



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

Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton Weekly Video Message
Jan. 14, 2022

Blessings as we commemorate Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

In his letter from the Birmingham jail, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." We also recall this passage from first Corinthians that says, "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it."

The racial reckoning in our broader society is forcing us as this church to acknowledge the rampant white supremacy that exists in this country and the complicit role our church plays, especially in our collective silence and in the lack of action to dismantle the structural and institutional racism present within and among us.

Acknowledging that we have a long way to go, we are actively wrestling with the ways the sin of racism shows up in our lives together as a church. We also know that grace gives us the freedom to face our sin. One way we are called to live out our mutual responsibility for one another is by guaranteeing our neighbor's right to vote and participate freely and fully in society.

Since the racial reckoning of 2020 it has been impossible for us to continue to ignore the injustices that our siblings of color suffer. The pandemic continues to show us just how deep the sin of racism goes, from the murders of Black and Brown people by authorities to the disproportionate numbers of Black and Brown people dying from COVID.

On January 18, the day following Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, the ELCA will observe the National Day of Racial Healing, a growing national initiative to encourage acts of service and raise awareness of racial injustice.

In 2019 the ELCA Churchwide Assembly issued a declaration to people of African descent. This declaration names the role of the church's complicity in the history and perpetuation of slavery in the United States and the legacy of racism. In its actions, the ELCA Church Council called congregations, synods and the churchwide organization to observe an annual Day of Repentance from racism.

Last year this church affirmed that the National Day of Racial Healing would be added to the ELCA's recognized event dates. This day is an opportunity for people, organizations and communities to call for racial healing, to bring people together in their shared humanity, recognizing that we are all created in God's image. We take action together to create a more just and equitable world. I encourage you to join in partnership with others on a journey towards racial healing.

Be well, dear church.