

AFRICAN
DESCENT
MINISTRIES 20
22



ANNUAL
REPORT

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nicolette.penaranda@elca.org

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Greetings from the Program Director

"And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because she has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with her love." - Romans 5:5

Greetings beloved community,

I have had the honor of serving as Program Director for the last fifteen months. This past year has allowed for me to learn more about the incredible ministries and leaders around the ELCA. We are blessed to have such incredible pastors, deacons, and lay leaders that care about faith and justice.

As we enter in 2023, let us pray for the congregations that could not continue their ministry, for the leaders of our communities that went on to be with our savior, and for the new life that is entering our communities. May this year bring realignment, hope, and momentum to continue to do God's work in the world today.



African Descent
Strategy Team,
womanist
teaching
theologians, and
Bishop Davenport
in Chicago
October 2022

REV. NICOLETTE PENARANDA
PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Highlights of 2022

Reporting performance can include details such as indicators identified, data collected and SDG-related activities accomplished. Clear and concrete performance goals make it easier to generate relevant, consistent and comparable data over time, in formats that your audience can understand and appreciate.

Projects	Details	Outcome
Sankofa Wellness Series	In response to the pandemic, the first initiative of 2022 invited rostered leaders to participate in group workshops facilitated by a licensed therapist.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Over 30 leaders signed up for the 6 session series.• Leaders were able to explore trauma, grief, and develop more coping skills for their work.
Relational Trips with International Partners	ADM sent youth and young adult representatives to Ghana for the All Africa Youth Congress and a delegation of clergy women under 40 to Suriname for their 280th anniversary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Young adults were able to reconnect with the continent and network with Christians across the diaspora.• Clergy exchanged strengths and struggles with international counterparts and worked with young people to discern their call to serving the ELKS.
Season of Jubilee Brunch	ADM continues to partner with Racial Justice and several synods in bringing a documented discussion of reinvestment from Churchwide to local congregations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chicago event had over 30 people and 14 congregations represented.• Success of Chicago event has sparked interest in several other cities for 2023.

TALKS AT THE DESK

African Descent Ministries



Black History Month Project

Black History Month in 2022 launched a video and photo project called "Talks at the Desk" featuring new and seasoned leaders from the African Descent community. TATD centered Black Lutheran voices for a month and invited the ELCA to engage in conversation around misogynoir, faith formation, community engagement of the Black church, and activism. Accompanied by a discussion guide, the series was used as a devotional series for Lent in some spaces.

TATD had over 8,000 views, a social media impression of over 102K, and at least 36 downloads. The viewership does not reflect the zoom events and church watch parties that occurred on Wednesday evenings.

The series has led to several significant events since. One of those outcomes being the relationship building between the women clergy of Suriname and the United States. After highlighting a handful of young people in the series, one of them was able to represent the ELCA at the All Africa Youth Congress. TATD has also forced the church to ask "*what's next?*" after hearing the laments of Black rostered women. The success of this series has provided insight to how the African Descent community has already been doing the prescribed work of *new, young, diverse* and then some.

As more of our stories become documented, it helps as we work to push for systemic change. More congregations are wondering how to place more Black and POC candidates in front of their call committees. We are building stronger arguments for grant funding for ministry projects and connecting advocacy, domestic hunger, environmental justice teams, to our community members that are deeply embedded in those ministries.

African Descent Ministries will be releasing another season to the series in February 2023. Previous content can be found at elca.org/talksatthedesk.

Projects in the Works

This year involved working with ELCA communications, Congregational Generosity, as well as Christian Community and Leadership teams. Follow African Descent Ministries at [facebook/elcaadm](https://facebook.com/elcaadm) and [twitter/IG @ELCAADM](https://twitter.com/ELCAADM)

Talks at the Desk

February 2023 continues the storytelling of African Descent Lutherans. The series concentrates on different experiences in our community.

- Featured congregations are in USVI, Milwaukee, and members of CIBL
- Check us out at elca.org/talksatthedesk

New Start Cohort

Deeper investment to measure the actual cost for a successful African Descent Ministry.

- 5 new starts selected across the ELCA
- Coaching, consulting, and financial commitment

The role of the desk is to accompany the African Descent community. Participation and input from congregations, communities, and congregants are essential to how ADM develops. Please contact nicolette.penaranda@elca.org to find out how you can be more engaged in this work.

African Descent Stewardship Project

We are revising the 2005 document *Stories to Tell & Gifts to Share* to make our stewardship resources more accessible to church today.

- Project to take place over five years and working with local congregations to apply content

Reclaim Regional Gathering

Event at Central Lutheran Church, Redeemer Lutheran Church, and the Hyatt Regency in downtown Minneapolis, MN

- September 14th- 17th, 2023

RECLAIM

Embody! Embolden! Liberate



September 14- 17th, 2023
Minneapolis, MN

Hotel: Hyatt Regency
Downtown Minneapolis

Event Location: Central
Lutheran Church
Redeemer Lutheran Church

Early Bird Registration: \$350
Standard Registration: \$400
Late Registration \$450
Young Adult Track: \$300

"For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."- Gal 5:1

Reclaim is a curated gathering for Lutheran people of African Descent of all ages and gender identities. We have decided to *reclaim* our space in the church through honoring our history and planning for our futures together. The African Descent community thrives most when gathered. This event is meant for our siblings in the pulpits, pews, and brunch.

Grounded in scripture, this gathering seeks to help participants feel Embodied, emboldened, and liberated in their identities. Over the four day gathering, participants will engage in workshops, shared meals, praise and worship designed to build and strengthen community, teach new skills, share resources and rejuvenate weary souls.

AFRICAN DESCENT DIRECTORY

Roster Leaders | Seminararians | Lay Professionals

Full Name and Title

Name of Ministry Context you serve

Phone number

Email Address

Mailing Address

Date of Birth

Synod and Region

Head Shot/ Self Portrait



Email Nicolette.Penaranda@ELCA.ORG

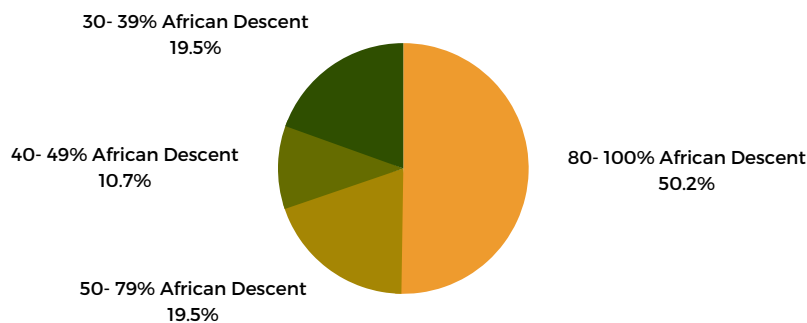
Documenting African Descent Congregations and Membership

People of African Descent continue to be the largest demographics of non-white Lutherans in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. However between congregation closures and limited reporting we do not have an honest estimate of how many people of African Descent are worshipping members. Therefore we need more concise reporting through annual reports.

Black Churches Across the ELCA

Congregational Form A help us identify African Descent congregations across the ELCA. The information provided is based on our 2021 data.

Race/ Origin of active participants in 206 African Descent Congregations



206

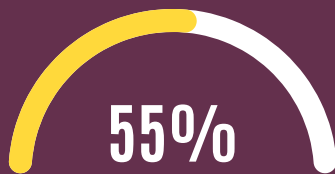
Congregations self identified having 30% or more people of African Descent

40

African Descent New Start Congregations exist across the ELCA

Why is it important to complete your annual reports?

- **Key statistics** - as mentioned, it helps us keep track of the wellness of our community
- **Key findings** - we can determine if there are particular trends in geographical locations
- **Succession planning** - helps us discern how we prioritize pastoral recruitment to ensure future leadership
- **Networking** - it allows for us to connect seminarians, future parishioners, and even pastors with community
- **Advocacy and support**- you might be in a key location for the Church to respond to crisis events in your nearby area



Over half of all African Descent congregations are located on the eastern seaboard

CONGREGATION REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2022

FORM A

This report should be filed online. Connect to the website (ELCA.org/congregationreport) and enter your congregation's IfID and password (printed below) you are unable to file electronically, complete this paper form and return it to your synod office by March 1, 2023.

Latest report on file:

1. Baptized membership at end of 2021	
2. Baptized members received during 2022	
a. By baptism: children (15 yrs. and younger)	
b. By baptism: adults (16 yrs. and older)	
c. By affirmation of faith	
d. By transfer	
e. From other sources and statistical adjustment	
f. Total members received this year	+
3. Baptized members removed during 2022	
a. By death	
b. By transfer	
c. For other reasons and statistical adjustment	
d. Total members removed this year	-
4. Baptized membership, end of 2022	=

Congregation ID#: _____ Online Password (2022 only): _____

Synod: _____

Conference: _____

15. Location address describes where the church or place of worship is physically located. This may differ from the mailing address, but must identify a street name. Corrections should be made below:

- Clean up your membership records and review who is receiving communion and giving (time/ treasures/ talents) in the last year
- Realistic membership helps us take inventory of our national presence
- Total confirmed members should look close to attending members during a holiday

5. Total confirmed membership, end of 2022 _____
6. Number of baptized youth who were confirmed in 2022 _____
7. In 2022, the number of weeks this congregation worshipped:
- a. On-site (in person) _____
- b. Online (via streaming) _____
8. Average weekly worship attendance in 2022:
- a. On-site (in person) _____
- b. Online (via streaming) _____

- Online and On site is beneficial to determine especially as ADM works on tools to discuss stewardship and congregational vitality for both contexts

16. Please tell us how each phrase describes this congregation:

	Hardly at all	Some - what	Very well
a. There is excitement about the future here.			
b. This congregation is a positive force in the community.			
c. This congregation is always ready to try something new.			

9. Total number of people (including children) actively participating in the life of the congregation in 2022 _____

10. Race/ethnic origin of ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS. Must equal active participants on line 9:

African American/Black	African National/African Caribbean	American Indian/Alaska Native	Arab/Middle Eastern	Asian/Pacific Islander	Latino/Hispanic	Multi-racial	White	TOTAL

17. Please tell us how this congregation is at the following:

	Poor	Mod- erately good	Great
a. Seeking out and using the gifts of members of all ages.			
b. Helping members live out their faith in their daily lives.			

- The total should match your total number of worshipping members
- If any specific non-white category has 30% or more of your total, your congregation is labeled under any of these categories.
- Please base this on your current worshipping community size.

Verify the following congregation information; correct as necessary. Corrections can be made online at ELCA.org/tools/updatecongregation.

11. Phone: _____ 12. Fax: _____
13. Email: _____ 14. Website: _____

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS CONGREGATION'S FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP (Please round all figures to nearest dollar. Omit cents.)

18. Receipts during 2022

a. Regular giving	\$	_____
b. Designated giving	\$	_____
c. Earned income (any source)	\$	_____
d. Grants (any source)	\$	_____
e. All other receipts	\$	_____
f. TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$	_____

19. Assets as of December 31, 2022

a. Church real estate	\$	_____
b. Endowment and memorial funds	\$	_____
c. Cash, savings, bonds, etc.	\$	_____
d. All other assets	\$	_____
TOTAL ASSETS	\$	_____

20. Total indebtedness as of Dec. 31, 2022 _____ \$

21. Budgeted/projected 2023 Mission Support _____

22. Gifts from the estates of deceased individuals received during 2022

a. Number of gifts received	_____
b. TOTAL VALUE of gifts received	\$ _____

23. Disbursements during 2022

a. Current operating expenses	\$	_____
b. Capital improvements	\$	_____
c. Payments on debts	\$	_____
d. Mission Support (regular synod benevolence)	\$	_____
e. Other benevolence sent directly to the synod (for any synod OR churchwide appeal including ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Response, Missionary Sponsorship, etc.)	\$	_____
f. Other benevolence sent directly to the churchwide office (for any churchwide appeal including ELCA World Hunger, Disaster Response, Missionary Sponsorship, etc.)	\$	_____
g. Benevolence sent directly to any of the following:	\$	_____
1. An activity in another country including a missionary, a congregation, a companion synod, a hunger program, disaster response, etc.	\$	_____
2. Camps	\$	_____
3. Campus ministry	\$	_____
4. Colleges	\$	_____
5. Seminaries	\$	_____
6. Social service group, agency or institution	\$	_____
h. All other benevolence sent directly to the recipient	\$	_____
i. Other expenses and realized losses	\$	_____
j. TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	\$	_____

- Trying to complete an audit every two years can help us accompany you with best practices for your assets.
- Realistic track of giving and debt can help us figure out how to support you.

Priorities for African Descent Ministries

At the end of 2021, there were 55 candidates for ministry

In the last decade, the African Descent Strategy was reevaluated and broken down into an implementation plan. The three core areas are leadership, congregational vitality, and justice.



100 VISIONARY VITAL LEADERS

We are identifying all leaders who are committed to the wellness of the church. We want to engage with rostered/ lay leaders and church professionals that have the ambition to move our church forward. Help ADM identify and meet these leaders.



SUSTAINING CONGREGATIONS

As more churches struggle financially we are seeking to find alternatives to closures and grow opportunities for first call pastors. We want to help churches do self assessments and establish long term plans dealing with their assets and church growth.



DEVELOPING OUR JUSTICE INITIATIVES

Our community interests are expansive. We are seeking to develop a network to keep each other informed of initiatives and allies to our efforts. If your church is doing serious justice work with the community, please contact ADM so we can be in accompaniment.



FAITH FORMATION

In all aspects of the work we seek to do, we want to create more opportunities for folks of all ages to discern and grow in their faith. We plan to host more events and provide resources for all members of the body of Christ to engage and be challenged.

Frequently Asked Questions

01

How to Call a Pastor

Inform your synod that you are seeking to call a pastor and follow your synod's call process steps. Develop a diverse call committee that represents different ministries and values of your church. Create a Ministry Site Profile. Emphasize to your synod if it is important that you call a BIPOC and/ or LGBTQIA+ leader and that you would like to prioritize those profiles. This helps bishops prioritize calling those candidates to the synod and encourages synod staff to reach out to ethnic specific ministry staff for referrals. While you are waiting for a pastor, I encourage you to take advantage of your interim or assigned synod staff person to work on grieving or any unhealthy dynamics that are happening in your church. This helps your next pastor a lot!

02

How to Get Young People to Church

Every context is different but churchwide has a network that might help. The Young Adult Ministry team for the ELCA is very dynamic. Mae Helen Jackson is the leadership chair for the African Descent Strategy Team and the Outreach and Placement Manager for YAGM. Contact her at maehelen.jackson@elca.org if you would like to explore opportunities or seek out resources for your own young adult ministry event.

03

How to Terminate a Call

Congregations have the power to terminate a call. Proper methods should be written in the constitution. It typically takes significant reason or crisis for synods to intervene and remove a pastor. That being said, it is the responsibility of the congregation. A three months severance package is a standard but not the cap for a clergy that has been asked to resign or voted out of their position.

(elca.org/constitution has a mock congregational constitution if you are seeking to make revisions)

Frequently Asked Questions contd.

04

How to Fix Your Pastor

Burn out- ruin one's health or become completely exhausted through overwork.

Ministry in the 2020's has drastically changed and congregations are still playing catch up. Whether your pastor works alone or on a team, part time or full time, there is no doubt that they might be nearing burn out. If you think your pastor is not showing up and working as hard as they did when they started, it might be do to being overworked. Encourage them to take their vacation time as well as to use their spiritual renewal and continuing education benefits. After seven years of ministry, a pastor should be able to take sabbatical. Help look for grants that would allow for the church to pay the pastor during their sabbatical and have funds available for a supply preacher during that time. Denying time off does not produce an environment that allows for folks to thrive.

05

How to Fix Your Budget

Ministry! If you have **already established ministries**, there might be ELCA grants available to you (daily bread grants, domestic hunger grants, young adult ministry grants, Lutheran disaster response grants). Often times these grants are not difficult to write but some are more competitive than others. Some synods also have grants and you can find more information on your synod's website. Within your synod there may also be churches with endowments that you qualify for but research is required. Churches in your synod may be eager to partner with you because of your ministries. Community partnerships are also a necessity. Working with community orgs open you up to more donors, potential grants from local government, and sometimes even foundations. When we give in abundance we open ourselves up to receive in abundance.

Feast Day of Harriet Tubman March 10th

Correlating Scriptures:

a. Exodus 14 (Moses call and leadership)

b. Matthew 2:1-23 (North Star - Jesus' birth: holy)

c. Psalm 119:19:20 (stranger in a strange land without welcome)



Explanation of the day

On this day we honor Harriet Tubman, known for her courageous work and ministry as a “conductor”, a title generally given to those who transport cargo from one place to another on a railroad system. Tubman covertly transported the precious cargo of similarly stolen African American lives underground toward a “milk and honey” land of freedom, opportunity, and imagination.

Born as “Araminta Ross” into slavery in March of 1822, the threat of change ignited the course of history as we know it. A few years after marrying her husband, John Tubman, the fear of being sold - and continued - as forced labor sparked the abolitionist to plan her escape. Bringing her mother with her by adopting her first name as her own before ultimately returning to rescue her, Harriet’s ancestors and the North Star both guided her toward freedom. Nicknamed “Moses” in reference to her God-ordained service and advocacy in the freeing of enslaved people, Harriet Tubman organized trusted people and plans in order to liberate more than 700 enslaved individuals in her lifetime.

While there is much to celebrate about Tubman’s life and courage, honoring her in this “here and not yet” space should include naming and exposing the oppressive systems that still continue today. Remembering Harriet and her freedom work includes confessing our participation in the perpetuation of these institutions, lamenting about the sustaining subjugation that exists in our modern age, and committing to the “holy” and “law-breaking” gospel liberating work that God calls Harriet and each of us to continue.

**LITURGY CREATOR
REV. JIA STARR BROWN**

Prayer of Confession;

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and one another:

Merciful God, we confess that we have watched and allowed our Black and Brown siblings to endure injustice, inequity, hurt and hate. We confess our awareness of their continued struggle and subjugation, and our failure in using the power and privilege accessible to us in order to advocate for change. Forgive us for our silence, our inactivity, and our complacency in their bondage. Give us courage, voice, and bold faith to serve the entire community in the ways that You envisioned for Your Church. **Amen.**

Communion Prayer:

By your grace, oh God,
We've come this far by faith. Leaning on you.
Trusting in you, trusting your holy word, and believing that You have not failed us yet.

Because of your faithfulness, we have faith in the evidence of that which we believe but cannot see, that which we have not yet seen or experienced.

We have seen your faithfulness in your liberation of the Israelites, in your multiplication of manna - then and now, and in continued daily grace as we witness each daily morning dew.

We give you thanks for the uphill and undergrounds that continue to guide Your people toward the Life and Love with which You have graced each of us.

Help us in our unbelief.
Help us in our silence and doubt.
Help us in our fear and frustration.
Help us believe that you will do what you what you always do:

See us, Help us, save us.
Save us all. **Amen.**

Intercessory Prayer:

God of creation, reveal the beauty of all that You have formed in this world and in this Church. Inspire in us an appreciation and a kinship for all of Your magnificent creations.

Lord, in Your mercy...*hear our prayer.*

God of peace, bind all the evil that divides us. Teach us how to speak and listen to the hearts of all Your people so that we can walk and serve together in unity.

Lord, in Your mercy...*hear our prayer.*

God of justice, give comfort to those who have been mistreated, misunderstood, misjudged. Protect all who are living, resisting, or fleeing, in fear.

Lord, in Your mercy...*hear our prayer.*

God of mercy, free all who suffer in body or spirit and all who share the suffering by enabling it. Pour out the Spirit of compassion on us and others that we may ease the burdens of those afflicted.

God of ancestors, we remember Harriet Tubman. Inspire us to live, love and lead as courageously as she did, that we may be lampposts to journey with others through the wilderness toward liberation.

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, **Amen.**

Benediction

May God grant you courage to live into the dream that you have been given, as well as the "strength, passion, and patience to change the world." (Reference Ps. 104:44-46). **Amen.**

Feast of Earth Day April 22nd

Correlating Scriptures:

a. Psalm 24:1 (good stewards)

b. 1 John 3:17-18 (open your heart to neighbors in need)

c. Prov. 29:7 (the righteous know the rights of the poor)



Explanation of the day

Every April the world gathers in spirit to honor our Earth and continue the preservation work to address climate change and environmental injustice. In this case, injustice occurs when those most impacted by the effects of climate change are those who contributed to it the least. These vulnerable populations suffer and endure preventable hardship. Our response in faith as good stewards of this planet extends to and beyond our natural lands to all who reside on them, nurtured and nurturers alike.

As we gather to honor and acknowledge, may we also plant and share - resources, ideas, and connections - to honor God's "imago dei" design and love in creating all that we have and all that we need: community.

Prayer of Confession:

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and one another.

Loving God, You created a magnificent world, full of natural beauty. We confess that we have not been good caregivers of the creation and sustaining gifts that You have designed. We admit to falling short of sharing, of caregiving, and of "going" in gospel service to others as You have called us. We acknowledge our selfishness of "stuff" and our willful blindness to the torrential poverty rains that drench the lands and the bellies of our siblings. Forgive us for our participation in the scarcity that others experience. Help us to recognize the beauty in all of Your creation. Show us, remind us, bless us with reminders of Your grace and our responsibility to our neighbors. **Amen.**

Communion Prayer:

Creator God, we give You thanks for the gift and the grace of creation. We join the sun and moon, the mountains and valleys, the rivers and oceans in praise to Your holy name! For nourishment and shelter, for medicine and compass, for rest and relationship - we thank You, O God, for the natural care and provision that You have created.

At this Memory Table, we remember the great sacrifice of Your son, Jesus. We honor the grain, grown by the natural elements of Your love and creation, the sun and the rain. We give thanks for the human hands that ground it into flour, and baked it into bread. We praise You for the grapes, grown on the vines of Your love and care for us and this world. As we partake of this bread and wine, we remember the divine nourishment that comes to all who hunger and thirst for the Bread of Life. Thank You for this gift of grace! **Amen.**

Intercessory Prayer:

God of all creation,

You created a universe and all therein by your design and by your hand. We pray for our Earth, and for a continued ripe harvest of the manna fruits that sustain creation on this planet.

God, in Your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

In exchange for worldly popularity, the Church has fallen short in its responsibility as beacons for compassionate stewardship of this world. Help Your Church to renew its commitment and care for the vitality of all creation.

God, in Your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

We pray for our world leaders, tasked with addressing the environmental irresponsibility of generations past, in preparation for future generations. Help them to seek and respond to the cries of those most vulnerable, who are also suffering most from the decline of our Earth's resources.

God, in Your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

O God, we lift up our neighbors near and far, who do not have access to clean and consistent water. We pray for all living in food deserts, who have lost homes and livelihood as a result of our world's climate crisis.

God, in Your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

We pray for humanity, that we be moved not only to concern but to action in response to the degradation of the resources on our planet. Inspire in us an urgency for change, and a desire to become better stewards of our Earth.

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Benediction:

May we be inspired and renewed by the beauty of God's creation,
in ourselves and in each other.

May we grow to love others as we love ourselves;

May we honor the work of God's hands.

Amen. May it be so!

Feast Day of the Emmanuel Nine June 17th



Correlating Scriptures:

a. Mark 4:1-20 (the scripture worshippers were studying the night of the shooting)

b. Psalm 46:1-6,10 (God is our refuge and strength)

c. Psalm 13 (“How Long, O Lord?”)

Explanation of the day

On June 17, 2015, a white supremacist (and fellow Lutheran) named Dylan Roof walked into Emanuel American Methodist Church, known to be the oldest African American churches in the southern United States. Congregation members, in the middle of a Bible Study, welcomed Dylan; as soon as they bowed their heads for prayer he opened fire, killing nine.

Grief abounds. Like the first Last Supper, friends gathered around the Bread on that heartwrenching day, unaware that life - and meals - would forever be altered. On this day, we gather for the anniversary lament of fallen humanity in our world. This annual repast meal brings us together in thankfulness for models of such holy hospitality, to remember and mourn spilled Blood that still matters, and to recommit our love and ministry to collective liberation for all.

Benediction:

As we leave this place, may we share the same peace and love that Jesus shares with us.

May we look and perceive.

May we hear and understand.

May we turn and be forgiven. (Mark 4:12b)

Amen. May it be so.

Prayer of Confession:

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and one another.

Creator God,

You lovingly created every person in Your beautiful image. We confess that we have not loved and protected Your beloved creation well. Racism and hate continues to blossom, disfiguring Your beautiful and divine plan for human life. Help our unbelief, O God, in the realities of racism and oppression; remove the scales from our eyes and our hearts. Forgive us for our participation, both knowingly and unknowingly, in its flourishing. Give us the courage to remember and share these true stories of cruelty and injustice, and those who, because of it, lost their lives and freedom. Grant us determination and an accountable community to interrupt these unjust systems. Help us to use our voices, our agency, and our faith to advocate for justice.

Amen.

Communion Prayer:

God of the Oppressed,

You desire for all people to be liberated and whole. We believe that wherever there are broken spirits or broken bodies, You are there. We believe that Your love flows for us just as Your tears fall with ours in the midst and memory of racialized violence.

We thank You for this holy table that makes room for the myriad of emotions that fall underneath the stormy umbrella of lament. May the blood of Jesus cover and heal all of the scars and wounds incurred from bigotry and hatred.

As the world selectively observes and scrutinizes, we are grateful for Your ever present witness. Thank You for the holy conviction to embody the liberating gospel that embraces each one of us every single day. Revive us, O Lord. Renew us, and ready us for the work of anti-racism. **Amen.**

Intercessory Prayer:

Thank You for filling our world with a beautiful array of diverse people and voices. Inspire in us an appreciation for all of humanity, and to see Your face in those who differ from us.

God, in Your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

We pray for Your Church, broken and riddled with the burdensome history of its involvement in the perpetuation of hate, and the violence that it creates. Heal us, O Lord, by granting us the courage to name and address our mistakes.

God, in Your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

We pray for our institutions, infused with the DNA of institutional racism at every turn. Inspire in both educators and leaders both wisdom and community to dismantle the rusty and rusted frameworks that continue to condone and enforce subjugation.

God, in Your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

We pray for all lives affected by racism. We lament the lives altered and the lives lost to racialized violence. Help us to remember their names and their stories. May their loved ones experience holy unexplainable peace in the midst of this turbulent storm.

God, in Your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

We ask for Your help in remembering the names and stories of. Help us to carry and continue their hope for collective justice and liberation for everyone.

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Juneteenth Feast Day

June 19th



Correlating Scriptures:

- a. Exodus 3:7, 9 (God hears and answers the cries of God's people)
- b. 1 Corinthians 15:57 (victory through Jesus Christ)
- c. Luke 4:18 (liberty for those who are oppressed)

Explanation of the day

June 19 is the national day of observance and celebration for the emancipation of enslaved African Americans in the United States. Shortened to "Juneteenth", it was on this day that federal troops trekked into the state of Texas to personally ensure and witness that African Americans were released from slavery, as resolved by the Emancipation Proclamation.

While this is indeed an occasion for celebration, it is a profound act of solidarity to weave truth and history among our praise and cymbals. It behooves congregations to educate its community and members not only about the dreadful period of slavery, but also its residue that remains and continues to permeate the nervous system of our communities.

Surely, liberation is a spiritual experience! Jesus calls us to account for our witness; this must be achieved not only by our faith, but also by our example. The gospel presents an invitation as well as an expectation to unite our hearts and hands to actively pursue justice and liberation for all. May our advocacy for others equal Jesus's for us - bold, passionate, and unwavering.

Prayer of Confession:

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and one another.

Loving God,

As we gather today to commemorate the ending of slavery, we also grieve the bondage of hatred and subjugation that continues to exist.

We lament that African Americans still do not have access to resources, opportunities, and support to live fully in freedom in this nation. We confess our participation and complicity in the Church's prioritization of comfort, power and authority over justice. Help us to remember and celebrate the ancestors who resisted slavery, and to participate in eliminating its remaining residue that continues to bind, limit, and prevent all people from flourishing equitably. Guide us in love to inaugurate the liberation that you proclaimed: freedom and life for all. **Amen.**

Communion Prayer:

God of freedom,

Throughout the generations, You have liberated Your people from enslavement and bondage of many forms. May this Bread and Wine nourish and strengthen us to free others as we have been freed.

May we see as we have been seen.

May we be empowered to empower.

May we love as we have been loved by You, O God - deeply, wholly, and freely.

Amen.

Intercessory Prayer:

Merciful God,

We thank you for hearing the cries of your people, stolen and brutally enslaved for hundreds of years. And, we celebrate the long-awaited Juneteenth day when freedom rang!

In our celebration, we also lament that slavery in various shapes and forms continues today. We pray for all those in bondage of mind, body, or spirit. We pray for institutional disruption, interruption, and transformation.

God, in Your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

We pray for all in positions of authority, that they lead with honesty and integrity in advocating for the changes needed to ensure that all have equal and open access to healing, wholeness, and vitality.

God, in Your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

Help us to employ our privilege and freedoms to support the liberation of others who remain in bondage in mind, body, or spirit.

God, in Your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

God of us and our ancestors, we remember those whose lives and dreams were stolen for institutional profit and gain. Grant us courage to mirror Jesus's ministry by boldly advocating for the liberation of all who remain in bondage.

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Benediction:

May the Spirit of the Lord be upon you,

May you bring good news to the poor.

May you proclaim freedom to those in bondage,

May you recover sight for those who are blind.

May you set free those who are oppressed. (Luke 4:18-19)

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Go in peace and in love!

**LITURGY CREATOR
REV. JIA STARR BROWN**

Feast Day of Jehu Jones

November 10th



Correlating Scriptures:

- a. Jeremiah 45:1-5 (weariness from adversity and obedience to God)
- b. Acts 11:27-12:3 (the “violence” of power)
- c. Matthew 20:20-28 (the great cost of following Jesus)

Explanation of the day

Today we honor Rev. Jehu Jones - faithful servant and changemaker ahead of his time. Born into a life of slavery in 1786, Jones lived during an era where life, work, and worship were segregated. Controversially believing that God loves each person as they were divinely designed, Rev. Jones became the first African American Lutheran pastor and the founder of St. Paul Lutheran Church, the first Black church in the denomination in 1832. This title and accomplishment remains intact, notwithstanding the persecution and dismantling of this sacred congregation just seven years later.

While we gather today to remember Jehu’s courage and vision, we also hold space and lament for the injustice that he and hopeful African American congregants endured while reaching for their God-given right to God and worship. And, we celebrate the foretaste of the interwoven presence and voices of all people, united in the life of the Church and community, as Jesus taught.

We come to the feast on this day as we arrive at many holy gatherings - with varying convictions and competing emotions about the joy and the pain of being connected today to such a courageous and inspiring leader, while simultaneously to a denomination that still today remains steeped in segregation and racism. Around the holy table, confession can and should nourish our spirits like the Bread and Wine in front of us.

Prayer of Confession:

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and one another.

Loving God,

We bemoan the horrors of hate and its windfalls within the Church that lead to discrimination, division, and destruction. We lament that spaces, congregations, and hearts within the ELCA continue to remain closed to African Americans - in membership, leadership, and community. We confess our participation in the flourishing of oppression by our complacency and by our fear. Forgive us for the justification of racism that our silence provides. Gift us the undeserved grace of another opportunity to embody and share Your gospel of community, embrace, and inclusion. **Amen.**

Communion Prayer:

Merciful God, we come to this holy table, hungry for change. Empty from the placebo bread of this world that we have been served, we are grateful for the healing properties of this holy table, and for the sacred invitation to bring our heavy and hungry hearts to You. Help us to hunger and thirst for what is just, and for what is right.

We thank You for the courage and faithfulness of Rev. Jehu Jones, and other prophetic changemakers who have faithfully stood against ignorance and hatred over the generations, in Jesus' name. Inspire us to do our part to honor them and You by decolonizing the walls of racism that divide us. **Amen.**

Intercessory Prayer:

God of justice,

For the Church and its leadership, that it repents of its weaponization of Scripture and misrepresentation of God that has led to the abuse, enslavement, and exclusion of millions of people, we pray:

God, in Your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

For followers of Jesus, that they be encouraged and strengthened as prophetic lampposts, exposing the cracks and decay of oppression, we pray:

God, in Your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

For our community and government leaders, that they hunger for connection with those most starved for the food of institutional and equitable change, we pray:

God, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For the passion and person of Rev. Jehu Jones, and all fellow dreamers of holy trouble, we praise Your holy and righteous name, O God!

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Benediction:

As we leave this place, may we “do good; seek justice, correct oppression” (Isaiah 1:17a)

May we be

“Repairers of the breach and restorers of the streets we live in” (Isaiah 58:12).

May we advocate for justice that rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream. (Amos 5:24)

Amen. May it be so!

KWANZAA

December 26th- January 1st

Correlating Scriptures:

a. Psalm 133:1 (living in unity)

b. Jeremiah 29:11 (purpose)

c. Romans 12:17 (do not conform to this world)



Explanation of the day

Kwanzaa is a seven-day annual observance in the United States that acknowledges and celebrates African heritage in African American culture. Created in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, the Sankofa breadcrumb path for a people who are generationally robbed of their lineage is an important one.

With daily Swahili principles toward individual and collective unity, this occasion presents many opportunities for education, exploration, and engagement. While Kwanzaa is an African American-centered celebration, non-Black neighbors can honor this occasion by considering avenues to support their local Black community in achieving the vision of wholeness that Dr. Karenga shares with the world during Kwanzaa.

Benediction:

On this Kwanzaa day, let us go from this place as one body—
in the spirit and support of:

Umoja - Unity;

Kujichagulia - self-determination;

Ujima - collective work and preservation;

Ujamaa - cooperative economics;

Nia - purpose;

Kuumba - creativity;

Imani - faith!

And in the Spirit and fullness of our God.

May it be so!

Amen and Ashe

LITURGY CREATOR
REV. JIA STARR BROWN

Prayer of Confession:

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and one another.

Merciful God,

You have blessed each of us abundantly with a lineage. We lament its sinful interception from Africans, whose bodies and identities were stolen along with their heritage, and the part that we play every day in its institutional disguise.

We confess that we have not done all we can to remember, maintain, and teach our children and communities about the painful past - and present - of our nation that necessitates a Kwanzaa Feast Day. Forgive us for our laziness, trepidation, and ignorance in learning and sharing truth.

We acknowledge our failure to support efforts toward rebuilding and unity. We confess that we have not done all we can and should to celebrate the beauty and brilliance of African Americans.

Help us to cling to our identity in You, O God, as members of Your beautiful “imago dei” Kin-dom family! Give us a thirst for education and community that fuels relationship, and leads us to celebrate the unique designs and legacies that You have gifted to each and all of us. **Amen.**

Prayer of Communion:

Sankofa God,

We thank You for the Earth, its fullness, and the blessings that spring forth. May we experience the spirit of Kwanzaa in our daily lives and ministries - with family and community, with friends and coworkers, and as we love ourselves. May we share the ancestors' stories in reverence and humility, honoring their memory and Your faithfulness to every willing heart and hair. **Amen.**

Intercessory Prayer:

Loving God,

In a nation that actively seeks to appropriate African Americans, we give You thanks for this gift of celebration that uplifts their beauty, contributions and resilience.

God, in Your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

We pray for all African Americans who have been told and taught that their existence is anything less than holy, prophetic, and profound. We lament the rippled effects of these lies, and pray for a holy undoing that leads to agency, empowerment, and transformation.

God, in Your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

As we strive to become more like Jesus, help us to honor each other by seeking fellowship and relationship over transaction, distance, and data.

God, in Your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

Spark in us a curiosity for history, and a hunger for the truth about our ancestors - those on either side of slavery. Help us to honor their life and legacy by striving for a reality where all experience the beautiful freedom that every person deserves.

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

God's Work. Our Hands.

African Descent Ministries only thrives when the community thrives. Thank you to the African Descent Strategy team, the Reclaim Gathering Planning Team, each congregation that has participated in the stewardship project survey, congregations that have invited me to worship with them, and every unsung hero at our congregations.

As we enter into 2023 we want to invite more of our community to be engaged in the work we are trying to do.

- Contact us about hosting the Season of Jubilee brunch
- Reach out to recommend a young adult for engagement opportunities
- Send parishioners to the Reclaim Gathering
- Nominate someone to join the Leadership, Congregational Vitality, or Justice table implementation teams

“it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind.”

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