

Report of the Strategic Planning Task Force

This report begins with the acknowledgment that a new reality in planning for the future of an organization is needed. Strategic planning is no longer the preferred process of planning for the next 19 years of an organization. Over the last 20 years we have watched the concept of strategic planning move from planning for the next 10 years to planning for the next 5 years to planning for 2-3 years out. That necessitated a different focus for our task of planning a direction for WELCA's future. We used a logic model, or theory for change process, that focused us on the big picture and became a catalyst for change in Women of the ELCA's work for the next 2-3 years. That fits in well with our triennium framework.

When Women of the ELCA was formed, we chose to build on the legacy of the women in the predecessor bodies before us, particularly those in the Lutheran Church in America. Our first board engaged in antiracism education and, with the hiring of Inez Torres Davis in the mid 90s, the vision for anti-racism training began. In 2002, we adopted a constitutional provision claiming an antiracist identity, and in the intervening 19 years,

- What progress has been made?
- We have not seen anti-racism training to be a sustained focus across the entire organization.
- There has been little progress or emphasis in this area across the organization.

This history moved the task force to focus on the big picture using Anti-Racism as the way to position this organization for its future. Using what we have received from the work of entities in churchwide and beyond, it will revolve around three foci:

Anti-Racism Awareness – Raising: Women need to educate ourselves to see everything through an anti-racist lens. Are you interested in learning more, sharing your experiences with others, and/or becoming culturally competent? There are many organizations that can help to raise your anti-racism awareness by connecting you locally with others concerned about the future of our society and church journey to discern an antiracist identity, provide you with resources (informational handouts, worship materials, maps, historical background, trip planning ideas, church policy, etc.), and provide comprehensive training to enable you to go deeper toward an authentic anti-racist identity.

Anti-Racism Accompaniment: "Walking together in solidarity, that practices interdependence and mutuality. In this walk, gifts, resources and experiences are shared with mutual advice and admonition to deepen and expand our work within God's mission." This definition is from "Accompaniment: A Lens & Methodology for Mission Together on the ELCA website under Accompaniment Resources. Accompaniment is rooted in the "promotion of values of mutuality, inclusivity, vulnerability, empowerment and sustainability." For us this means European descent women walking in solidarity with BIPOC women in the struggle for

racial equity through developing authentic relationships. All women are strengthened for this journey in the listening and sharing together always rooted in authenticity.

Anti-Racism Advocacy: The ELCA website reminds us that as members of the ELCA, “we believe that we are freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor. God uses our hands, through our direct service work and our voices, through our advocacy efforts, to restore and reconcile our world. Through faithful advocacy, the ELCA lives out our Lutheran belief that governments can help advance the common good.”

In adopting this identity and foci, the task force returned to our roots as women in the church, becoming a catalyst for supporting women and mobilizing the church to fully embrace living out a biblically rooted inclusivity based in a commitment to fully embracing an anti-racist identity.

In our formation as Women of the ELCA, we adopted principles of organization (Article III of the CWO Constitution) that support moving in this direction. Five sections are particularly informative:

- SECTION 1. Unity of Purpose. As a community of women called and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the participants shall commit themselves to full discipleship and oneness in Christ.
- SECTION 2. Affirmation of Individual Worth. Recognizing that each woman is created in God’s image and uses her varied gifts in diverse ministries, this community of women shall affirm in its life and work the worth of each woman.
- SECTION 3. Inclusiveness. This community of women shall be inclusive because in Baptism God makes all people one in Christ and shall have the objective of proclaiming and practicing this inclusive unity in the life of its participants together.
- SECTION 10. Wholeness of the Church. This community of women shall work toward wholeness of the church.
- SECTION 13. Anti-Racist Identity. This community of women shall claim and practice an anti-racist identity and actively seek full participation and shared power in determining its mission, structure, constituency, policies, and practices.

Further, the Model Constitution for ELCA Congregations contains the mandatory Chapter 9 Rostered Ministers. C9.03 a.8) states every minister of Word and Sacrament shall “speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, calling for justice and proclaiming God’s love for the world.” If this is the call for our rostered leaders, is it not also the call for us as disciples of Christ?

We point you to two scriptures as the biblical guideposts informing our work toward authentic anti-racism.

Ephesians 4:4-6 “⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”

Micah 6:8 “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

We pray you will join us in supporting this focus for our next triennium.

Grace and Peace,

Strategic Planning Task Force of Women of the ELCA

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Addendum:

Why did we pick this topic? Though we often say it is in our DNA as Lutherans to work for justice, we must confess that though we have produced many tomes of paper with nice proclamations, after over 34 years the ELCA remains the whitest denomination in the country. The women of this church started with a commitment to anti-racism. What has happened to that commitment?

What do we do with those who refuse to embrace this work? We continue to encourage them in prayer and conversation. We speak the truth in love calling them to authenticity in relationships with all siblings through Awareness-raising, Accompaniment and Advocacy.

What do we say to those who say the church is being political? Political means having to do with the polis – the community. We contend that not being political means we are only about individualism. A proper criticism can be raised when things become partisan. Being partisan meaning putting loyalty to a political party ahead of loyalty to the well-being of the polis – the community.

Recommendation:

The task force recommends the churchwide executive board adopt three foci of anti-racism awareness-raising, anti-racism accompaniment, and anti-racism advocacy for the remainder of the 2020-2023 triennium and instruct the executive director to begin implementing them. Each synodical unit will be asked to annually report on the activities accomplished in their anti-racism journey.