



## 2019 Churchwide Assembly Report of the Reference and Counsel Committee

**Wednesday, August 7, 2019**

### **Motion A**

#### **Resolution to Establish June 17th as Emanuel 9 Feast Day of Repentance**

Submitted by: Rev. Kwame Pitts

WHEREAS, the Lord teaches us "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:31-32); and

WHEREAS, the Emanuel 9 (Rev. Clementa C. Pinckney, Cynthia Marie Graham Hurd, Susie Jackson, Ethel Lee Lance, Depayne Middleton-Doctor, Tywanza Sanders, Rev. Daniel L. Simmons, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, and Myra Thompson) on June 17, 2015, while in prayer and bible study at the historic African-American church, Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Charleston, South Carolina were murdered by a self-professed white supremacist adult who was raised and formed in the ELCA; and

WHEREAS, that self-professed white supremacist espoused racist rhetoric and epithets before and after committing these murders; and

WHEREAS, two of his victims, Rev. Daniel Lee Simmons Sr. and Rev. Clementa Pickney, were graduates of the Lutheran Theology Southern Seminary, one of eight ELCA seminaries.; and

Whereas, the deep sin of white supremacy and racism continues to be a plague and hindrance in the life of the ELCA as a church called to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED** that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America reaffirm its commitment to repentance from racism by:

1. Venerating June 17th as a feast day of repentance in the ELCA for the martyrdom of the Emanuel 9; and
2. Having the names of the Emanuel 9 (Clementa C. Pinckney, Cynthia Marie Graham Hurd, Susie Jackson, Ethel Lee Lance, Depayne Middleton-Doctor, Tywanza Sanders, Daniel L. Simmons, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, and Myra Thompson) added to future ELCA publications to venerate their martyrdom and lead us to repentance because of the white supremacy and racism in our church; and
3. Calling for this feast day be grounded in prayer as the Emanuel 9 were murdered while in prayer at the end of the bible study; and
4. Directing the Division on Worship to help develop future worship prayers and litanies around repentance from racism; and
5. To encourage giving both prayer and financial support for the memorial to be built in remembrance of the Emanuel 9 (<https://www.emanuelnine.org/>); and
6. Be in deeper conversations with the AME church on ways of reconciliation and repentance on the matters of white supremacy and racism.

*Authored 18 June 2019 by: Rev. Michael Vinson, Rev. Kenneth Wheeler, Rev. Kwame Pitts, Rev. Angela Khabebe, Rev. Angela Shannon, Ms. Suzannah Porter, Francisco Herrera, M.Div., Yvette NewberryWhite*

## **Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee**

We recommend adopting the **Resolution to Establish June 17<sup>th</sup> as Emanuel 9 Feast Day of Repentance**.

### **Motion B**

#### **Resolution on the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to Condemn White Supremacy**

Submitted by: Kerry Nelson

WHEREAS, we are members of the Body of Christ called to love and serve a hurting world; and

WHEREAS, each of us is called through our Baptisms to proclaim that God's love is for all people, not just for people who are white; and

WHEREAS, we have observed with alarm a rising tide of racist rhetoric, hate crimes, and domestic terrorism in the name of white supremacy in our nation; and

WHEREAS, we have now seen again the terrible consequences of violence visited on immigrants and people of color in the name of so-called "Christian Nationalism" or "white supremacy"; and

WHEREAS, we now grieve with the communities of El Paso, Texas and Dayton, Ohio, who have experienced terrible losses as a result of mass shootings or racist violence directed against their neighbors, friends, and loved ones; and

WHEREAS, we continue to grieve with and remember the communities of Charleston, South Carolina and Charlottesville, Virginia, who have also been victims of hate crimes in the name of white supremacy; and

WHEREAS, as Lutherans, we have a unique historical calling to recognize, name, and condemn racist acts, imagery, and violence that seeks to injure, demean, or marginalize persons who are not white or Christian; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge with horror that Christians, including persons raised in congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, have committed mass shootings in our nation; and

WHEREAS, we understand that interpretations of Scripture that seek to legitimize racism or white supremacy are false teachings that must be named and condemned as such by this Church with one, powerful voice; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, we the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America do hereby resolve and proclaim that:

1. White supremacy is racism and we condemn it;
2. Violent rhetoric against persons of color in the name of so-called "Christian Nationalism" is not a true Christian faith. It is idolatry and we condemn it;
3. The love of God is for all people, without exception, and we proclaim it;
4. The justice and mercy of God are for all people, without exception, and we proclaim this;
5. Our religious and political leaders have a moral responsibility to condemn racist rhetoric and to speak with respect for the innate dignity of all persons, regardless of their race, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, or faith tradition and we call our leaders to honor this responsibility; and
6. Language that refers to people of color or immigrants with words like "invasion" or "infestation" or "white replacement" is racism and we condemn it;

7. We are called by Jesus to "love our neighbors as ourselves." As persons called to love one another as God has loved us, we therefore proclaim our commitment to speak with one voice against racism and white supremacy. We stand with those who are targets of racist ideologies and actions. With them, we demand and will advocate for a more just, loving, and peaceful world where the gifts of all people are appreciated, and the lives of all people are treasured; and
8. We call all congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to engage in communal study of the structures and rhetoric that empower and fuel racism and white supremacy and to take to heart the teaching of Scriptures, so we may all be better equipped to speak boldly about the equal dignity of all persons in the eyes of God.

### **Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee**

We receive the **Resolution to Condemn White Supremacy** and recommend referral to the Office of the Presiding Bishop of the churchwide organization.

### **Motion C**

#### **Resolution on Reaffirmation of ELCA Social Statement on Abortion**

Submitted by: Jon Hale

WHEREAS, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America adopted a Social Statement in 1991 in which the ELCA "...opposes ending intrauterine life when a fetus is developed enough to live outside a uterus with the aid of reasonable and necessary technology. If a pregnancy needs to be interrupted after this point, every reasonable and necessary effort should be made to support this life, unless there are lethal fetal abnormalities indicating that the prospective newborn will die very soon."; and

WHEREAS, this 1991 Social Statement was reaffirmed in its entirety by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America 1999 Churchwide Assembly; and

WHEREAS, there has been no formal reaffirmation of either the original 1991 Social Statement on Abortion or the 1999 reaffirmation for the past 20 years by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and

WHEREAS, at least seven states currently have no prohibition against late-term abortion, and several states are currently considering or have adopted dropping all laws prohibiting late-term abortion for any reason, up to and including during the birthing process itself; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America reaffirms the church's commitment to and support of the 1991 Social Statement on Abortion, especially that of Section IV.B entitled "Ending a Pregnancy" as it applies to "This church opposes ending intrauterine life when a fetus is developed enough to live outside the uterus with the aid of reasonable and necessary technology. If a pregnancy needs to be interrupted after this point, every reasonable and necessary effort should be made to support this life..." and Section V.C entitled "The Regulation of Abortion," as it applies to "... this church supports legislation that prohibits abortions that are performed after the fetus is determined to be viable, except when the mother's life is threatened...", and as reaffirmed by the 1999 Churchwide Assembly;

To commend the Social Statement on Abortion which was adopted by the 1991 Churchwide Assembly and reaffirmed by the 1999 Churchwide Assembly, as a resource to our pastors and members dealing with this issue;

To continue to oppose legislation that permits abortions that are performed after the fetus is determined to be viable outside the uterus; and

To oppose legislation that permits willful neglect of otherwise viable babies during delivery or post-delivery.

## **Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee**

We recommend a substitute motion to the assembly:

BE IT RESOLVED to lift up to members, congregations and ministers the value of reviewing our social statements as a resource for deepening and broadening moral deliberation in personal and public life. (The social statements and messages are found at: <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements> <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Messages> )

To commend the Social Statement on Abortion for reading or rereading as the debate and discussion in public intensifies. (It was adopted by the 1991 Churchwide Assembly and reaffirmed by the 1999 Churchwide Assembly as a resource to members, congregations and ministers.)

## **Motion D**

### **Resolution to Disregard *Vision and Expectations***

Submitted by: Rev. Gretchen Rode

WHEREAS, a new document is being drafted to replace *Vision and Expectations*; and

WHEREAS, *Vision and Expectations* has caused harm to candidates and rostered leaders, especially people of color, LGBTQIA people, people with disabilities, retired people, and single people; and

WHEREAS, while *Vision and Expectations* is in place, it will continue to be used against rostered leaders and cause additional harm; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Churchwide Assembly encourage candidacy committees and bishops to disregard *Visions and Expectations* while working with candidates and rostered leaders, as an act of true repentance of the harm done to candidates and rostered leaders, especially causing pain to people of color, LGBTQIA people, people with disabilities, retired people, and single people, who more often than not it has been used against.

## **Recommendation of the Reference and Counsel Committee**

We recommend referring the resolution to the Domestic Mission unit of the churchwide organization.