



Worship Resources for the Day of Racial Healing

As part of the adoption of the “[Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the People of African Descent](#),” a request was made to name a Day of Repentance for congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization to observe annually. The day named is the Tuesday in January following the national observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. This Tuesday is already observed by several organizations as the National Day of Racial Healing which originated in 2017 under W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation efforts. Since repentance is one of the ways we work toward such healing, you are encouraged to use and adapt these resources in your context to mark this day of repentance and healing.

These worship elements could be integrated into a worshiping community’s primary weekly service of Holy Communion or Service of the Word, or as part of a special prayer service to mark this day.

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

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.**

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, p. 62)

Prayer of Confession

Creative and loving God, you have searched us out and known us and all that we are is open to you. We confess that we have sinned: we have put up walls between ourselves and you, closing our hearts to your gifts. We have failed to respect and honor the gifts you have given us in creation, earth and all living things. We squander the inheritance of generations to come.

We have sinned against each other: we have put up walls between ourselves and our neighbors, giving in to fear, ignorance, and arrogance. We are stained by the sin of racism and fail to respect the gifts of all your peoples.

We have used our power to dominate and our weakness to manipulate; we have evaded responsibility and failed to confront evil; we have trusted false gods and listened to their promises; we have denied dignity to ourselves and to each other; we have fallen into deep despair. In our despair we have forgotten you, and have gone away from your path.

Forgive us for what we have done to hurt others and the ways we have hurt your earth. Give us your blessing and help. Let us walk in your great love; through the great peacemaker, your Son, Jesus Christ.

(Book of Common Worship, Prayer of Confession #8, pp. 609-610)

Intercessions and Prayers to Mark the Day of Racial Healing

One or more of the following petitions or collects could be included as part of the prayers of intercession in Sunday worship.. They also could be used together in a special service to mark this day.

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.

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son. Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred that infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unites us in bonds of love; and, through our struggle and confusion, work to accomplish your purposes on earth; so that, in your good time, every people and nation may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne. Lord in your mercy,

hear our prayer. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 79*)

O God, call us into a deeper relationship to be your church for the sake of the world. Help us to see with new eyes the injustices within church and society. Call us to have a loving heart that respects and uplifts the humanity and dignity of every person; open our ears to listen to and learn from the experiences of people of color. Open our mouths to speak up and about injustices. Join us with others to work for racial equity and inclusion for all people. Lord in your mercy,
hear our prayer

Social justice

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may move every human heart; that the barriers dividing us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease and that, with our divisions healed, we might live in justice and peace; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 79*)

Bitterness, anger

Lord God, when we are assaulted by the troubles of life, and the deep waters of anger threaten to overwhelm us, do not let us sink. In your great compassion, hear us and help us. Deliver us from anger's power over us. Lead us out of bitter silence and hurtful words so that we may speak the truth in love. Heal every heart set on vengeance and show us the way to honesty and reconciliation; through the one who has shown us both impassioned zeal and forgiving love, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.** (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Pastoral Care, p. 359*)

Discouragement, despair

God our comforter, you are a refuge and a strength for us, a helper close at hand in times of distress. Enable us so to hear the words of faith that our fear is dispelled, our loneliness eased, our anxiety calmed, and our hope reawakened. May your Holy Spirit lift us above our sorrow to the peace and light of your constant love; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

(Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Pastoral Care, p. 360)

Time of conflict, crisis, disaster

O God, where hearts are fearful and constricted, grant courage and hope. Where anxiety is infectious and widening, grant peace and reassurance. Where impossibilities close every door and window, grant imagination and resistance. Where distrust twists our thinking, grant healing and illumination. Where spirits are daunted and weakened, grant soaring wings and strengthened dreams. All these things we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

(Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 76)

A prayer attributed to Francis of Assisi

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. *(Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 87)*

Prejudice, racism

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)*

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.

Prayers of Intercession

Lord, our God, creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible, the source and sustainer of life, you who holds in unity and harmony the multiple parts of the entire cosmos, we thank you and praise you for your love, for your wisdom, for your kindness and mercy. Give us courage and strength to follow your way and to be your witnesses to the end of the earth so that the world may know your love.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, you are our way to life, justice, and peace. In you we are called to find our unity. Come into the brokenness of our lives and our land with your healing love. Help us to be willing to bow before you in true repentance and to bow to one another in real forgiveness. By the fire of your Holy Spirit, melt our hard hearts and consume the prejudice and pride which separate us. Fill us, O Lord, with your perfect love that casts out fear and bind us together in the unity that you share with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Make us instruments of your love, O God, agents of your justice and peace. Strengthen us to work for unity and harmony between people of every race, color and creed. Enable us to respect all of your creation and to love one another as ourselves, that we may serve one another in humility, simplicity and joy; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

(Book of Common Worship, Prayer of Intercession #1, p. 616; From 2013 Busan Assembly of the World Council of Churches.)

Prayers for Various Occasions

Social Justice

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart, that the barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease, and that, with our divisions healed, we might live in justice and peace; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. *(Book of Common Worship, For Social Justice, #1, pp. 629, 630)*

O God, you have bound us together in a common life. Help us, in the midst of our struggles for justice and truth, to confront one another without hatred or bitterness, and to work together with mutual forbearance and respect; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.** *(Book of Common Worship, For Social Justice, #1, p. 629)*

Racial and Cultural Diversity

God, you created all people in your image. We thank you for the astonishing variety of races and cultures in this world. Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of friendship, and show us your presence in those who differ most from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.** (*Book of Common Worship, For Racial and Cultural Diversity #1, p. 630*)

A Sending/Charge to the People

Go out into the world in peace; have courage; hold onto what is good; return no one evil for evil; strengthen the faint hearted; support the weak, and help the suffering; honor all people; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

Blessing

Que el Dios de justicia nos conduzca
en medio de la furia de los mares.

Que el Cristo solidario
renueve la fuerza de nuestros sueños.

Que el Espíritu Santo nos guíe a aguas tranquilas
donde reina la justicia, la solidaridad y la paz. **Amén.**
(*REC – Red Create, a liturgical network of Latin American Christians*)

May the God of justice lead us
through the tumultuous seas.

May the Christ who came to dwell among us
renew the strength of our dreams.

May the Holy Spirit guide us to still waters
where justice, solidarity, and peace reign. **Amen.**
(*Book of Common Worship, Blessing, Spanish and English adaptation, pp. 625-626*)

Resources

- 📖 *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Pew Edition*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006.
- 📖 *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Pastoral Care*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008.
- 📖 *All Creation Sings*: Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2020.
- 📖 *The Book of Common Worship (2018 edition)*, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Westminster John Knox Press, June 2018.
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Additional Worship Resources

- *From the National Council of Churches:*
 - [Uniting Prayer and Action](#)
 - [Anti-Racism Resources](#)
 - [Prayers and Meditation](#)
 - [Scriptures, Prayers, and Meditations](#)
- *From the World Council of Churches:*
 - [Ecumenical Prayer to Mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#)
 - [Racism, Discrimination and Xenophobia](#)
- [Prayers for Racial Reconciliation and Justice from The Episcopal Church](#)
- [Litany for Those Not Ready for Healing \(futurechurchnews.org\)](#)
- [United Methodist Church: Daily Prayers for Anti-racism](#)

Additional Resources for Racial Healing

- [Commemoration of the Emanuel Nine](#)
- [ELCA Racial Ministries](#)
- [ELCA Racial Justice Blog](#)
- [Resources from “Day of Racial Healing” website](#)
- [Center for Racial Healing](#)

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