



INTERRACIAL MARRIAGE

A statement adopted by the Fourth General Convention
of The American Lutheran Church, October 1968

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(A statement approved by the Fourth General Convention of The American Lutheran Church, October 16-22, 1968, "as the corporate policy of the church and as a guide to the individual members of the congregations of The American Lutheran Church.")

1. The American Lutheran Church, in "A Christian Affirmation on Human Relations" approved by the Church Council in October 1961 as a policy statement of the church, declared: "We believe that God created one human family and that all men everywhere, whatever their color, culture, class, or caste, are inseparably related and bound together as members of one human family," and that "all men are created in the image of God and are equally precious in His sight."

2. In 1964 the General Convention reminded members of The American Lutheran Church that "they have the duty to protest against and to act responsibly, beginning in their own communities, to correct those cruelties and injustices which deny basic human freedoms." In 1966 it asked "that we examine ourselves as to what we are thinking, saying, and doing to establish the point that all persons are entitled to equal opportunity in the social order."

3. We rejoice over the progress toward equality of opportunity in, for example, education, housing, employment, voting, public accommodations, and access to public services. These forward steps can help to bridge the gaps of communication and understanding that so often separate racial and ethnic groups. A major barrier, both real and symbolic, yet remains. That is the barrier to interracial marriage, a social and psychological barrier in many hearts and minds.

4. We hold that, upon the basis of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a person's race is not a valid ground to deny him marriage to the person with whom he purposes to build a life-long marital union. We confidently affirm that there are no Scriptural barriers to marriage across racial lines.

5. Marriage, however, involves more than the personal decision of two individuals. It is a decision affecting also the parental families, the children of the union, the friends and neighbors, the congrega-

tions, and the community. Our convictions on the qualities essential for a wholesome marriage were set forth in "Teachings and Practice on Marriage and Divorce," adopted by the Second General Convention.

6. Before a man and a woman commit themselves to an interracial marriage they need to examine honestly and openly their own reasons and motivations. They need to examine carefully the probable consequences of their union for themselves, their children, and their families. They need to be convinced that they are sufficiently strong and mature, both spiritually and emotionally, to overcome not only the problems and difficulties normal to any marriage but also the complications added by community attitudes toward interracial marriage. To face these questions adequately they need to enlist the aid of balanced and objective counsel, including that of their pastor.

7. Should the couple in this light decide that their marriage is one that God can join together, their decision should be honored and respected. Families, friends and neighbors, congregations, and community need to undergird this marriage, as any other, with the sustaining arms of love and fellowship. In particular, the Christian congregation and its members can show how the redemptive, barrier-breaking, Gospel releases men from the captivity of ignorance and prejudice. When the interracial marriage is blessed with children the church should take the lead in accepting them, in surrounding them with love and concern, in assisting their parents to "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord," and in building a climate of public opinion that fosters and guarantees to them every equality of opportunity to develop into mature, self-respecting, respected members of the community.

8. We neither advocate nor condemn interracial marriage. We rejoice over the diversity in the human family. We understand why persons who appreciate their distinctive racial heritage wish to perpetuate it. Nevertheless, we deny that race must be the determinative criterion in any proposed marriage. Being part of God's creative and sustaining order, marriage builds upon mutual devotion and commitment, mutual recognition and sharing of each other's needs and gifts, mutual strengthening and upbuilding. These qualities know no racial lines.

**COMMISSION ON RESEARCH
AND SOCIAL ACTION**

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