

## **ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton addresses issues of racial justice**

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In baptism we are joined to the death and resurrection of Jesus and in baptism we are all one. In baptism we have forgiveness and that makes it possible for us to speak and listen to each other even and especially when the conversation is difficult.

Our nation and our church have been and remain deeply besieged by racism. Following the decisions by grand juries in Ferguson and New York, it has become clear that we have different experiences of life in this country. We continue to struggle. We continue to struggle in our conversation about race in our congregations, communities and places of business, even at our kitchen table.

We as members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have named racism -- a mix of power, privilege and prejudice -- a sin. A violation of God's intention for our world. We recognize that racism pervasively affects all aspects of our society and church. Too often racism is often unacknowledged, particularly among people with privilege. The criminal justice system is in some ways broken and can perpetuate racial injustice. The ELCA social statement, "The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries," acknowledges the disproportionate racial and economic impact within that system. We are church. We are in Ferguson, Staten Island, Los Angeles and elsewhere. This church acknowledges and supports leaders and members on the ground making a difference every day.

We are church together with resources to help turn the tide of injustice. Together we can advocate for legislation that protects the civil rights of all. Together we equip members through community-based organizing. Together we can teach about our faith practices that enable us to live out our faith and grow in our discipleship. Together we participate in the work of responding to disaster in communities by bringing hope, healing and renewal among people whose lives have been disrupted.

Here are actions that each of us can take where we are. Listen to and learn from the experiences and history of people of color and communities of color. Muster the courage to have and stay in difficult conversations about race. Respect and uplift the dignity and humanity of every person.

There are no quick answers or easy solutions, but we can remain in it for the long haul. As we anticipate the birth of the Christ child, let's recall our baptismal covenant to live among God's faithful people; hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper; proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed; serve all people following the example of Jesus; and strive for justice and peace in all the earth.