

Summarizing our ELCA Social Statement on Race

As Lutherans pondering our role in attaining racial justice, we can find our mission in the ELCA social statement entitled “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture.” A full reading of the 8-page document reveals the word “time” repeatedly. We might conclude that *it’s about time* we address racial justice! A brief summary follows:

The statement instructs that first we must face God and recognize how scripture supports our oneness. We must enter into a time of confession and a time of commitment. We must recognize this spiritual crisis in all its social, economic, and political dimensions.

From there, the statement moves to facing obstacles. It is a time to confront the sin of racism. We are still in the process of realizing the complexity of the sin, which pervades the entire social system. We must acknowledge that white people have benefited socially, economically, and politically from their privileged position. It is a time to *be* the church, living our connectedness with each other. We expect our ELCA leadership to guide us in our repentance and to direct us toward meaningful change.

Lastly, the statement speaks of *doing* justice. Talk, talk, talk is good, but not good enough. It is a time for public leadership, public witness, and public deliberation. We are not to be the faint of heart. The ELCA vows to support legislation that guarantees civil rights for all and grants access to quality education, health care, housing, and employment opportunities. A tall order, but essential!

In conclusion, you may be surprised to learn that this social statement was adopted in 1993, though it resonates as if written in recent months. Most would agree that some progress in addressing racism has been made in these 27 years, but we know there is still a lot of hard work to be done. With the heinous death of George Floyd, the eyes of many holdouts to change have been opened, and compassion has poured forth. Let us capitalize on the momentum and be the legs of the ELCA, helping to accomplish a mission it lifted up a long time ago!