

Intentional Conversations about Loving Our Neighbors

Resolution #4

Whereas The Northwest Synod of Wisconsin (NWSWI) of the ELCA, walking in the way of Jesus, takes seriously the greatest biblical commandment to “Love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves.” (Matthew 22:39)

Whereas Martin Luther reminds us that responding to God’s grace by loving our neighbor also means caring for the physical and social needs of our neighbor (The Forgotten Luther II pp.89, 93)¹ and

Whereas our baptismal promises call us “to care for others and the world that God has made and work for justice and peace” (ELW p. 228) and

Whereas we often have sinned and fall far short of loving our neighbors as ourselves, especially our neighbors who are Black, Indigenous or Persons of Color (BIPOC)

Whereas intentionally and unintentionally we have contributed to a way of life that has harmed our BIPOC neighbors and

Whereas racism and racial disparities permeate the state of WI, especially in the health of babies, children and adults, in incarceration rates, and in education and

Whereas at the April 2021 synod assembly and at the September 2021 the synod council approved the *Synod Racial Justice and Equity Statement* written by members of the synod youth board and the synod justice team; and be it

Resolved, that the 197 congregations of the NWSWI be encouraged to engage in ongoing intentional conversation about race and love of BIPOC neighbors using the synod’s Racial Justice and Equity Statement and accompanying Glossary of Terms in that discussion and publicly take action in their communities consistent with that conversation; and be it further

Resolved, that in addition to promoting the relationship building resources of Neighbor to Neighbor, other resources be provided for adult and cross generational conversations about race and love of neighbors by the Synod Justice Team and Synod ministers; therefore be it further

Resolved, that rostered leaders and SAMs note in their annual report to the Bishop the length and type of intentional conversation and any action(s) taken promoting racial justice and equity and loving our neighbors.

1 The Forgotten Luther II: Reclaiming the Church’s Public Witness; Ryan P. Cummings, Editor

Addendum A

Racial Justice and Equity Statement:

https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/0a/0a854394-3a19-4d9f-b1ae-f93021508921/documents/FINAL_Racial_Justice_Equity_Statement.pdf

Glossary of Terms:

https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cloversites.com/0a/0a854394-3a19-4d9f-b1ae-f93021508921/documents/NWSWI_Racial_Equity_Statement_Glossary_2_.pdf

Addendum B

Reflection Questions

Background: In 2021, representatives at the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin synod assembly approved a Racial Justice & Equity Statement and accompanying Glossary of Terms. This statement was written by youth in our synod, in conversation with members of our racial justice team. The hope is to have all congregations in our synod read and reflect on the values and commitments in the statement. Thank you for your participation.

Method for Conversation: Share the statement & glossary document with your congregation and invite them to conversation. While face to face conversation is preferred, we know that not everyone is attending in person or able to join a Zoom meeting. Some people will also appreciate being able to take time to reflect on the questions before offering a written response. So, these conversations might take place during worship, during a coffee or education hour, on a Zoom call or via email/online survey tool.

Statement & the Reflection Questions:

1. Read the Statement & accompanying Glossary of Terms. We encourage you to read it aloud, and take time to read from the glossary as well.
2. What is something new you learned from reading this statement?
3. What makes you uncomfortable?
4. What is 1 connection you see from something in this statement to your local community?
5. What is one next step you want to take after this conversation?