

**Resolution # 2—Project Connect Resolution:  
Ushering in Fullness of Leadership in the ELCA for All People**

Whereas Project Connect, an initiative of the Eastern Cluster of ELCA Seminaries, has been endeavoring to strengthen the efforts of the ELCA to encourage young adults (specifically those under the age of 30) to consider that God might be calling them to public ministry in the church; and

Whereas the Multicultural Planning group of Project Connect has identified several factors that inhibit this initiative from effectively strengthening the Ecology of Call in the ELCA as identified in the document, “Is There a Place”<sup>1</sup>, particularly as it pertains to increasing the number of young adults of color in rostered leadership; and

Whereas the scripture reminds us that we are all inheritors of God’s promises because we know that Christ “has broken down the dividing wall, that is the hostility between us.”<sup>2</sup> We are no longer foreigners and aliens but fellow citizens with all of God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2); and

Whereas the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is 98% people of European descent even as a commitment was made to be a church comprised of at least 10% people of color by 1998 and we are convinced that because of racism – a mix of power, privilege, and prejudice – this has not yet happened; and

Whereas the ELCA in its social statement, “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture” acknowledges racism as sin, a violation of God’s intention for humanity that fractures and fragments both church and society; and

Whereas studies have shown that in its institutional form, racism creates a system that allows those of European descent to stand at the center and pushes all others to the margins. Due to racism people of European descent not only maintain their privilege and status unconsciously, but all people are pressured into remaining silent about the realities of race relations even in the Church<sup>3</sup>; therefore be it

Resolved, that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod takes the necessary steps to abolish racism and review the factors inhibiting people of color from experiencing the fullness of leadership in this Synod; and be it further

Resolved, that this synod memorialize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in all of its expressions—congregations, synod and Church wide—to take the necessary steps to abolish racism throughout this whole Church and review the factors inhibiting people of color from experiencing the fullness of leadership in this Church at the 2009 Church wide Assembly; and be it further

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<sup>1</sup> Clergy of color are more likely to be paid below synod guidelines; clergy of color receive lower retirement benefits; clergy of color wait for a first call for a significantly greater period than those of European descent; the culture of the ELCA believes that only certain congregations have a mission for ministry in ethnic communities. Taken from, “Is There a Place?”

<sup>2</sup> “Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture”, ELCA Social Statement, 1993

<sup>3</sup> “A Place At The Table An African American Lutheran Preaching from Margins to Mainstream”, thesis submitted to LSTC for DMin in preaching 2007

Resolved, that the ELCA formulate a model of reconciliation<sup>4</sup> that would be used in congregations, synods and the Church wide expression for the purpose of abolishing racism by:

- Confessing and repenting from the sin of racism and its harmful effects on the Body of Christ;
- Fostering dialogue between the diverse members of this Church and acknowledging the gifts that can be exchanged;
- Reformulating views on who can serve, at what levels they can serve and in what context they can serve;
- Providing a forum for leaders of color to communicate to the whole Church their “real-life” experiences as it pertains to the Candidacy and Call process in the ELCA for the purpose of uncovering the extent to which people of color are excluded from full participation;
- Accepting the varied expressions of the ELCA practiced throughout the diverse communities of the Church as equally valid expressions of the Lutheran faith.

In consultation with the submitters, and to make the resolution more precise, **the Committee offers a substitute resolution and recommends its adoption.**

**See Resolution # 2 A.**

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<sup>4</sup> Patterned after the **Truth and Reconciliation Committee** formed in South Africa following the abolition of apartheid. This committee was formed to oversee the implementation of the *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, 1995*. The act created a framework for the “establishment of as complete a picture possible of the nature, causes and extend of gross violations of human rights committed during the period from 1 March 1960 to the cut-off date contemplated in the Constitution” (pg 1. of the ACT available online at <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/legal/act9534.htm>). It allowed victims and victimizers to speak with the promise of reparation and amnesty where necessary/appropriate for the purpose of reconciliation.