



### **Statement of the Synod Council of the Central States**

The recent murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Dreasjon (Sean) Reed, and George Floyd have jolted many to action. For more than a week, individuals around the world have taken to the streets to express their pain, anger, and frustration over the dehumanization being experienced by black and brown people due to individual/systemic racism. The anguish endured by people of color in this country because of the actions or inactions of other citizens is real, and it cannot be ignored.

Racism and racist notions have no place in Christianity. They are antithetical to our core beliefs. We believe God made all of humanity in God's image (Gen. 1:27). We believe Jesus Christ lives in each one of us (1 John 4:13) and tears down the dividing wall of hostility between us (Eph. 2:14). And we believe we are all members of the Body of Christ; hence, "if one member suffers, we all suffer with it" (1 Cor. 12:26).

Despite our relationship with God, we are sinners. We consciously and unconsciously sin against God and each other in thought, word, and deed. We love neither God nor our neighbor with our whole heart. Instead, we give in to temptation and seek to satisfy our own desires.

The Synod Council of the Central States encourages its congregations and their members to use this time of national self-examination as an opportunity to engage in courageous dialogue to tackle the sinful issue of racism. We invite our faith communities to listen to the experiences and perspectives of those who have endured racism and aggression at the hands of individuals and institutions, including our own ELCA. We also ask members to reflect on what actions they have taken or missed to reduce racism and lift up the dignity of all people.

The Council understands that discussions about race are difficult. Some participants may feel uncomfortable and even vulnerable. But what is hard should not stop us from doing what is right.

The Synod has tools available (<https://www.css-elca.org/workshops>) to facilitate positive, courageous dialogue. Therefore, we encourage congregations and members to be brave and examine their own attitudes and conduct. Each person, regardless of background or age, can help to advance the eradication of racism, disrupt systemic inequality and inequity, build a more inclusive community, and live out Christ's teaching to love our neighbor.

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**God's work. Our hands.**