



## **Prayers, Litanies, and Laments for the Commemoration of the Emanuel Nine** **June 17**

*These worship resources especially suitable for the Commemoration of the Emanuel Nine could be used and adapted in various ways. Consider this document to be a library of several resources, and not a complete service. However, many of the elements could be combined to create a synod or congregational service on or near June 17.*

*Worship planners might consider the Service of Word and Prayer from All Creation Sings as a basic framework to get started. The “Gathering – Word – Prayer – Sending” framework of this service allows for great flexibility in adapting for various contexts. The elements in this document could be included in various combinations.*

*Any of these elements could be integrated into a congregation’s primary weekly service of Holy Communion or Service of the Word.*

*Additional resources for this commemoration are available at [ELCA.org/EmanuelNine](http://ELCA.org/EmanuelNine).*

*The following confessional litanies may be used as part of a gathering rite or at another appropriate time in the service.*

### **A Confessional Litany and Lament Commemorating Nine Who Were Slain at Mother Emanuel AME Church**

They were doing  
what we are called to  
as they engaged in bible study.

It was Wednesday night—  
a stranger walked in,  
and these people welcomed him and prayed together:  
the Rev. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, Cynthia Marie Graham Hurd, Susie Jackson, Ethel Lee Lance, the Rev. DePayne Middleton-Doctor, Tywanza Kibwe Diop Sanders, the Rev. Daniel Lee Simmons, the Rev. Myra Singleton Quarles Thompson, and the honorable state senator and pastor of the church, the Rev. Clementa C. Pinckney.

This stranger wanted to ignite a “race war,”  
he said, after he shot and killed them,  
denying them the very humanity he claimed for himself,  
claiming rights and privileges associated with “whiteness.”

Now we are grieved, once again in pain,  
burning and anguished, lamenting the horror of evil unleashed.  
And so we cry out,  
**Have mercy, O God, have mercy on us.**

Sorrow and heartache have come to us.  
Death and mourning have visited us.  
We feel far from you, O God, and distant from one another. And so we cry out,  
**Have mercy, O God, have mercy on us.**

Evil besets us in our land.  
We acknowledge that our nation is socialized in ways that promote and normalize  
colonialization.  
We cry out against the horrors and agonies of racism. And so we cry out,  
**Have mercy, O God, have mercy on us.**

The privileged of our nation have benefited from practices that dehumanize indigenous peoples.  
We have claimed as “discovery” lands that were not ours. These lands have been stolen and the  
nations, that were the original occupants of these lands, slain. And so we cry out,  
**Have mercy, O God, have mercy on us.**

Tribalism has led to the denial of your presence, O God.  
Present generations,  
the children whose ancestors were kidnapped and sold into slavery,  
those forced to labor not on their own behalf,  
still suffer and struggle to live in freedom  
while the children of colonizers,  
live out of “white privilege,”  
denying the fullness of your presence in all people. And so we cry out,  
**Have mercy, O God, have mercy on us.**

Assaults born of greed and murder continue propping up  
white privilege that is institutionalized in our church and nation,  
preventing us from recognizing  
the twin evils of racism and nationalism  
still perpetuated among us. And so we cry out,  
**Have mercy, O God, have mercy on us.**

Open our eyes, O God, open our hearts.  
Open our ears, O God, open our minds.  
Help us to behold one another as you behold us.  
Help us to be more firmly rooted  
in the practices of the gospel—so that, when we pray,  
the way we live will make real the dream of your beloved community  
within and among us. And so we cry out,  
**Have mercy, O God, have mercy on us.**

With the help of your mercy and grace,  
lead us to think, believe, and change.

May your gospel's transforming power  
by the working of the Holy Spirit  
be present in us, in our churches,  
in our nation and all the nations of the earth.  
May it be so. And the people said, "Amen."  
**Amen.**

## **Confessing Racism: A Lament for the Church**

As church, we confess the sin of racism and condemn racist rhetoric and the ideology of white supremacy. God, have mercy.  
**God, have mercy.**

As church, we confess, repent, and repudiate the times when this church has been silent in the face of racial injustice. God, have mercy.  
**God, have mercy.**

Racism is deeply ingrained within the ELCA, a predominantly white church. It is deeply embedded within the individual congregations whose members continue to foster stereotypes and support policies that actively hurt people of color. God, have mercy.  
**God, have mercy.**

As church, we declare that the enslavement of black bodies and the removal of indigenous peoples established racism in the United States, a truth this nation and this church have yet to fully embrace. God, have mercy.  
**God, have mercy.**

Rooted in slavery, racism is manifested through the history of Jim Crow policies, racial segregation, the terror of lynching, extrajudicial killings by law enforcement, and the disproportionate incarceration of people of color. God, have mercy.  
**God, have mercy.**

As church we lament the institutional racism of discriminatory treatment within the call process; inequitable compensation of clergy of color; racial segregation; divestment from black communities and congregations; systemic policies and organizational practices; and a failure to fully include the gifts of leadership and worship styles of black people, indigenous people, and people of color. God, have mercy.  
**God, have mercy.**

Confessions are empty promises without meaningful actions—actions that are grounded in prayer, education, and soul-searching repentance. The sin of racism separates us from one another. Though we trust that we are reconciled to God through Christ's death and resurrection, we seek such life-giving reconciliation with one another. As we repent, let us not turn back to ideologies that promote white supremacy. We trust that God can make all things new.  
**Amen.**

## **Intercessions to Mark the Commemoration of the Emanuel Nine**

*One or more of the following petitions could be included as part of the prayers of intercession in Sunday worship on or near the commemoration. They also could be used together in a special service to mark the commemoration.*

### *For the church*

God, our truth, through the ages you have spoken through prophets. Stir up in your church a passion for your word revealed in Jesus, that following the witness of the Emanuel Nine, your church studies the scriptures, shows hospitality, prays without ceasing, and embodies prophetic justice in community. Embolden church leaders and all the baptized to remember the lives of the Nine, repent of racism and white supremacy, and renew our commitment to your word revealed most fully in Jesus, our way, truth, and life. In your great mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

### *For the nations*

Mighty and loving God, we pray for our nation and the plague of racism that threatens, destroys, and kills. Root out white supremacy wherever it takes hold. Release its grip on those lured by its false promises. Bring to repentance all who continue to benefit from prejudice and hatred, both hidden and revealed. Plant in our hearts and nation a willing spirit open to truth-telling and healing. In your great mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

### *For those who are oppressed and victimized*

Immanuel, God with us, you embrace in love those who cry out to you. Lift up all whom hatred has cast down (*especially ...*); embolden those who need courage to speak and act against oppression (*especially ...*); sustain those who are weary from efforts that bring no end to injustice (*especially ...*). Comfort parents weeping for children, children who have been separated from parents, and families in crises of any kind. Restore hope where it has been lost, so that all may trust your love that reaches to the depths of pain and suffering. In your great mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

### *Thanksgiving for the saints*

We give you thanks, Holy God, for the faithful life and witness of Clementa, Cynthia, Daniel, DePayne, Ethel, Myra, Sharonda, Susie, and Tywanza, the Emanuel Nine. May their faith and witness to your forgiving love in Jesus Christ inspire all people to pursue paths of justice, courage, and self-giving love. In your great mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

## **A Litany of Remembrance for the Emanuel Nine**

*This litany may be used as part of a gathering rite, following prayers of intercession, or at another appropriate time in the service.*

*A bell may be rung ten times, once for each of the nine victims and once for the survivors.*

We join with Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in remembering the slain nine—the Rev. Clementa C. Pinckney, the Rev. Daniel Lee Simmons, Cynthia Marie Graham Hurd, the Rev. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, the Rev. Myra Singleton Quarles Thompson, Tywanza Kibwe Diop Sanders, the Rev. DePayne Middleton-Doctor, Susie Jackson, and Ethel Lee Lance—and those who survived.

**We remember.**

We remember that they lovingly welcomed the stranger into a Wednesday-night bible study—they sang, they prayed, they gathered to study the word of God.

**We remember.**

We pray for the continual presence of God's peace; may it comfort and surround the families of the nine who were slain.

**We remember.**

We pray for the African Methodist Episcopal Church, its senior bishop and episcopal leaders, the community of Charleston, and all who continue to grieve—trusting that God will continue to unite us in the work to end racism and white supremacy, so that we may be witnesses of Christian unity.

**We remember.**

We remember the legacy of the Rev. Pinckney and his fight for racial justice for his parishioners and his community. Let us not only be moved by emotion but also be moved toward action.

**We remember.**

We call the United States to remember and confront its history of racial injustice. We must not forget the crimes committed against humanity in the name of Christ: the land theft from and genocide of indigenous peoples and the enslavement of black bodies that built this nation.

**We remember.**

We call this country to remember the policies and practices that excluded Chinese immigrants and that forced the internment of Japanese Americans.

**We remember.**

We call this country to remember the exploitation of migrant farm workers from Latin and Central America and the separation of families at the U.S. southern border.

**We remember.**

We remember the faith leaders whose lives are a living witness to black liberation and womanist theology in the struggle for black freedom: Bishop Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, Sojourner Truth, Denmark Vesey, Jehu Jones, Daniel Payne, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, James Cone, and Katie Cannon.

**We remember.**

We remember the unarmed innocent black lives lost at the hands of law enforcement: Eric Garner, Laquan McDonald, Sandra Bland, Sean Bell, Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, Atatiana Jefferson, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Daunte Wright, [*additional names may be added*], and many others, known and unknown.  
**We remember.**

We remember the innocent, unarmed black bodies that were racially profiled, shot, and killed because whiteness stood its ground: Emmett Till, Trayvon Martin, Jordan Davis, Ahmaud Arbery, Renisha McBride, [*additional names may be added*], and many others, known and unknown.  
**We remember.**

As we remember, Living God, may we be re-membered as your body, connected to one another and empowered for the work you call us to do in the name of Jesus and by the power of his renewing Spirit.  
**Amen.**

### **The Witness of the Emanuel Nine: A Litany of Remembrance for Their Vocations**

*This litany may be used as part of the sending, in connection with a remembrance of the faithful departed, or another appropriate time in the service.*

The “Emanuel Nine,” of blessed and eternal memory, were nine gifted, loving, and faithful people who spent their lives striving for excellence, connection, and the presence of God, and spent their last moments in study of the word. They leave a legacy of grace, resistance, family, and faith.

Gracious God, in remembering their lives and witness, we are called to a wider understanding of the Spirit’s work in the world.

They were preachers: Open us to receive the good news of Jesus Christ.

They were students: Kindle in us a desire to learn and grow in your ways.

They were teachers: Instill in us a passion to share the wisdom of Christ.

They were coaches: Accompany us as we strive to run the race set before us.

They were mentors: Inspire us through the wise counsel offered by others.

They were leaders: Embolden us to seek out the best in others.

They were musicians: Attune us to the sounds of your creation.

They were poets: Reveal your truth in language we have yet to discover.

They were barbers: Shape us as attentive caregivers to those around us.

They were custodians: Protect those whose work ensures our safety.

They were bus drivers: Carry us as companions in life's unexpected journeys.

They were veterans: Remember those who risk harm for the sake of others.

They were librarians: Write on our hearts and minds the wisdom of the generations.

They were advocates: Call us to speak and act on behalf of those who are silenced.

They were public servants: Show us how to love our neighbors as ourselves.

They were legislators: Inscribe your laws of love and justice on our hearts.

In lives of faithful dedication, your servants Clementa, Cynthia, Daniel, DePayne, Ethel, Myra, Sharonda, Susie, and Tywanza lived by your promises, sharing their gifts with those in their families and communities. May we not forget their lives, taken too soon. In the years to come, let us share their names and their witness, so that the world comes to know of your spirit at work in and through them.

We ask this in the name of Jesus.

**Amen.**

## **Lamenting Racism**

*This lament and prayer may be used in preparation for the work of faithful listening in discussions around racism and racial reconciliation, and at other appropriate times. The naming of communities, situations, and experiences may be adapted for the context or occasion.*

*People of color may opt for silence during parts of this lament to contemplate the community's words.*

*A leader introduces a gathering lament in these or similar words.*

The sin of racism hurts communities of color, fractures human relationships, and denies God's good creation. Lament is a way for us to recognize the harm caused by racism.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:35-39). God's grace in Christ frees us for the difficult work of recognizing and lamenting racism.

We are all part of one body in Christ, called to act with equity, fairness, and justice. God's saving love creates grace-filled spaces within us and within our relationships. God's saving love calls and leads us toward rooting out the racism that continues to infect the body.

*A leader invites those gathered into lament and prayer in these or similar words.*

Within the whole human family, people of color have experienced both interpersonal aggression and structural oppression instead of abundant life. We recognize and lament the harm racism has

caused to *African Descent communities; American Indian and Alaska Native communities; Indigenous Peoples within Canada; Arab and Middle Eastern communities; Asian and Pacific Islander communities; and Latinx communities*. We cry out to you,  
**hear our lament, O God.**

We have assigned the notion of race to human beings created in God's own divine image. We have judged God's beautiful diversity by our flawed and artificial standards. We cry out to you,  
**hear our lament, O God.**

We have used language and images in ways that equate *black* and *dark* with dirt and sin, and that fail to welcome the treasures of darkness in God's good creation. We cry out to you,  
**hear our lament, O God.**

We have accepted practices in our churches and in our society that privilege whiteness over diversity and equity. We have been complicit in how racism continues to exclude and harm people of color. We cry out to you,  
**hear our lament, O God.**

When one part of the body of Christ hurts, the whole body hurts. As we listen to people who are harmed by racism, we call to you,  
**open our hearts, O God.**

As we reflect on our daily interactions with people and communities of color, we call to you,  
**open our hearts, O God.**

As we reconsider what we have been taught about race and racism, we call to you,  
**open our hearts, O God.**

As we contemplate what we have done and what we have left undone, we call to you,  
**open our hearts, O God.**

As we labor to create a loving and safe community for our siblings of color, we call to you,  
**open our hearts, O God.**

Holy and merciful God, as your people we recommit ourselves to loving one another as you have loved us. Prepare us for this time of listening and discovery. We pray in the name of the one who has made us one, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*(All Creation Sings, pp. 62-63)*

## Prayer for Racial Justice

Save us, O God, from ourselves,  
from racism often cloaked in pious words,  
from the machinations of white supremacy hidden in calls for civility,  
from micro aggressions thinly veiled in arrogance,  
from apologies when they don't give way to action,  
from forgiveness without facing the truth,  
from reconciliation without reparation.

Deliver us, O God, from expecting siblings of color to continue to bear this emotional work,  
which is not theirs to do.

Grateful for the long arc that bends toward justice, we pray:  
Grant us wisdom,  
give us courage for the facing of these days,  
by the power of the Spirit, all for the sake of the kin-dom that we share in Christ Jesus.  
**Amen.**

## Additional Prayers

O God of all, with wonderful diversity of languages and cultures you created all people in your own image. Free us from prejudice and fear, that we may see your face in the faces of *our Asian siblings and* people around the world; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. (*Adapted from Evangelical Lutheran Worship Occasional Services for the Assembly, p.398*)

O God, you form all humanity to bear your divine image, and you intend for everyone to live together in harmonious dignity. We pray for all people, whether ourselves or others, who suffer the cruelties of racial or ethnic prejudice. Grant your Spirit of power to all who are oppressed. Give healing to victims of violence, protection to the vulnerable and abused, better housing and worthy employment to the mistreated, courage to the fearful, a remedy for rage, strength to parents and caregivers, and hope to children and youth. Purge the privileged of their sense of superiority, and lead church and society to foster communities of equity and diversity; through Jesus Christ, our loving Savior.

**Amen.** (*All Creation Sings, p. 50*)

O God, in your divine mystery you embrace difference in unity, and you call your people to live in peace with all. We pray for an end to racial and ethnic prejudice. Free us from the dread of difference. Free the church from constricting traditions. Free our society from centuries of violence against the other. Break down the walls that separate your people by color, culture, or religion. Call us to repentance for our sins of racism and prejudice, known and unknown. Transform discrimination into a passion for justice. Guide us to nurture a society that embodies reconciliation and cooperation among all, for the sake of the one who embodies your love, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.** (*All Creation Sings, p. 51*)

## Readings

*This list includes helpful considerations for scripture to be included in a dedicated service commemorating the Emanuel Nine. If the commemoration is included as part of a primary weekly gathering in a congregation, the lectionary texts assigned for that Sunday may still be used. One or two additional readings could be read before prayers specific to the commemoration, either in the Gathering or another time in the service.*

*Readings and Psalm included in the 2020 ELCA Commemoration of the Emanuel Nine:*  
Isaiah 11:1-9; Psalm 91; 1 John 3:1-3, 18-24; Matthew 5:1-10

*Readings and Psalm for the Commemoration of Martyrs in Evangelical Lutheran Worship:*  
Ezekiel 20:40-42; Psalm 5; Revelation 6:9-11; Mark 8:34-38

### *Readings related to the Emanuel Nine*

Mark 4:16 *The scripture passage studied at Mother Emanuel on June 17, 2015.*

1 Peter 4:8 *Used when bible studies resumed at Mother Emanuel after the shooting.*

*Additional readings for remembering those who have died and those who mourn*

Psalm 23  
Psalm 30  
Psalm 34:1-8, 17-18  
Psalm 82  
Psalm 121  
Psalm 130  
Isaiah 25:6-9  
Isaiah 41:9b-10  
Isaiah 49:15-16  
Lamentations 1:1-3  
John 6:35-40  
John 10:27-29  
John 11: 25-26  
Romans 8:31-35, 37-39  
2 Corinthians 1:3-7  
1 Thessalonians 4:13-14  
2 Timothy 2:8,11  
Hebrews 12:1-2  
Revelation 21:1-6a

*Additional readings for communities affected by violence*

Genesis 32:22-32  
1 Kings 19:1-13  
Job 23  
Psalm 22  
Psalm 46  
Psalm 74  
Psalm 88  
Psalm 120  
Psalm 137  
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8  
Isaiah 35  
Isaiah 41:10-13  
Jeremiah 17:14-18  
Ezekiel 37:1-14  
Habakkuk 3:17-19  
Matthew 2:7-18  
Matthew 27:45-54  
Mark 16:1-8  
Luke 23:26-31  
2 Corinthians 4:7-12  
Revelation. 22:1-5

*Additional readings for justice and reconciliation*

Isaiah 2:2-5  
Isaiah 58:1-14  
Amos 5:14-15, 21-24  
Micah 6:1-8  
Matthew 25:31-46  
Luke 4:16-21  
2 Corinthians 5:16-6:10  
Ephesians 2:13-22

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