

Introduction: Thank you for visiting the Racial Justice Task Force *Introductory Readings & Reflections*. The purpose of this document is to invite you to pause, reflect, and seek God's holy wisdom on the topic of *racial justice*. We are all pilgrims on a journey. Peace be with you as you begin taking your first steps. Amen. (Bryan Maurer 9/25/2018)

## What is “racial justice?”

- 8 Things You Should Care About if You Care About Racial Justice.  
<https://www.benjerry.com/whats-new/2017/11/care-about-racial-justice>
- Question for reflection: What is my own definition of “racial justice?”

## How does the ELCA define the terms “racial justice” and “antiracism?”

- WORKING DEFINITIONS ELCA Racial Justice/Anti-Racism (December 2008).  
<http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Working%20Definitions.pdf>.
- Question for reflection: Why is this definition important to our faith tradition, our congregational life? At a deeper level, why should racial justice be a part of my own spiritual journey?

## What are the various layers of our *lived experience* (text and context) with respect to our lives as spiritual (inner) and social (outer) beings?

- We are all parts of a whole, both pilgrims and a congregation, yet we are also individuals, siblings, partners/spouses, families, neighbors, citizens, and communities among St. Paul, Minnesota, North America, and the World.
- Therefore, we must begin to critically question longstanding American assumptions and re-define/redeem what it means to be alive in North America (and American) right now, this minute, while at the same time being Christian---that is, members among the counterculture embodied by Christ.
- For example: “In America, if you work hard, you will succeed. So those who do not succeed have not worked hard. It’s an idea found deep in the marrow of the nation.” Americans Want to Believe Jobs Are the Solution to Poverty. They’re Not.  
<https://nyti.ms/2MkTNLc?smid=nytcore-ios-share>
- Question for meditation/reflection: If I consider myself a believer and therefore a Christian, then can I also be an American? In a similar way, which parts of my being belong to Christ and which to America?

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**What level of *Dignity*—i.e., according to Webster’s, “the quality or state of being worthy, honored, or esteemed”—do we offer people of color at the congregational (social) level? What about at the individual (spiritual) level?**

- “Naming whiteness” is not the end—it’s the beginning: An interview with author Austin Channing Brown.  
<https://www.livinglutheran.org/2018/08/naming-whiteness-is-not-the-end-its-the-beginning>
- Question for reflection: What is the author suggesting to us with respect to believers as both social and spiritual beings?
- Question for reflection: How can a person become aware of, and then begin to disentangle one’s white privilege?

**How important are issues of race to Lutherans?**

- “We assert that God’s justification of sinners through Jesus Christ occurs without regard to race, gender, or nationality.” Elizabeth Eaton (2017), ELCA Bishop: [After October 31: Freedom From, and Freedom For](#)
- Question for reflection: Since justice has already been given to all (freely by God through Jesus), what role do I (or we) play in living out God’s justice?

**“Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40). What difference would it make if our witness and work to advance racial justice took this as its starting point?”**

- Quote from Richard Chapman (2008) : [Just Enough? Lutherans, Slavery, and Racial Justice](#)
- Question for reflection: *(feel free to generate your own reflection and have a conversation with a fellow pilgrim)*

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## What are Martin Luther's thoughts on being Christian and being free?

- Harold Grimm. Martin Luther (1520) [\*On the Freedom of a Christian.\*](#)
- Question for reflection: *(feel free to generate your own reflection and have a conversation with a fellow pilgrim, OR attend a Brew Testament gathering on the first Monday of each month)*

## What role does the idea of freedom play in Martin Luther King, Jr's compelling 1963 *I Have a Dream* speech?

- [Video] <https://youtu.be/I47Y6VHc3Ms>
- Note: The speech opens and closes with an exploration of the concept of freedom.
- Question for reflection: How have the readings and reflections changed the way you think about Martin Luther King, Jr's message? About racial justice? About freedom?

Conclusion: We hope these introductory readings and reflections have compelled you to seek God's wisdom in new ways with respect to the topic of racial justice. It is a global issue that spans the history of human beings. Please commit to taking these first steps beyond passive engagement to active engagement---consider confronting racism whenever, and wherever, you encounter it. God bless you on your journey of being a Pilgrim.

## Additional Resources by Task Force and Pilgrims

### Podcasts:

*Scene on Radio* - Episodes on Whiteness (2017) and Gender (2018) in particular

*Still Processing* - The New York times - Provocative, dealing with culture, LGBTQ and racial topics

### Books:

*A Good Time for the Truth: Race in Minnesota* - Minnesota Historical Society Press

*There There, Tommy Orange* - Native American themes (novel)

*Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* - Ibram X. Kendi

*Between the World and Me* - Ta-Nehisi Coates

*Waking Up White* - Debby Irving