 black.

On Sunday May 15th – a political/racially motivated attack at the Irvine, CA Taiwanese Presbyterian Church by a man of Chinese descent. One man died and five people were wounded. And, these are just the latest headlines of this kind of violent terrorism.

Dear siblings in Christ, this must stop! Our society needs to change. Our tears of grief and prayers for victims must lead us to recognize and repent of our own complicity in this systemic racism and violence. We are called to recognize the many ways in which these horrific acts impact and harm all of us. We need to rise up as the body of Christ and proclaim the Gospel and power of Jesus to transform our lives and world. St. Paul wrote, *“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28 NRSV)*

Our Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has long held a commitment to anti-racism. *“We expect our leadership to name the sin of racism and lead us in our repentance of it. Although racism affects each one of us differently, we must take responsibility for our participation, acknowledge our complicity, repent of our sin, and pray God will bring us to reconciliation.” (FREED IN CHRIST: RACE, ETHNICITY, AND CULTURE, ELCA Social Statement Adopted 1993, p.5)*

As we continue to engage in confession, conversation and commitment to actions for racial justice, may we ground ourselves in the Holy Scripture and bind ourselves to one another, holding ourselves accountable to do whatever we can in ourselves, our congregations, institutions and agencies, denomination, communities, nation and world. Let us not grow weary or cynical.

Our Virginia Synod will continue to work toward racial justice at every level. The Synod Staff and Synod Council have engaged in continuing conversations about racial justice over the last two years and are committed to continuing that work. The Tapestry Team has developed an Unconscious Bias module to help rostered ministers and congregations better understand, identify and transform our own racism. There is much work to be done, but together we can work toward change. May God inspire and empower us to be FAITHFUL + BOLD + SERVING!

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