

JUSTICE DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION RESOLUTION

A Resolution for the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin to fully support and engage in pursuit of an environment and community which embodies Divine Hospitality.

WHEREAS, we are called to live in right relationship with ourselves, our God and our neighbors (Exodus 20:1-17), this requires humility, curiosity, and bravery and given that we have various levels of anti-racism training available, numerous book studies past, present and future, pilgrimages, and many learning opportunities, we are able to take another step from informed to allied; and

WHEREAS, Paul reminded the people of God in his letter to the churches of Galatia that “in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 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 3:26- 28]; and

WHEREAS, we are among the multitude, not above or beyond it, but part of “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb ” (Revelation 7:9-10); and

WHEREAS, we are called to live the Greatest Commandment, to “love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39) and as such seek to make the church, our communities, and congregations as welcoming and hospitable to any and all people, to be repairers and restorers of the Earth, and to be a place of lived Gospel and the Kingdom of Heaven.” For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:16-17); therefore be it

RESOLVED that the synod commit to an ethos of inclusion and acceptance to show the public and our community that diversity, equity, inclusion are priorities for the synod and to demonstrate that justice is important to our organization, our congregations, and our communities with this DEI Commitment statement that:

The Northwest Synod of Wisconsin is committed to creating an environment that embodies the Commandments of Creation by furthering diversity, equity, and inclusion in the congregations and communities of the synod, as we strive to be a church practicing Divine Hospitality and a space to embody the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth; and be it further

RESOLVED that each congregation take action to do the same on a congregational level and work with the synod to create an environment that encourages awareness for others, self-reflect on our own personal behaviors and biases, and make a commitment to learn about how to change them for the better.

Submitted by the NWSWI Minister for Right Relationship, and the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin Council. Resolution approved January 30, 2023.

APPENDIX

Background information:

- The Northwest Synod of Wisconsin passed a resolution to support Racial Justice Training at Synod Assembly, April 2021
- The Northwest Synod of Wisconsin passed a Racial Justice and Equity Statement at Synod Assembly, April 2021
- The Northwest Synod of Wisconsin clearly states on our Neighbor to Neighbor page and program, "when the ELCA was formed in 1988, it was with the intention that our church would be a diverse body, inclusive and authentically reflecting the world around us." And that "we at the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin faithfully join the whole church in recognizing the need for our synod, our leaders and our congregations to engage in action and opportunities to reflect on our diversity, to educate ourselves on our diversity and to start some healing action." And most importantly, "we know with more voices and input from differing backgrounds and walks of life, our synod becomes stronger, more authentic and more clearly reflects the body of Christ. We must work harder and with more intention to raise the level of diversity in the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin."
- In order to live out the mandate of the ELCA, the vocation of Lutheran life in the kingdom of Christ, and obey the Ten Commandments and Greatest Commandment, we must take the next step from learning and educating ourselves to becoming allies and active participants in creating a welcoming environment for others.

DISCUSSION:

Diversity Equity and Inclusion

- Are we pro-active or re-active when it comes to inclusion and accessibility?
- Do we consider accessibility to worship and activities to be an accommodation issue, or a justice issue?
- Could anyone wondering who we are, enter our churches and feel welcomed?
 - What if they are blind?
 - What if their language is not English?
 - Where do they participate in worship?
 - Can they follow the service easily?
- Do we understand that use of pro-nouns is to make *others* feel welcome

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- Do we offer Communion to those who cannot come to the front first, or last? Why?

Active Empathy

- Are we challenging ourselves to predict accessibility challenges from the point of view of a visitor?
- Do we rely on badges (RIC, EcoFaith, BLM, Indigenous ELCA, etc.) to communicate rather than actions? (Note, these programs are important tools, and do help visitors decide whether or not to risk attending a church)
- How are DEI and Divine Hospitality similar? Or different?

Planning for a Future of Divine Hospitality?

- How does your congregation, or the synod, create a new place together with strangers, visitors, and the community surrounding us (rather than inviting people into “our” space, or going into “theirs”)?
- What actions toward Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion can we make together as leaders in our community?