
Executive Summary of the Assessment Report of the Synod Anti-Racism Teams in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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"Promises are kept when vision is communicated in word and deed, and members are captured by it. For this to happen, we need the leadership of all who have been given responsibility and authority: members of congregations and their pastors; boards and staff of institutions and agencies of the church; synodical bishops; and the bishop of this church ... Because of sin and indifference, intentional measures are necessary for vision to become reality.

We expect our leadership to clarify why measures were taken, and to help members deal with the implications of such measures."¹

From, Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

SECTION 1 - OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

In late 2007, the Conference of Bishops (CoB) Ministry Among People in Poverty (MAPP) Committee expressed its support regarding the intersection of race and poverty and provided funds for capacity-building among the ELCA synod anti-racism teams. This capacity-building project is comprised of three phases: an assessment of the network of synod anti-racism teams' current capacity and needs; a synod team gathering which also provides emerging leadership a network point of entry; and the production of a post-gathering network resource. This report completes the assessment phase of the project.

The ELCA's institutional commitment to address structural racism within the church is outlined in four foundational documents: The ELCA Constitution; the Strategic Plan for Multicultural Ministries; the Social Statement, Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture; and the Plan for Mission. The ELCA is one of a small number of mainstream and predominately white institutions in the United States that openly and explicitly discusses racism in its institutional documents.

The journey to transform institutions and lessen individual prejudice and bias is long. The work of the ELCA synod anti-racism teams is to be applauded for the members' passion, tenacity and the outcomes they report to date. This assessment report focuses on next steps in what still needs to be accomplished in becoming an anti-racist, multicultural² church. Toward strengthening a systemic approach to meet this commitment of addressing institutional racism, ELCA members in their many roles and functions are encouraged to engage the following questions:

- Assessment: Where are we?
- Vision: Where are we going?
- Equipping: What resources, skills, practices and disciplines are required to reach the vision?
- Monitoring & Evaluation: How do we hold ourselves accountable?
- Momentum & Sustainability: What is the next step?³

¹ Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture, Section 2 part 3.

²"Multiculturalism means more than racial balance and inclusion. All members of the community must be competent to communicate with each other for an effective multicultural process... The goals of multicultural competency are increased understanding, respectful communication, and full inclusion of all people, not cultural competence by itself." From, Uprooting Racism, Paul Kivel, 2002, p. 226.

³ From powerpoint presentation, Staff Convocation: The Diversity Audit, Commitment to Anti-Racism, and Anti-racism Training, January 17, 2008.

Throughout this report, the term anti-racism will be used to remain consistent with current ELCA churchwide organization (CWO) language. There is current discussion among race relations and racial justice organizations and academics about the use of terms other than anti-racism.

The overarching question in thinking about how to build capacity and deepen this work is, "How will institutional leadership (synod bishops, churchwide staff, Church Council) communicate and establish a structure and strategies to support the ELCA's constitutional commitment to address institutional racism such that synod teams are recognized and their work catalyzed to bring about sustaining transformation of this church?"

ASSUMPTIONS AND FRAMEWORK

In preparation for reviewing the data, this section offers a framework to address institutional racism and white privilege in four areas to provide context for the reader:

1. Transformational institutional change,
2. Anti-racism training,
3. Evaluation,
4. Different approaches in race relations and racial justice work.

This background information will assist in understanding good practice, challenges, and assumptions.

Transformational Institutional Change

Tina Lopes and Barb Thomas, authors of the book, *Dancing On Live Embers: Challenging Racism in Organizations*, provide guidance on how to think through an organizational change plan:

- Includes shared definition of racism and anti-racism work.
- Acknowledges the value of racial equity to the organization.
- Links racial equity to mission, core values and the mandate of the organization.
- Outlines clear actions, time frames, people responsible for each action, indicators of progress and processes for monitoring and evaluation."⁴

Anti-Racism Training

The second area in this framework is anti-racism training, a key strategy used by synod teams and the churchwide organization (CWO). There are two sources of information to frame best practices in this area. The first is a publication by Ilana Shapiro, *Training for Racial Equity and Inclusion: A Guide to Selected Programs*. Her research includes a theory of change, and strengths and limitations for several training programs and the challenge and future directions of anti-racism training. She says, "... discrete training sessions offered by most programs are not sufficient to produce lasting change in institutions and structures. That will require a broader, sustained plan for change across individuals, groups and systems. ... More work is needed, however, to help participants implement, assess and redesign their strategies for addressing racial and ethnic oppression."⁵

The second source is Western States Center, a well-known grassroots organization. For six years it conducted dismantling racism training, and based on its experience decided to change its organizational strategy. It offers these words of wisdom: "Anti-racism education and organizational development are tools for building a shared language, analysis and organizational transformation. ... Over the years, as demand for Dismantling Racism (DR) training from the Center increased, the Project began asking, "Why?" We came to the

⁴ *Dancing On Live Embers: Challenging Racism in Organizations*, Tina Lopes and Barb Thomas, 2006. p. 246

⁵ *Training for Racial Equity and Inclusion: A Guide to Selected Programs*, Ilana Shapiro, Aspen Institute Roundtable for Community Change and Center for Assessment and Policy Development, 2002, p. 111.

conclusion that anti-racism training was gaining a reputation that mistakenly viewed it as an end in itself rather than as a set of tools.”⁶

Evaluation

For us to plan the journey here to there, we need to think about how we think about change, specifically about institutional change. We need a theory of change by asking questions like, “What are the strategies and activities that need to happen to reach our long-term outcomes?” “How do we know if we are making progress?” As you will see in the data, one of the capacity gaps for teams is evaluation. The resource used for this section of the framework is the Web site www.evaluationtoolsforracialequity.org, developed by the Center for Assessment and Policy Development in partnership with MP Associates. The following is pertinent to helping understand evaluation with a racial equity lens. “As strategies and activities are being considered, the following questions can help the group select those with the greatest probability of success and those with the biggest potential impact:

- Are the specific ways in which our strategies address the identified problems and contribute to the desired outcomes clearly spelled out? Is there a well described pathway from each activity or program to its expected immediate effects and from these effects to the next expected change, and so on?
- Do we have evidence -- from research, from best practices, or from experience -- that suggests that the activities or programs of our strategies (if they are implemented well), and their effects, will make a difference in the ways we expect?
- Is the strategy going to be implemented broadly, with sufficient quality, intensity and duration, to make a difference in what you will be able to observe about the expected effects?
- Have external factors that might weaken our strategies or lessen their effects been identified? What has been done to address these factors, or to reduce their consequences, if that is possible? If not possible, what information will be available to take these factors into consideration when evaluating the success of our strategies?”⁷

Different Approaches in Race Relations and Racial Justice Work

The fourth area is to understand the different approaches used for race relations and racial justice work. First, it may be helpful to provide an overview of the different strands of work in the race relations and racial justice field. The three main strands are individual, intergroup, and institutional. The following describes each cluster of work based on its theory of change:

- Some believe if we increase individuals’ knowledge and their skills, and they understand the different levels of racism, than once there is a critical mass of individuals, institutions will change and there will be racial justice. [Individual]
- Some believe that if we bring groups across racial lines together to discuss how to address racism and build relationships and trust, than once there is a critical mass of individuals, institutions will change and there will be more racial justice. [Intergroup]
- Some believe if we work to change the policies of institutions and we organize residents to understand and conduct a power analysis, then once those institutions begin to change, individual behavior will change and then there will be racial justice.⁸ [Institutional]

It is important to note, especially when gathering teams who use different approaches, that unnamed assumptions about the most effective way to create change can provoke tension. Many – including the researcher – believe that none of these approaches can be solely responsible for collective change to lead

⁶ Sharing the Lessons Learned: Reflections on six years of anti-racism work, David Rogers and Moira Bowman, Dismantling Racism Project, Western States Center, 2005.

⁷ www.evaluationtoolsforracialequity.org, produced by Center for Assessment and Policy Development and MP Associates. Tipsheets cited by Sally Leiderman, CAPD.

⁸ M. Potapchuk, Cultivating Interdependence: A Guide for Race Relations and Racial Justice Organizations. (Washington D.C.: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, 2004) p. 47.

toward racial justice. Instead, it is a combination of the three and an understanding how they each work collectively in a process of change that will make the difference.

METHODOLOGY

In November 2007, MP Associates was retained to assess the work of the synods' anti-racism teams. With attention to diversified racial/ethnic, geographic, age, gender and structural placement representation, an advisory committee⁹ was established to provide input at different stages of the assessment process. MP Associates worked closely with Office of Research and Evaluation staff to launch the survey electronically in January 2008 to the most current team network contact list (56 individuals). Fifty of the 65 synods returned completed surveys – an impressive return rate of 77%.

The researcher and the ELCA project staff decided to deepen assessment data by interviewing eight synod teams. Teams were selected based on the following representational criteria: almost all regions (except Region 3, since no surveys of synods with teams were completed); different stages of team development, including one in the formation stage and one only a year old; and different approaches to addressing racism (e.g. diversity, cultural competency, anti-racism, healing, etc.).

There are three questions to reflect on before and after reviewing the results of this assessment process:

- Though the ELCA overall is 97% white, individual synods have a greater, lesser, or equal percentage of multiracial constituency. How does the ELCA build and support the capacity of an anti-racism network with regional, cultural, racial/ethnic and historical differences to educate and train constituency on structural racism?
- What level of support should each team expect from the synod bishop and synod staff, from churchwide staff and the presiding bishop in terms of financial resources, technical assistance and vocal and action-oriented leadership?
- What shared principles, strategies, assumptions and approaches, if any, should be expected by churchwide anti-racism staff of the network and its teams?

SECTION 2 – SURVEY DATA

OVERVIEW OF THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

We received a high survey response rate (77%, or 50 of the 65 synods). Of the 50, only 28 were synods with teams; the rest of the responses were completed by synods without teams. Closer review of the survey showed that among the 28 synods that said they had a team, two reported they were inactive, two have not met for one to two years, and two said they were currently in the formation stage. It is also important to note that of the 22 synods that did not have teams, seven reported having an anti-racism team in the past. Among the eight synods whose second-largest racial group is American Indian and Alaska Native, five responded that they had no teams, and three did not complete the survey.

To keep the anonymity of the survey respondents, all distinguishing information is removed. Finally, for most topics of the survey, a box with the researcher's observations, questions, and/or analysis is provided.

⁹ A full list of advisory committee members is in the acknowledgements section of the appendix of the full report.

SURVEY DATA FROM SYNODS WITH TEAMS

The following is the survey data gathered with the top responses from 28 synods with teams, along with observations, questions, and analysis.

Teams' Structure

- Ninety-six percent define themselves as synod teams, and 66% use the term “anti-racism” to define their team.
- Forty-two percent of the teams are less than one year and up to 4 years old, while 31% are more than 11 years old.
- Thirty-two percent of the teams are composed of majority white team members (51-79%), 25% of the teams are predominately white (80-100%), and only 21% of the teams are predominately people of color.
- Most teams recruit team members one-on-one (70%) and 52% recruit after trainings and workshops.
- Thirty-seven percent of the teams meet 3-5 times a year and 26% meet 6-9 times.
- Two hundred and thirty-two ELCA members have been trained in one of the following training programs:
 - 62 Crossroads in 11 synods
 - 47 LHRA in 11 synods
 - 40 ELCA Anti-racism training in 13 synods
 - 18 Women of the ELCA in 9 synods
 - 65 Other - Participated in other training programs in 2 synods
- There are 5 synods that had no members trained. Synod teams averaged 8 people trained, and in 21% of the synod teams, 12-26 people were trained in the synod.
- Teams receive most of their funding from the synods (89%); 18% also receive funding from local congregations and another 18% from individual donors.
- Teams were asked to describe their relationship with the synod offices. Seventy-eight percent said their activities are endorsed/advertised by the synod office, 75% provide funding for activities, and 61% provide team activity reports to the synod office.
- Teams described the changes they would like to make in how they are organized; 35% want more team members, 22% would like more synod support, and 9% would make no changes.

Observations/Analysis/Questions

- There are no self-identified American-Indian/Alaska Natives or Arab or Middle Easterners representatives on the 28 teams.
- With 4 teams over 15 years old (2 are 20 years old), what would the ELCA expect for outcomes based on the age of the team and assuming strategies were implemented sufficiently, consistently and effectively?
- What type of synod support is needed to build a team’s capacity and assist in its effectiveness? Is the support provided typical of the synod’s practices and culture (i.e., a longstanding commitment to support committees). Is the synod office providing support based on the ELCA Constitution and supporting documents in order to fulfill its institutional commitment to address structural racism?

Teams' Work

- The teams stated the top three terms they use to discuss their work within the synod: Racism/Anti-racism (59%), White Privilege/Privilege (55%), and Multicultural (44%).
- Over half of the teams say the main focus of their work is to increase racial/ethnic awareness, knowledge and skills (67%) while only 9% focus on reducing racial inequities in the synod.
- The teams were then asked, “What are the top three anti-racism issues the team has worked on?” Sixty-three percent work on increasing congregational leaders’ awareness and 44% focus on increasing

congregation members' awareness. Thirty-three percent work for creating inclusive synodical policies, practices, and worship.

- The community issues teams work on are immigrant and refugee issues (11%) and poverty (7%).

Observations/Questions

- Is there pressure to work on the ELCA- or synod-identified issues only? How is it determined which issues to work on?
- What, if any, established accountability practices exist between the team and its different stakeholders, and specifically the greater community?
- What is the synod's role in the greater community?

- Teams were asked how they address, educate, and/or train about the issue of poverty and the intersection of poverty and racism. Forty-three percent of teams use training, workshops, and experiential exercises while 27% have either not addressed poverty or the intersection with race, or the team is inactive.
- It is important to note that 63% of survey respondents would like to learn more about the intersection of poverty and race for their work. This request will be addressed at the Intersection of Race and Poverty: Capacity Building for ELCA Synod Anti-Racism Teams Gathering in September in Baltimore.
- Asking who the teams' audiences are resulted in a helpful indicator of teams' operating assumptions about how change happens. Overwhelmingly, the teams work from a top-down model (75% synod leadership and 57% congregational leadership), assuming change happens by first educating and training leadership about the issues, after which leaders in turn will encourage other leaders and congregations to become knowledgeable. Leaders and congregations will act on this encouragement and seek education and training, and this education and training will lead to changed behavior.
- The current strategies the teams use are: anti-racism training (44%), synod educational events (41%), and awareness training (33%). Teams were asked which strategies worked the best. The top ones mentioned were anti-racism training (47%), educational events (29%), and dialogue/discussions (18%).

Observations/Analysis

- Though training and educational events are the most frequently used strategies, one question not asked was "What do you hope will be the change that will occur from these strategies?"
- One of the critical steps in a change process is conducting an assessment to learn where an organization (congregation, synod) is in terms of content knowledge and awareness, as well as awareness of the inequities in policy, practice and culture. Only 7% of the synods are currently doing an assessment, and 15% have done so in the past. Conducting an assessment process assists in learning what human and financial resources are needed to implement strategies to meet short- and long-term outcomes.

Barriers and Capacity Issues

- Teams described the obstacles they face in anti-racism work. Almost half face "not enough congregational interest" (46%), "resistance to the issue by congregations/members" (39%), and "competing priorities within the church" (32%).

Observations/Analysis/Questions

If synod teams expressed generally that they feel supported by the bishop and synod staff, yet on the other hand they experience strong congregational resistance, there seems to be a disconnect or a lack of communication between synod offices and congregations.

Resistance is a theme throughout the survey and deserves further exploration. Some questions to reflect on:

- Are congregations not aware, or not hearing, that addressing racism is a priority of the ELCA?

- How might the methods, strategies or tone used by teams not be appropriate, effective, and/or helpful in their work with congregations?
- What behaviors or responses are the teams expecting based on their strategies? Are they reasonable expectations based on racial identity¹⁰ and organizational development theory?¹¹

- A long list of possible capacity issues were provided to learn more about teams' need for training opportunities, technical assistance, materials, and regional and national gatherings. Teams were most interested in learning more about:
 - 81% How to deal with resistance
 - 70% Racial reconciliation
 - 73% How to be accountable to people of color and communities of color
 - 63% Included several topics: how to create an inclusive, equitable process, how to conduct outreach in different racial/ethnic communities, addressing the intersection of poverty and race, working with groups – multilingual or bilingual, accountability with congregational members, and dealing with burn-out and using self care techniques
- Teams also described how frequently they use various ELCA resources in their work. The ones most frequently mentioned are: Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture Social Statement/Study Guide (48%), God's People Building Bridges (41%), Troubling the Waters for Healing the Church Leaders Guide (white privilege) (41%).

Outcomes and Evaluation

- Teams stated the top outcomes they have observed to date in their synod: increased awareness of race/racism (70%), different/increased conversations about race/racism (55%), and a growing number of congregational members with knowledge and skills (33%).
- Teams' top prioritized long-term outcomes are increasing awareness (35%) and increasing diversity of membership and outreach (22%). Thirty percent said their long-term outcomes were unknown or could not be identified at this time.
- Only 22% of the teams have a formal evaluation process and the method most used by those teams are workshop or event evaluations (80%).

Observations/Analysis/Questions

- What is positive from this response about outcomes is that the strategy most teams focus on is building awareness and survey respondents have observed more awareness in their synod. Each of the top outcomes listed above needs more information to truly understand the change that is occurring from: description of behavior, numbers of people, what type of awareness and conversations are occurring, and what the congregational members are doing after increasing their knowledge and skills.
- A third of the teams did not know their long-term outcomes. This response is understandable since some teams are inactive or in the formation stage. This assessment process is assisting the church in learning “where are we?” in terms of the anti-racism teams.
- For 35% of the teams, long-term outcomes are focused on increasing awareness. In the survey question, long-term outcomes were not defined. (Does “long-term” mean five years? Ten years?) It is the researcher's belief that while awareness building activities are ongoing, a critical corollary question is: awareness building to what end?

¹⁰ Reference book: Wijeyesinghe, Charmaine L., and Bailey W. Jackson III, *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development*. New York: New York University Press, 2001.

¹¹ Resource books: Cross, Elsie, Judith H. Katz, Frederick A. Miller, Edith W. Seashore. *The Promise of Diversity*. New York: Irwin Professional Publishing, 1994.; Scheie, David M., with T. Williams and Janis Foster. *Improving Race Relations and Undoing Racism: Roles and Strategies for Community Foundations*. Minneapolis, MN: Rainbow Research, Inc., 2001. and *Dancing On Live Embers* mentioned in the Assumption and Framework section.

SURVEY DATA FROM SYNODS WITHOUT TEAMS

- Survey respondents were asked if their synods have anti-racism teams. If respondents answered “no,” they were directed to a shorter survey. There were 22 respondents to this survey. The respondents’ demographics are predominantly white (86%), mostly male (54%), and predominantly aged 41-70 (95%). As previously stated, 7 (32%) of the 22 synods previously had teams.
- Seven synods previously had teams and the average amount of time lapse since their synod had a team was 5 years.
- The top two obstacles they faced in doing this work is not having enough volunteers (66%), lack of resources (33%), and resistance to the issue by congregations (33%).
- For these same seven synods, we asked how many people were trained. Surprisingly, the number was greater than those synods with teams. Two hundred and fifty-one members have been trained with the following breakdown:
 - 148 Crossroads in 4 synods
 - 8 LHRA in 2 synods
 - 60 ELCA Anti-racism training in 5 synods
 - 35 Women of the ELCA in 5 synods

Questions/Analysis/Observations

The training responses raise some concerns. If synods that no longer have teams have an average of 23 trained members (in one case 50, in another 90) when the average number of trained members is eight for synods with teams, then the following questions need to be asked:

- What happened?
- Why is there no longer a synod team? Did support from the synod bishop and staff change?
- Did congregational resistance to team efforts result in frustration and team member burn-out?
- Did anti-racism training effectively prepare team members for their role?

- Respondents shared the reasons why synods never had a team, which included: lack of diversity in the synod (36%), other groups or ways of doing the work (36%), or size of their synod affecting things such as staffing (28%).
- The respondents said what is needed to initiate or re-initiate their teams are people and support.
- Fifty-four percent are interested in strategizing with other synods on how to start a team.

Expectations for Roles of the Coordinator, Synod Bishop and Presiding Bishop

For synods with teams and without teams, surveys included questions about what teams expect from the role of the coordinator of anti-racism education and training, the synod bishop, and the ELCA presiding bishop.

- The top roles for the coordinator are to provide resources and tools and communicate the anti-racism vision.
- The top roles for the synod bishop are to be a vocal supporter of anti-racism work and encourage congregational leaders to make anti-racism work a priority.
- The top roles for the ELCA presiding bishops are to be vocal supporters of the anti-racism work, communicate a theological argument for anti-racism vision, and communicate to synod bishops the importance of engaging and supporting this work.

SECTION THREE - INTERVIEW RESULTS

In-depth interviews helped shape a baseline profile for team practices. All information contained in the reporting of the responses is per the interviewees’ perspective, with no further research conducted to “verify” information. The synod team interviewee sample is diverse in terms of age of the team, focus of their work, and geographic area. Members from eight teams graciously agreed to be interviewed and share stories of their

work: Eastern Washington/Idaho, Metropolitan Chicago, Nebraska, New England, Northeastern Ohio, Sierra Pacific, South Carolina, and Southwestern Pennsylvania.

STRUCTURE OF TEAM: Meetings, Recruitment, and Funding

- These teams had 6-9 members and met annually 3-9 times. Most started their meetings with a devotion or prayer and included check-in time among the members. Two of the teams focused on addressing issues, either on diversity or oppression, and formulating responses or actions based on a specific issue. Five teams' agendas focused on planning events and/or workshops, coordinating overall operations, or deciding which issues to bring to synod assemblies.
- The types of recruitment activities described by the teams are: calling parish pastors for names, facilitating break-out sessions at Synod Assembly, organizing an application process, inviting training participants, and having a display at Synod Assembly with information about the team. Regarding calls to parish pastors, one team remarked, "We were met with phenomenal hostility. Pastors were offended that a call was made to find people for this team."
- Teams reported that their funding from the synod offices ranges from less than \$500 to \$19,000. The average budget for five teams (not including the two teams with the largest budgets and the team still in formation) is \$2,400.
- The two synod teams with a unique and comprehensive team structure have the largest funding, \$16,000 in the New England Synod and \$19,000 in the Metropolitan Chicago Synod.

RELATIONSHIP WITH SYNOD OFFICE

- For almost all teams, a synod staff person sits on the committee and serves a key role in communicating the work of the team and helps the team learn what is happening in the synod.
- Three teams reported a high level of support from their bishops, including regular meetings, attendance at events or training, and in one case attendance at the team's meeting.
- From this sample of interviewees, what does not surface is a consistent expectation for either of the key leadership groups (Synod Council and synod staff) to participate in training, be held accountable for ensuring equitable and inclusive practices, or for providing vocal support for the ELCA's commitment "to confront, among others, the scandalous realities of racial, ethnic, and cultural oppression."
- Four teams had not experienced a change in their bishop; four had experienced a transition and two of those were recent. These transitions had differing degrees of impact, typically including at least a change in the staff liaison. For some teams, the change will or has provided more support of their work, since some of the new bishops are passionate and committed to creating an equitable, inclusive church. One team said that after the transition to the new bishop, multicultural issues were not in the forefront anymore and a change in structure of the office has limited their work due to reduced support.

STRATEGIES

- There are some teams which have a comprehensive program and are seeking to work different levels; individual, intergroup, and institutional and other teams that are singular in focus. The teams overwhelmingly focus on increasing awareness of synod/congregational leaders and members, which is important in a church composed of 97% white people, though it is not in and of itself sufficient for institutional change.
- One theme expressed by some team members was the amount of effort they expended to be a part of the Synod Assembly, the Synod Council agenda, and/or to receive attention and support from the bishop. Some have faced institutional barriers and individual resistance. And there were some teams who were successful in integrating their work within the synod's structure and practices.
- The following are examples of the synod team's strategies: host a dinner along with a speaker at the Synod Assembly; offer two, three-day processes, facilitate quarterly one-day community meetings with participants, and conduct analysis on incidents involving people of color and/or communities of color; offer Crossroads training, workshops at Synod Assembly, Foot Analysis of synod's impact, and create a town hall meeting at Synod Assembly; address a different "ism" each year and host an educational event

or workshop and also a celebration of diversity; and educate the synod about immigration including creating media, print and either a forum or an interview process with immigrants.

- Most teams focus their work on synod and congregational leadership. The first reason is the assumption that if leaders are educated they will educate others, as it is believed a top-down approach is needed to reach many people and build a critical mass. Second, because of the size of some of the regions, it is the most efficient way to reach the number of congregations.

Training

- Synod teams and congregations have availed themselves of workshops and training opportunities made available at different times primarily through four entities: Crossroads, ELCA Churchwide program, Lutheran Human Relations Association and Women of the ELCA. Other training entities used by interviewees include Huperetai and Kaleidoscope. Teams' experiences of these workshops and train-the-trainer programs vary widely. In some cases experiences have been less than positive and remain unresolved, informing current team work.
- Of the eight teams interviewed, four shared a negative experience of anti-racism training early in the history of the team (most just referred to training in general and not specific references or whether it was a train-the-trainer program). In two synods, these early teams conducted training with congregations and it seems they were initially well-received. But later, congregational resistance grew to the materials and requests for training ended. One perspective was the training "came across so harsh, people simply didn't want to be 'beat up about this.'" The training was described as too shocking and too invasive and people were called racists to their face. "It was painful for people of color and it was too hard on our white brothers and sisters."
- In response to these early negative experiences, teams created different language to talk about their work, for example: inclusivity, diversity, building bridges, and multicultural. Some teams which experienced resistance to their past training said they wanted to ensure current training did not reflect anti-racism concepts, though some wanted to use a few of the exercises from an anti-racism training curriculum.
- Through discussion with interviewees about their training experiences, four themes emerged:
 1. For some, after what was described as a few days of training, team members were encouraged to return to their synods and offer workshops, sometimes with limited facilitation or training experience or guidance.
 2. Others said the tone of the training did not fit their synods' cultures. For some synods, at a certain point, congregations' requests for training just stopped. For one synod their training activity did not even begin because they could not create enough interest since it was called "anti-racism" training. Teams told stories of how they are currently dealing with negative responses to training experiences, even though in some cases those experiences happened some years back.
 3. A few teams mentioned that proprietary rights regarding use of training materials were a barrier to their work.
 4. For many of the interviewees an underlying theme was the lack of institutional support (e.g., resources, mentoring, network) for doing this work. Some individuals were pioneers in starting a discussion about racism in the synod. They were asked to "confront the scandalous realities of racial, ethnic and cultural oppression," without, as some noted, a solid ELCA organizational infrastructure or security that "someone has their back."

RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMUNITY AND/OR PARTNERS

- Although teams identified current issues in their community, overall, very few teams work on issues such as: economic development, environmental justice, housing, and violence in the greater community as a team or with partners. Only a few of those teams interviewed work with community partners and even less with ecumenical organizations.
- Most of the interviewees mentioned individual team members' involvement in various community organizations and campaigns, which is typically reported back to the team. The primary focus of the teams' work seems to be inwardly on the synod. This may be due to the limited capacity of the teams and available resources. In talking with some team members, it did not seem that they perceived

working on community issues as part of their purview, nor did they share a perspective that the church's relationship in the community impacts outreach and ethnic ministries.

RELATIONSHIP WITH CONGREGATIONS

- As mentioned earlier, the teams focus their work on engaging synod and congregational leadership which is mostly done through established events such as Synod Assembly or entities such as Synod Council and synod staff. Again this decision is based on the perception that change happens top-down and also because some regions are geographically large.
- Some teams expressed challenges to engaging congregations. Interviewees cited a bishop never mentioning the work of the team in any public way, except to provide space for a team member to do announcements at Synod Assembly. Some teams said they don't have the ability to go into congregations, especially those where they need the work the most. Congregational resistance was consistently mentioned on the surveys and with the interviewees as one of the top barriers.

CAPACITY AND SUPPORT

- During the last part of the interview, synod team members were asked about their capacity needs and the level of support they would like from the churchwide organization (CWO) The immediate capacity most teams are seeking diverse membership, so one of the challenges in finding more people is the Church's relatively small number of people of color.
- The resources they said would be helpful are: Bible study ideas, fundraising tips, resource lists, how to support volunteers (and keep them involved), workshop designs with liturgy, and information on immigration. As for the churchwide organization's role, they continued to express the need for vocal support and leadership.

SECTION FOUR - FINDINGS

The following findings are based on the researcher's interpretation and analysis of the survey and interview data. They are based on "snapshots" of the ELCA synod anti-racism team members' work, which they graciously shared. There is still information to be collected from those synods that did not answer the survey and it is still necessary to interview synods that no longer have teams to better understand what happened. It will be important for those with long-term relationships with the Church's anti-racism journey and knowledge of the teams' work to also interpret this collection of data.

- Without consistent support from the presiding bishop, churchwide staff, synod bishops, and synod staff, these synod teams were able to implement various strategies, most consistently training and educational events, to different scales and quantities to fulfill the church's vision of becoming an anti-racist church.
- Most teams are focused on awareness-building activities and typically focus almost exclusively on congregational and synodical leadership.
- Most teams said they are not addressing issues of poverty and would like more resources and assistance.
- Most teams do not have an evaluation process to: reflect and refine what is being done; celebrate and publicize accomplishments and successes; expand engagement through information sharing; and to learn what differences the strategies made in the short and long term.¹²
- Support provided by synod offices takes the form of endorsement and/or advertisement of activities, funds, and vocal support. Synod offices' level of support varies, and for most synods no clear expectations or roles have been defined.

¹² www.evaluationtoolsforracialequity.org, produced by Center for Assessment and Policy Development and MP Associates. Tipsheets cited by Sally Leiderman, CAPD.

- Where synod bishop and office support is present, it has not necessarily led to congregational openness, interest or invitations for education and training. Though congregational interest or involvement is inconsistent and in some cases described as resistant, it is not known if what teams are offering is what congregations need.
- Teams express challenges in regard to cultivating member diversity and team sustainability.
- Teams do not have diverse funding sources and sometimes their funding is vulnerable due to changes of the synod bishop. The range of funding is significantly different across synods.
- Most teams did not have membership criteria, apart from passion about the issues. A few teams expected members to attend training or educational processes, but not all.
- In some synods, anti-racism training has been a key strategy to meet short-term outcomes. For other synods, anti-racism training has negatively impacted interest in the work. For a few synods the response to the negative impact of the anti-racism training was to choose different approaches, such as cultural competency.
- Across the synods, there is no consistent pattern of practices or strategies for institutional change and racial equity. Though some strategies are used more frequently than others, synod teams implement them differently, e.g., the type of training curriculum or number of activities.

SECTION FIVE - RECOMMENDATIONS

The data collected from this assessment process shows how the synod anti-racism teams can and do play critical roles in the ELCA becoming an anti-racist church. The work of the teams needs to be affirmed and recognized by the ELCA. These individuals are taking risks and addressing a complex issue in a role that is usually marginalized and demoted in society. The challenge for the teams is not only to implement effective strategies while also having to respond to resistance from congregations and leaders, but to do so as volunteer committees with varying levels of support and capacity. The question to answer is, “What is the church’s responsibility and accountability in its support of the anti-racism teams?” As this work deepens within the ELCA, all programs, practices, and policies need to be assessed, monitored and evaluated in terms of equity, inclusiveness, and power dynamics. It will be important for teams to be included as stakeholders and leaders in creating a comprehensive action plan for the church to become anti-racist and multicultural.

The recommendations are based on analysis of the data collected and the researcher’s experience working on racism in community settings, providing technical assistance to communities and organizations addressing racism, and research on capacity-building issues. The following recommendations are focused in three areas: advancing the role of institutional leadership, building team capacity, and providing institutional support.

Advancing the Role of Institutional Leadership

- It is important for regular communication from the churchwide organization (CWO) with synod bishops and teams to report the progress toward making the internal operations of the church more inclusive and equitable. It’s also important for the CWO to model and be transparent on the trials and tribulations of this organizational journey and their lessons learned.
- Work toward the vision and ideas expressed in the four ELCA documents with a clear consistent voice from all leadership, specifically the presiding bishop, Conference of Bishops, Church Council and Synod Councils. Since the documents mentioned have less clarity on implementation, it will be important to include action ideas for becoming an anti-racist church.
- Building capacity to deepen the ELCA’s work will take a different level of involvement from leaders, along with an enhanced governance structure, more resources, an investment of time, and an expanded staffing structure.
- Twenty years ago, the commitment that the church would become, in 10 years, at least 10% people of color and people whose language is other than English, was constituted. It will be important to reassess this goal

and to consider the church's responsibility and relationship with the greater community. The Western States Center, has done significant work on dismantling racism and offers this wisdom:

"Many places in our region have so few people of color that the goal of making existing white organizations legitimately multiracial is incredibly difficult if not counterproductive. In those places, strong, independent organizations of color are most needed. When organizations are competing for the time and energy of a limited number of leaders of color, those leaders often get burnt out and/or tokenized. In some cases, trying to diversify a primarily white organization may create additional barriers to the building and strengthening of organizations of color. ... Some organizations need to accept that their role is not to become multi-racial, but rather to figure out how they can become anti-racist, white organizations."¹³

- There are processes and functions within the church where institutionalizing anti-racist practices can have significant impact. These include both the candidacy and call processes, budget and policy decision processes, and Church Council and Synod Council appointments. A set of equity principles could be developed and followed by each synod. Giving recognition to synods for best practices on equity may help create expectations and develop a learning community.
- Though there are many examples of best practices of anti-racism training, there are also some synods that reported negative impacts. The leaders of the training programs most used by the ELCA and staff will need to collectively address these impacts with regard to healing, taking responsibility for actions, and discussing principles of practice.
- With team representation, develop an ELCA theory of change that would include identifying strategies to meet short- and long-term outcomes. Establish benchmarks for what success/progress looks like at the synodical and churchwide level. It will be important to establish indicators based on the following variables: demographics of the region, history of racism in the region, number of congregations and level of staffing, number of team members, and budgets.
- Develop accountability mechanisms for those synods without teams.
- Synod bishops and teams, if not already established, need to create accountability relationships with each other to ensure each are working toward a common vision with necessary synod resources, and regularly assessing progress. Integrating anti-racism work in the synods' culture, policies and practices is the next step in deepening this work on a regional level.

Building Synods Anti-Racism Teams' Capacity

- With teams, co-create: competencies for teams, synod, and congregational leaders and principles for doing anti-racism work. Choose a term for this work that encompasses different approaches but still explicitly focuses on addressing racism at the institutional level.
- Decide, with teams' involvement, what minimum level of consistency will be expected from teams in areas such as message/terms, strategies, work in the greater community, and level of communication with leadership and membership. Decide on the roles and level of support to be provided by synod staff and the council.
- Collect information from those synods that did not respond to the survey to learn whether they have teams, and gather data about strategies, outcomes, obstacles, etc. Learn more from the synods which currently do not have teams to understand their challenges and interests.
- Teams in formation are in a vulnerable stage. Provide technical assistance and coaching for these teams as they build their capacities, establish their roles in the synods, and develop effective strategies.
- Provide technical assistance and tools to help teams evaluate their work. Regularly review evaluations across regions to assess progress, and address problems with teams that need assistance and/or resources.

¹³ Rogers, David and Moira Bowman, *Sharing the Lessons Learned: Reflections on Six Years of Anti-Racism Work*, Western States Center, March 2005. Pages 7-8.

- Establish accountability practices between the stakeholder groups responsible for implementing the anti-racism plan churchwide, in synods and, especially, with congregations.
- Continue to build the teams' network with the leadership of members from synod teams. At a minimum this could include regular communication, regional and national gatherings, technical assistance, and resources. Additional resources and staffing will be needed to institutionalize this work and build teams' capacity.

Providing Institutional Support

- During the interviews, teams discussed the challenges of recruiting team members and some spoke of having team members who were involved from a small radius of where the synod office is located (which is typically in a large city). Create regional technology hubs or utilize community technology hubs (college, library) equipped with meeting technology so more people from all regions of the synod can be involved in governance, including the anti-racism teams.
- Provide anti-racism teams, as well as other volunteer commissions and committees, the resources and tools to be effective managers of volunteers.¹⁴ The resources referenced in the footnote can provide information on database management for CWO, so volunteers can be tracked and a strong communication network can be implemented. Some individuals said that though they were involved in this work for many years, they did not receive important announcements from CWO but from third parties. Improving database management leads to better communication and recognition that these members are important in their volunteer roles within the church.

CONCLUSION

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America must first recognize its progress to date. There are few mainstream, predominately white institutions in the United States that include in their strategic planning or founding documents commitments to: "Confront the scandalous realities of racial, ethnic... barriers that often manifest themselves in exclusion, poverty, hunger, and violence.

The synod anti-racism teams of the ELCA, even with the limitations of capacity, support, and the resistance they faced, continued their pursuit and vision to become a more inclusive, anti-racist church. Each team deserves much affirmation for the impact they have made in their synods to date, as well as their tenacity and commitment. The next step for staff, Conference of Bishops, Church Council, synod councils, the coordinator of anti-racism education and training and the director of racial justice ministry is to join together with these teams to ensure that sufficient strategies (with the appropriate intensity, duration, and resources) are implemented with a strong collective voice of leadership to fully address structural racism within the institution and in partnership with the greater community.

"The social, economic, and political dimensions of the crisis are acute. We consider the source of the crisis to be profoundly spiritual. The activist Christ threw the money changers out of the temple. The Church must continue to take an activist role. We must make a choice. Are we going to continue barricaded behind old walls of ignorance and hostility or are we going to be the people God calls us to be?"¹⁵

-From, Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

¹⁴ A few volunteer management sites: www.narsvdpd.com, www.buildingchurcleaders.com, <http://volunteerweek.org>

¹⁵Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity and Culture - Copyright © September 1993 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Social Statements in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, adopted by the 1989 Churchwide Assembly, states that an addendum shall be added to those statements that elicit significant division in the Churchwide Assembly. The following amendment (at the point indicated in the text) received support at the Churchwide Assembly but not the vote needed for approval.