

Metro D.C. Synod Racial Equity Team (RET)
Report to the Synod, Co-Chairs, The Rev. Karen Brau and
The Rev. Franklin Morales.

This year 2020-2021 the Racial Equity Team spent time responding to all the various forms of racism and racial violence that continue to plague our society and churches. Here is what we have been working on.

Emmanuel 9 Commemoration:

On June 17 we created a virtual worship service for the Emmanuel 9 to commemorate the deaths of the Emanuel 9 — the nine people shot and killed on June 17, 2015 during a Bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC. The online worship service of repentance was live Facebook Live and YouTube, and affirmed our commitment to repent the sins of racism and white supremacy that continue to plague the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, and our nation. The Rev. Angela Shannon was the preacher and Bishop Leila M. Ortiz shared remarks.

Imago Dei Series

Under the leadership of Bishop Ortiz and the Synod staff four sessions called the Imago Dei: Embracing the Image of God were offered virtually in June and July. Session 1 we heard from - Rev. Dr. Steve G. Ray, Jr - President of Chicago Theological Seminary, Dr. Ulysses Burley III – Founder of UBtheCURE, Rozella H. White - author of Love Big: The Power of Revolutionary Relationships to Heal the World and

Bishop Ortiz. Session 2 was led by Rev. Dr. Steve G. Ray, Jr - President of Chicago Theological Seminary called *Malformed Genealogies: Race and Religious Identity*. This discussion reflected on the ways in which we tell the stories of our religious heritage and how those stories have been shaped by racial realities in ways that inscribe white supremacy into the very DNA of our traditions. Session 3 was led by Ulysses Burley III – Founder of UBtheCURE. This conversation explored the intersections of faith, health, and race and how the social determinants of COVID-19 have fueled a pandemic that disproportionately impacts people of color. Session 4 was Led by: Rozella Haydée White, The Love Big Coach. In order to lead well, leaders have to first be clear about their vision for leadership and the "why" of their leadership. This discussion invited participants to seek alignment of their being, beliefs and behavior as they seek to engage issues of injustice in ways that reflect their faith.

Sacred Grounds:

In an effort to foster discussions of race and racism the RET has engaged in a review of material and curriculum that can be used to foster conversations in our homes, small groups and congregations. Our team have focused on a curriculum called *Sacred Ground* developed by the Katrina Browne of the Episcopal Church. The series is part of the *Becoming Beloved Community* initiative of The Episcopal Church, a long-term commitment to racial healing, reconciliation, and justice. This is a race dialogue series designed for these times. It is an attempt to be responsive to the profound challenges that

currently exist in our society. It is focused on the challenges that swirl around issues of race and racism, as well as the difficult but respectful and transformative dialogue we need to have with each other about them. It asks each participant to walk back through history in order to peel away the layers that brought us to today, and to do so in a personal way, reflecting on family histories and stories, as well as important narratives that shape the collective American story. It holds the vision of beloved community as a guiding star – where all people are honored and protected and nurtured as beloved children of God, where we weep at one another's pain and seek one another's flourishing. Our plan is that by late summer of 2021 we will be offering a curriculum similar to Sacred Ground in a small group format to all of the rostered leaders and congregations in our Synod. The context of each small group conversation will be the selected documentary films and readings that focus on Indigenous, Black, Latino, and Asian/Pacific American histories as they intersect with European American histories.

Synod Web Site:

RET has been posting resources on racial equity that are free for you to use, and we are continuing to add more. You can find these resources at this link

[Racial Equity | Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod \(metrodcelca.org\)](https://metrodcelca.org)

Here is what you will currently find.

- Synod Council draft statement on Plan for Racial Equity in the Metropolitan Washington DC Synod.

- Statements on current happenings on racial issues.
- Pastoral and Spiritual reflections
- Toolkit: Transforming White Privilege
- Video recording on previous seminars and discussion on race.
- List of books and educational materials for all ages on race.

Joining ADLA:

RET joined the African Decent Lutheran Association. The term “African descent” refers to people who self-identify as Black, African Caribbean, African American, African Nationals and others of African ancestry from numerous countries who now live in the United States. A network of African descent as active participants in the ELCA across the United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The association develops important connections, advocates for congregations, promotes implementation of the National African Descent Strategy, and provides fellowship, learning and sharing opportunities. It also provides a forum for theological reflection for clergy and lay members through collaboration with other African descent organizations and networks. We encourage you to join either as an individual or your congregation. To find out more about the ADLA or to sign up as a member you click on this link. [AFRICAN DESCENT LUTHERAN ASSOCIATION \(adlaelca.org\)](http://adlaelca.org)

Joining EDLARJ:

The European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice involves European descent members of the ELCA and partners of other ethnicities in being a visible and active anti-racist witness for a multicultural church. The association exists to help dismantle racism, white privilege and white power. Grounded in God's love and forgiveness, and with a spirit of repentance, we face the realities in the church and society that divide, exclude and oppress some people and not others. The European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice offers itself to the Holy Spirit, that the gospel might move and guide us to help shape our church for the future. For more information about the work of the European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice, joining or resources on anti-racism, visit www.crossculturalchurch.org