

HUMAN RELATIONS

A Social Document from the
Augustana Lutheran Church



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

A Series of Statements of the Augustana Lutheran Church, 1948, 1956, 1958

1948 Minutes, p. 341

Whereas God is the Creator and Father of all races, and all races have a common origin and hence common human qualities, and

Whereas Christ died for all men and

Whereas the Christian ethic demands mutual good will, justice and cooperation among all racial groups and appreciation and respect for human personality in every racial group.

Be it resolved:

That the Augustana Synod condemn all forms of racial prejudice and discrimination and urge the promotion of equal rights and opportunities in reference to cultural, social, economic, civic and religious matters.

1956 Minutes, p. 387

Whereas we recognize the growing tensions between the several races in our land and our Christian responsibility to work for better understanding,

- a. We reaffirm the position of our Church, that all people have equal rights before God, and are entitled to equal opportunities.
- b. We counsel our members to exercise love and understanding in all their dealings with persons of minority groups.
- c. We urge our members to use their influence in the securing of full rights of citizenship for all, and in discouraging any activity in their communities which would seek to circumvent orderly judicial procedure in the implementation of the Supreme Court decisions of segregation.
- d. We commend those who have sought to oppose wrong by non-violent means.
- e. We recognize that the evils of racial discrimination are not restricted to any one section of the nation, and we encourage our people to oppose all forms of racial discrimination whether they be found in the North or in the South.
- f. We point out to our members, especially those in the northern states, that discrimination in housing, real estate transactions, and employment is just as much a violation of Christian principles as discrimination in places of public assembly, public transportation, or schools.

- g. We again encourage our congregations to include all unchurched persons in their communities in their programs of evangelism without distinction as to race, color, or national origin.
- h. We particularly commend those congregations who have refused to abandon communities where major population shifts have brought large numbers of non-white persons into the vicinity of their churches.
- i. Where there are members of local churches in which racial integration is taking place, or is likely to take place, who are unwilling to continue membership in such congregations for this reason, we encourage such members to examine their consciences in the light of Holy Scriptures, and in the doctrines and decisions of the Church, specifically that God has created all men in His image, that Jesus Christ has given His life for the salvation of all men, that the Holy Spirit would call all men into the fellowship of the Church.
- j. We remind every congregation of its inescapable responsibility to bear witness in its locality to those truths, as well as the privilege of demonstrating that the Christian fellowship transcends barriers of race and class.
- k. We urge pastors of congregations to which such disaffected members may be seeking letters of transfer to encourage them to remain in their own congregations and to demonstrate Christian acceptance of and love toward those whom they have deemed different from themselves.

We call the attention of the National Lutheran Council to the above resolutions.

1958 Minutes, pp. 215,216

WE BELIEVE:

That God created one human family and that all men everywhere, whatever their color, culture, class or caste, are inseparately related and bound together as members of that one human family.

That all men are created in the image of God and are equal in status before Him.

That Jesus Christ, himself the God-man Who was born, lived, died, and rose again, lives now as the Savior and Lord of all men everywhere, whatever their color, culture, class or caste.

That all men are by nature selfish and in rebellion against God; and that only through God's reconciling grace can they be set free from the dominion of sin to live as one in Christ.

That Jesus Christ came to bring salvation to all men; and that, therefore, it is the obligation of the Church everywhere to communicate the Gospel without discrimination or distinction.

That since the Church is created by the Holy Spirit, the decisive factor in its policies and practices is not the will of men as conditioned by social, economic, or cultural

patterns but rather the eternal will of God as revealed in Christ Jesus.

That through the Gospel the Holy Spirit establishes the fellowship of believers and to that fellowship calls all men; and that to exclude from worship or membership in the local congregation any person on the basis of color, culture, class or caste is to sin against God and man.

That Christians ought exercise their social responsibility by acting in their own communities to remove whatever injustices exist and to insure for all persons, without discrimination, just and equal opportunities especially in housing, employment, education, and access to social welfare services.