



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

A brief summary of
Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture
An ELCA social statement (adopted 1993)

The statement and other supplemental materials can be downloaded at
www.ELCA.org/socialstatements

In a nutshell

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) teaches that there is one God and one humanity created by God, as expressed in Scripture. Our oneness in Christ, the one who breaks down dividing walls, connects all people. The whole church looks forward to God's future when people will come from everywhere to eat together in the reign of God (Luke 13:29).

This church names racism as sin and affirms that the diversity of cultures throughout history is a God-given gift and a glimpse of the future. Plurality of culture (the attitudes and patterns of life) is a blessing to be appreciated, not absorbed by assimilation. The ELCA opposes discrimination, supports legislation that guarantees equal rights, and promotes international respect for human rights.

The statement makes the following key points:

- Racism – a mix of power, privilege and prejudice – is sin, a violation of God's intention for humanity. Racism deforms relationships and harms sense of self. Its effects vary, depending on factors such as gender or economic situation.
- The ELCA is in mission in a multicultural society and has made commitments to welcome cultural diversity. This church, while taking some steps, has faltered in living up to its commitments, but will persist with repentant hearts.
- Those with access to opportunities, power and institutions remain separate from those without such access, whose cultures often have been ridiculed and reviled, or destroyed. The ELCA expects our leadership to name the sin of racism and lead us in our repentance. In a hostile and divided world, the church must insist on justice, resist cynicism, and refuse to blame victimized people. To pursue justice, the church must address how racism affects society, political decisions and economic forces as well as individual lives.
- Participation in public life is essential to doing justice. The ELCA encourages public witness and insists on a public forum accessible to everyone. In living up to its commitment to deliberation, the ELCA will model honest engagement on issues of race.
- The ELCA received from its predecessor church bodies a solid foundation for advocacy. Advocacy will look for change and fair distribution of the social costs of correcting past wrongs. Advocacy will work for respect of cultures and oppose language-based discrimination.

- The ELCA will support legislation that guarantees to all individuals equally: civil rights; access to quality education, health care, and nutrition; opportunity for employment with fair compensation; opportunity for business ownership; access to legal, banking, and insurance services; the right to purchase housing in any place; and access to public transportation. The ELCA will advocate for just immigration policies.
- The ELCA will promote international respect for human rights, and support the international movement to eliminate discrimination.

Summary provided by the Theological Discernment Team of the Office of the Presiding Bishop, ELCA. Only official statements of the ELCA should be forwarded or represented to third parties as the position of the ELCA.